

THE BILL BLACKWOOD  
LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE OF TEXAS

The Benefits of a Culturally Diverse Work Force  
for The Tyler Police Department

A Policy Research Project  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Professional Designation  
Graduate Management Institute

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March, 1997

## **Abstract**

This research paper addresses the issue of cultural diversity for a modern police agency. The paper deals with the history of the problems associated with recruiting minority police officers. The benefits found for those agencies that have culturally diverse work forces are found to be reduced crime rate and better relationships with the community. The material used for the research included books, journals and publications, and interviews with expert authorities. The result of the research revealed that after years of affirmative action plans, designed to work toward diversity, little progress has been made. Recommendations include recruiting at minority institutions and making use of community leaders whenever possible to facilitate a smooth recruitment effort.

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## INTRODUCTION

From time to time, all police agencies are faced with the necessity of having to hire new police officers. The methods chosen by these agencies vary between agencies. Some place ads in the newspapers, others use word of mouth to get the word out and some hire from their police reserve units. While these methods may solve the immediate problem of filling the vacant positions, it is not the best way to assemble a culturally diverse work force. A culturally diverse work force generates multiple perspectives for a business and for a police department, and has the effect of enhancing public perception. A progressive police department will often try to assemble a work force that mirrors that of the community.

The purpose of this research paper is to explore the benefits of a culturally diverse work force for a modern police agency. This report is intended to explore the best recruiting methods for achieving cultural diversity, and this research will serve as a guide to other police agencies or business that desire to diversify their work forces.

This research will be conducted for the primary benefit of the Tyler Police Department. The findings will be presented to the chief of police and used to determine if there are any other methods that might be used to help facilitate work force diversity. There is also some relevance in this research for other police agencies as well as businesses and organizations in the private sector. The sources of information used in this research include

law enforcement journals, books, newspaper articles, and expert opinions and experiences.

The Tyler police Department currently has an active recruiting unit that devotes about half of its \$5,500.00 annual budget to recruiting efforts directly targeting minorities and women. The department advertises in minority publications and enlists the assistance of community leaders from the Hispanic and Black community. While the department has been the beneficiary of some community goodwill because of these efforts, there still remains some negative perception on the part of some members of the community toward the police.

#### **Historical, Legal or Theoretical Context**

It was noted in an encyclopedic by Grolier Incorporated that the growing desire to see democracy fulfilled and to have equal rights was reflected in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This bill was intended to do away with discrimination in among other things, employment. Unfortunately its provisions were often ignored or met with violent resistance. Less than four months after passage of the civil rights act, three civil rights workers were murdered in Mississippi (104). Historically the police profession has been reluctant to move toward work force diversity. This history of exclusion practiced by many organizations in the u.s. has made it difficult for minorities to become part of the workforce. Progress was very slow but with the implementation of Affirmative Action there was renewed hