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Barriers to Recruiting Women and Minorities in Law Enforcement

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ABSTRACT

Public watchdog agencies are very mindful of what the demographic breakdowns of communities are. They can apply a great deal of pressure to obtain answers as to why females and minorities are not equally represented in law enforcement organizations. The purpose of this project is to identify the barriers in recruiting female and minority applicants to the law enforcement profession and find methods to overcome these barriers. It is hypothesized that the larger police departments across the State of Texas already know what these barriers are and have taken some steps to overcome them. The research suggests that police agencies should closely match the demographics of the cities they represent. The project contains a survey of some of the largest police agencies in the State of Texas and examines the barriers to recruiting they experience. The findings show that good relations with the community are the basis for being able to recruit minorities to a law enforcement agency. Working with community groups and establishing strong relationship are vitally important for recruiting success. Minorities must feel welcomed by an agency and that the agencies recruiting efforts are genuine. The project will suggest the recruitment of females and minorities to a law enforcement agency will result in greater cooperation with the community, a more efficient agency, and violent conflicts between the agency and the community will be minimized because of the reflective diversity.

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INTRODUCTION

Public watchdog agencies are very mindful of what the demographic breakdowns of communities are. They can apply a great deal of pressure to obtain answers as to why minorities and females are not equally represented in law enforcement organizations.

Law enforcement organizations need to be prepared to answer interrogatories by the above mentioned groups. In order to better serve the communities law enforcement agencies represent, they should identify the barriers to recruiting minority and female applicants, and they should also attempt to find ways to overcome these barriers.

The identification and attempts to address these barriers to the recruitment of females and minorities will only serve to enhance relations with the community and create a more efficient law enforcement agency through increased diversity.

The purpose of this project is to conduct research into the problems associated with the recruitment of female and minority police applicants and identify the barriers. Furthermore, the intent of this project is to identify productive and innovative ways for law enforcement agencies to overcome these barriers in order to have very positive recruiting outcomes.

The method in which information is obtained for this project will take place in several different ways. Books written on recruiting will provide a historical perspective of what methods should be implemented in order to recruit the intended target group; in this case females and minorities. Periodicals and journals will be reviewed to see what methods have been effective and what

methods have been less than successful. The demographics of Austin, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio will be compared along with the number of minority and female officers serving on their respective police departments.

It is believed that the research will find the profession of law enforcement has changed dramatically over the years. In the past, working for a law enforcement agency meant a steady paycheck with a fairly good salary for only having a high school education. In the past, a law enforcement job was a good way for women and minorities to make a decent living that was equivalent to their peers.

However, the law enforcement officer of today has to be an educated individual. Technical knowledge of computers, law, psychology, increased awareness of domestic issues, and a more litigious society have forced some law enforcement agencies to require a better trained officer. Some increase in pay and benefits has mirrored this trend for a better educated officer. Yet, private companies that are also publicly scrutinized have found the educated female or minority police applicant a very attractive employee.

Private companies can promise a Monday through Friday schedule with weekends off and daylight hours along with a very competitive salary. Law enforcement organizations can promise days off in the middle of the week, probably not consecutively, while working a night shift.

Another area investigated by this project will be the impact of the lack of support by an applicant's family. This may do more to harm the chances of an applicant than any other factor. If the parents of the applicant, or especially the

spouse, are not supportive of an applicant's intention to pursue a career in law enforcement, then all is practically lost from a recruiter's standpoint.

The field of law enforcement will benefit from this project because it will identify some of the barriers to recruiting female and minority applicants and offer ways to overcome these barriers which will result in the successful recruitment of these target groups. This will enable law enforcement agencies to prove to the media and special interest groups that they are doing everything possible to recruit a professional, qualified, and diverse workforce that is reflective of the community.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Take women and minorities out of the mix for a moment and just focus on Police Recruiting. Tate (2000) stated, "Finding the ideal police recruit, one who seeks a long-term career as one of society's peacekeepers, is becoming increasingly difficult" (p. 78). Tate (2000) continues that the economy has created an atmosphere of a job seeking population that was very selective. Applicants in the private sector were able to secure entry level employment with attractive salaries. The harder an employee would work in the private sector, the more bonuses and rewards they would accumulate. However, as the applicant advances in the private sector, rather than promote them, applicants are encouraged to separate and find employment elsewhere. Law enforcement, on the other hand, requires commitment and effort from the very beginning. The hiring process alone is complicated and lengthy. Accepting an entry level position and working your way to the top of the organization from the bottom is

the only way to achieve success. This will also ensure that applicants will have to remain loyal to the organization and not leave.

The cumbersome process of applying for a law enforcement career and earning a marginal entry-level salary can't compare to the huge entry level benefits that private companies can offer. Therefore, law enforcement recruiters are at a loss to find quality applicants. One would think a quick fix alternative would be to make the process of application and acceptance much easier and quicker. In the private sector, applicants want an immediate answer to their employment application (Tate 2000).

However, Tate (2000) sums up this argument by stating lowering standards to fill vacancies in an organization is a trend that has negative implications for the future of any agency and should be discouraged. These lowered standards may affect the entire recruitment process from educational requirements, fitness testing, or even the background investigation. Lowering standards may fill the vacancies, but it will only create further issues later on down the road in the form of citizen complaints, disciplinary problems, and avoidable civil suits because of bad officers.

With the above listed competition from the private sector, barriers to recruiting females and minorities to law enforcement agencies become even more personified.

The first woman deputy commissioner appointed to duty in New York City had the duties of supervising all conditions relating to "White Slave" traffic, crimes and offenses affecting women and girls, social welfare, and protection of juveniles (Owings, 1925).

One would think that great strides in women and policing would have taken place by the end of the 1970s with so many years between then and 1918. However, a 1979 survey by the Police Foundation of several municipal law enforcement agencies showed, “that only 3.38 percent of sworn personnel were female, at a time when women made up 38 percent of the national labor force” (Segrave, 1995, p. 111). Furthermore, educational requirements were more stringent on women than they were for men.

Sex differences in the occupations people choose have been found to develop early in childhood. In an informal study of the careers children dream of, Keely (1983) found that boys had desires in a much broader range of occupations than the girls. The girls’ choices were much more reserved and tended to reflect more office work or teaching type jobs.

Yet, research shows that female officers are just as effective in dealing with police issues. Actually, females can handle some situations more effectively because of their inherent community policing style of communication. Furthermore, females are much more sympathetic to victims of violent crime. This can be very helpful since calls related to domestic violence represent a large portion of calls for police service. Recruitment strategies for females should focus on diverse activities available and skills required, how challenging the job is, along with the brotherhood and sisterhood of the police culture. Furthermore, areas in which a new female recruit can help the community have shown to be very effective in sparking interest in female applicants (Prussel, 2001).

Prussel (2001) further stated that community college students are a very valuable resource to police recruiters. Students that attend community colleges

have often not chosen a career path and are often very willing to speak with recruiters. The benefits of police service are very attractive to college students that have not yet made a career decision. Current female employees (civilians) in a law enforcement organization are also an excellent source of recruitment once they are made aware of the better benefits of a sworn position.

Another barrier to recruiting applicants in general is physical fitness standards. Research shows that if the applicants are merely advised to show up for a physical fitness or agility test, the pass rate of the examination will be substantially less than if an applicant was informed ahead of time of the fitness requirements. Also, by not only including the criteria in the original application paperwork, but reinforcing the standard before the applicant shows up for an exam greatly increases the pass rate (Spawn 2003).

Research was also conducted in the area of work/family conflict of applicants. It is believed that many applicants, especially females and minorities, will not seek law enforcement positions because of a lack of family support.

In general, research conducted by Ryan (2001) leads one to believe that improving family knowledge of the nature of policing will greatly lead to reducing the stress of becoming a police officer. Furthermore, a female's career seems to be more affected than a male's because females tend to have the responsibility of caring for children.

However, after analyzing the results of the study according to Ryan (2001), applicant perceptions of anticipated conflict were much higher than the family perceptions of the conflict. In other words, applicants see the family members as being less supportive of the applicant pursuing the job than the

family members see themselves. Family members actually support the applicant and see the job as a chance to help people and do meaningful work.

It is of vital importance that a police department reflects the demographics of the community that it serves. There are many cultural differences between minorities. If a member of the community sees that the officers don't reflect the culture of the community, there may be hostility between the two. When you have people from different cultures and officers that understand and appreciate those cultures, they can better perform their jobs (Streit 2001).

According to Margolis (1971), the violent outbreaks of the Martin Luther King and Vietnam eras taught us that our big-city police departments were not racially balanced. The community saw police departments as primarily white organizations with no avenue of access from the minority community. Minority groups were successful in that they were able to make their voices heard in order to institute some change.

While in pursuit of minority applicants, just because an agency claims to be an Equal Opportunity Employer, there are no guarantees for success without enthusiastic recruiters. Minorities need to be assured they are genuinely welcome in an agency (Young 1969).

The initial meeting with the police recruiter will either be so positive that it will win over a minority applicant and eliminate ingrained fears of failure or it will be so terrible that it will instill a hostility that cannot be reversed. Sincerity and genuine enthusiasm are the keys to success (Margolis, 1971).

Some of the best recruiters in an organization aren't only the officers assigned to the recruiting detail, but the officers on the streets themselves.

Officers on the streets can unconsciously undermine any recruiter's efforts by having a bad attitude and disposition about the job in general and the department. If an applicant were to witness this behavior on the streets and hear grumblings coming from the officer's mouth, someone an applicant is supposed to be looking up to and wanting to idol, their hopes of going to work and being happy in their career has just been quashed (U.S. Department of Justice 2003).

When conducting a comparison of the literature, it is apparent that the many authors agree that sexual and racial diversification of police agencies is necessary in order for agencies to survive in today's world. Women and minorities want to, and should, have a voice in who is policing them. By providing this voice, it is very helpful in making departments more efficient and fostering good relations with the community it serves.

While searching for qualified applicants, it is imperative that the recruiters represent the department in a way that welcomes the applicant in an encouraging and enthusiastic manner while upholding the high standards of the police agency. Educating the applicant in all the steps of the process and what is to be expected will be paramount in successful recruiting.

METHODOLOGY

What are the barriers to recruiting females and minorities to a law enforcement organization and what are some of the ways to overcome them?

The author believes that most large police agencies are well aware of these barriers and have taken steps to overcome them.

A review of the literature has identified some of these barriers, yet, a telephone survey of recruiters from the San Antonio Police Department, Austin Police Department, Houston Police Department, and the Dallas Police Department was conducted to identify what the recruiters in the field thought were barriers to recruiting females and minorities. It was further asked of them to see if their respective agencies had taken any steps to overcome the barriers. All four agencies surveyed participated in the research project.

In order to analyze the information obtained, the responses will be compared with the recommendations found in the review of the literature. Furthermore, the population and demographics of the city that the agency serves, along with the demographics of the respective police department itself, will be compared as recommended by the review of the literature.

FINDINGS

The literature suggests that police departments must make every attempt possible to recruit a work force that is reflective of the community demographics in order to be more effective in serving the community along with avoiding racial tensions that have existed in the past.

With all of the literature available, the author found several points of view on what the different barriers to recruiting were and how to overcome them. Consequently, as a result of the research project, the author also found an array of points of view on what the different barriers were to recruiting females and minorities from the largest cities in the State of Texas.

In regards to recruiting females and minorities, only one police agency had a written policy in place to recruit minorities. This policy is non-specific in nature and does not mention a particular race (Appendix 1).

One overwhelming aspect of recruiting and a central theme that seems to be recurring in this project is that of education. An applicant's educational background was mentioned as a barrier by all parties interviewed in the survey. The ability to meet the minimum eligibility requirements of an agency or to effectively pass the written entrance examination were some of the biggest barriers noted for all applicants. Obviously, this project could take several different turns at this point and examine the different aspects of education and law enforcement. However, the focus of the project is on barriers to recruiting females and minorities along with ways to overcome them. Since all the agencies reported "education" was a barrier to recruiting all applicants, it is notable that none of the agencies were able to provide any statistical information broken down by race or gender that supported females and minorities were the only ones that had difficulty in meeting this requirement.

Most agencies noted that they attempted to overcome the educational barriers by recruiting at college campuses where the educational level of the applicants would be higher. Furthermore, actively informing applicants of the minimum educational requirements by providing them at the time of job announcements along with posting them on the departmental internet website were found to be valuable tools. One department gives a written examination workshop before they have the written examination in order to improve scores on the entrance examination.

Another barrier noted by the literature was the physical fitness examination. However, only two agencies noted this to be a true barrier. One agency stated they just provide as much information as possible to the applicants as to what is to be expected of them, and another agency has a fitness workshop to further expose the applicants to the agencies expectations.

One of the most important things gained from a review of the literature was that in order to really recruit females and minorities, an agency needed to first have a good working relationship with the community. By having the relationship, female and minority applicants will feel welcomed by the agency and that they will be accepted. Two of the four recruiters interviewed stated that their agencies were involved in the communities and engaged in activities to reach out and establish the above mentioned relationships.

As the literature suggests, the author has taken the demographics of the agencies of those that participated in the project, and compared them with the demographics of the communities they represent (Appendix 2).

The largest disparity is in the area of female representation on police departments compared to the demographics of the cities. Policework still remains a dominantly male profession. Males consistently make up anywhere from 83 to 93 percent of the police departments examined (Appendix 2).

In comparing the racial demographics of police departments to the demographics of the cities they serve, it appears the big city police departments across the State of Texas are making great efforts to recruit police officers reflective of city diversity (Appendix 2).

It is interesting to note that in cities where there is a high number of minority representation among the population of a city, the same minority is fairly well represented in the police agency that serves the city. For example, San Antonio is only 180 miles away from Houston, yet the representation of Blacks in Houston and Hispanics in San Antonio differ greatly. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that San Antonio and Austin are only 70 miles apart. Yet, the demographics of the cities are considerably different along with the make-ups of the police agencies (Appendix 2).

However, it is notable in both of the above mentioned examples, the demographics of the police agencies closely represent the demographics of the city.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this project was to identify the barriers to recruiting female and minority applicants to the law enforcement profession and find some ways to overcome these barriers.

It was hypothesized that the larger police departments across the State of Texas would already know what these barriers were and have taken some steps to overcome them. Furthermore, they would have police agencies that closely matched the demographics of the cities they represent.

From the findings, it was found several barriers to recruiting females and minorities that existed several years ago still exist today. For females, the stigma of the police profession being a man's job still exists. A review of the literature revealed these stigmas can be ingrained from early childhood. In conversations

with the recruiters of today, they are still attempting to overcome these barriers. Providing females with as much information as possible in regards to the profession of a police officer, along with convincing them females play an important role in the police department are paramount to success.

Education is another area identified as an area of concern for recruitment. Applicants must endure difficult testing in order to be selected by a law enforcement agency. Police departments attempt to combat this barrier by providing as much information to the applicants as possible concerning testing and minimum requirements. Furthermore, one agency surveyed provides a workshop to assist applicants with the written and physical examinations.

It is important that the demographic makeup of a police agency be very similar to the demographic makeup of the city it serves. The service the department provides to the community will be enhanced because of greater cooperation, minorities will have a voice in the force that polices them, and violent conflicts will be minimized because of the diversity.

However, good relations with the community are the basis for being able to recruit minorities to a law enforcement agency. Working with community groups and establishing strong relationship are vitally important for recruiting success. Minorities must feel welcomed by an agency and that the agencies recruiting efforts are genuine.

By conducting interviews with recruiters across the State of Texas, the review of the literature, and comparing the demographics of the police departments with the demographics of the cities they represent, it appears the hypothesis that most large law enforcement agencies recognize the barriers to

recruiting females and minorities and have taken steps to overcome them was supported.

The survey focused on the front lines of recruiting in order to determine from the recruiters what the barriers were. It was obvious during some of the interviews that recruitment and human resource training was lacking in some departments. One participant had to be convinced they would not be sued or suffer any legal repercussions as a result of participating in the survey. Another participant misquoted articles from the Local Government Code in regards to minority recruiting. Overall, the recruitment survey was a success and barriers to recruiting females and minorities were identified consistent with barriers identified in the review of the literature. However, better training for recruiters was also an important observation.

In comparing the demographics of the police agencies surveyed with the demographics of the cities they represent, problems were found using census results from the 2000 survey. In regards to race, one is allowed to respond to, or check off, more than one race when asked. Therefore, when the Census Bureau tallies the results, they end up with more responses to race than the number of people participating in the survey. For example, a person may turn in one form which will count as one person living in the city; however, they may have checked off that they are Hispanic and Black. Therefore, when you add up the total number by percentages, you can easily reach 180% of the total population. This makes comparing 100 percent of the police department with 100 percent of the city demographics rather challenging. None of the police departments surveyed recorded dual races for one person.

The results of this study are useful to law enforcement agencies because some of the barriers to recruiting females and minorities have been identified and examined so they may be overcome. The results of overcoming these barriers can create a law enforcement agency that is reflective of the diverse community it represents, more efficient, and enjoys better community relations that will be beneficial to both the agency and the community it serves.

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APPENDIX 1

Recruiters from large police departments, (San Antonio, Austin, Dallas, and Houston) were interviewed to provide answers to the questions listed. The questionnaire was intended to illicit honest and heartfelt responses from recruiters so that useful information would be obtained. Therefore, the answers listed to the responses are anonymous so the respondents will not have to defend their answers legally.

The first question in the questionnaire asked, "Does your agency's recruiting detail have a targeted group or goal?"

- One agency reported they do not recruit, they only give a test that establishes a list and they process applicants in the order they appear on the civil service exam.
- The next agency reported they only "go after" the most qualified applicants.
- Another agency reported, "All minorities that reflect the city's demographics" is the targeted goal.
- Finally, an agency reported that they aggressively attempt to recruit blacks and females.

All agencies reported they utilized a civil service examination to determine the order in which applicants were processed. In other words, once the test is given, applicants are ranked by score and processed in the order that they are scored from the highest scoring to the lowest.

The next question was, "If your agency has a targeted group or goal, is this a matter of written policy?"

- Only one of the agencies had a written policy as to a targeted group or goal that read, "Recruiting attempts will be reflective of the city's demographics". One other agency had an "Affirmative Action Plan" from 1995 that was almost identical to the above policy, but it was only a plan and not a matter of policy.

Next, the recruiters were asked, "What do you believe, as a recruiter, are some barriers to recruiting minorities and females in your agency?"

- All four agencies noted concerns about minorities and education along with an inability to meet the minimum educational requirements and pass the written examination.
- Two out of four agencies stated females had to be convinced they could do the job. Lack of confidence in themselves was of primary concern.
- One agency stated a lack of family support was a strong barrier for females and blacks.

- Another agency stated, “Blacks take numerous contacts to convince them to apply, Asians require a strong relationship with the organization before they can be convinced to apply to show them they are welcome, females need convincing they can do the job physically, but we really have no problem with the recruitment of Hispanics.”
- One agency only noted “education” as the main barrier. They stated besides education, they did not notice any barriers to recruiting minorities or females.

The final question asked of recruiters was, “How does your agency attempt to overcome the barriers you mentioned?”

- All four agencies stated that in the areas of education, they attempt to make their minimum education requirements known.
- One of the four agencies holds written workshops and physical fitness workshops to help with the testing process.
- Two of the four agencies stated they attempt to establish strong community relations in order to recruit more minority applicants.
- Three of the four agencies have a mentoring program to help all applicants once they are accepted to a cadet class.

Respondents to the survey: (note: the orders in which the respondents appear below have no bearing on the order of the above mentioned responses to the survey)

Officer Dianna Carmenaty, Recruiter, San Antonio Police Department, July 22, 2004.

Detective Eddie Lopez, Recruiter, Dallas Police Department, July 22, 2004.

Officer J.D. Gonzalez, Recruiter, Houston Police Department, July 22, 2004.

Officer Briggs, Recruiter, Austin Police Department, July 22, 2004.

APPENDIX 2

Figure 1.

Comparison of the Demographics of the San Antonio Police Department with the City Population.

<u>RACE</u>	<u>POLICE DEPT.</u>	<u>CITY CENSUS-ONE RACE</u>	<u>CITY CENSUS- HISPANIC</u>
White	48%	67.7%	
Black	6%	6.8%	
Hispanic	45%	19.3%*	58.7%**
All			
Others	1%	3.5%*	
Total	100%	100%*	
 <u>SEX</u>			
Male	93%	48.3%	
Female	7%	51.7%	
Total	100%	100.0%	

*The title "Hispanic" is not included in "One Race" statistics. The only information provided for the 19.3% are "Some Other Race" other than White, Black, or Asian. "All others" is indicative of Asian/Pacific Islander.

**The title "Hispanic" is calculated as a race by itself in Census Statistics. However, participants in the Census are allowed to claim more than one race which results in statistics that add up to more than 100% and numbers adding up to more than the total population.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000. San Antonio Police Department, 2004.

Figure 2.

Comparison of the Demographics of the Austin Police Department with the City Population.

<u>RACE</u>	<u>POLICE DEPT.</u>	<u>CITY CENSUS-ONE RACE</u>	<u>CITY CENSUS- HISPANIC</u>
White	71%	67.8%	
Black	10%	10.7%	
Hispanic	18%	18%*	30.5%**
All			
Others	1%	3.5%*	
Total	100%	100.0%	
 <u>SEX</u>			
Male	88%	51.4%	
Female	12%	48.6%	
Total	100%	100.0%	

*The title "Hispanic" is not included in "One Race" statistics. The only information provided for the 18% are "Some Other Race" other than White, Black, or Asian. "All others" is indicative of Asian/Pacific Islander.

**The title "Hispanic" is calculated as a race by itself in Census Statistics. However, participants in the Census are allowed to claim more than one race which results in statistics that add up to more than 100% and numbers adding up to more than the total population.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000. Austin Police Department, 2004.

Figure 3.

Comparison of the Demographics of the Dallas Police Department with the City Population.

<u>RACE</u>	<u>POLICE DEPT.</u>	<u>CITY CENSUS-ONE RACE</u>	<u>CITY CENSUS- HISPANIC</u>
White	60%	50.0%	
Black	24%	24.0%	
Hispanic	14%	17.7%*	35.6%**
All			
Others	2%	2.7%*	
Total	100%	100.0%	
 <u>SEX</u>			
Male	83%	50.4%	
Female	17%	49.6%	
Total	100%	100.0%	

*The title "Hispanic" is not included in "One Race" statistics. The only information provided for the 17.7% are "Some Other Race" other than White, Black, or Asian. "All others" is indicative of Asian/Pacific Islander.

**The title "Hispanic" is calculated as a race by itself in Census Statistics. However, participants in the Census are allowed to claim more than one race which results in statistics that add up to more than 100% and numbers adding up to more than the total population.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000. Dallas Police Department, 2004.

Figure 4.

Comparison of the Demographics of the Houston Police Department with the City Population.

<u>RACE</u>	<u>POLICE DEPT.</u>	<u>CITY CENSUS-ONE RACE</u>	<u>CITY CENSUS- HISPANIC</u>
White	56%	51.8%	
Black	21%	25.9%	
Hispanic	20%	18.8%*	37.4%**
All			
Others	3%	3.5%*	
Total	100%	100.0%	
 <u>SEX</u>			
Male	87%	49.9%	
Female	13%	50.1%	
Total	100%	100.0%	

*The title "Hispanic" is not included in "One Race" statistics. The only information provided for the 18.8% are "Some Other Race" other than White, Black, or Asian. "All others" is indicative of Asian/Pacific Islander.

**The title "Hispanic" is calculated as a race by itself in Census Statistics. However, participants in the Census are allowed to claim more than one race which results in statistics that add up to more than 100% and numbers adding up to more than the total population.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000. Houston Police Department, 2004.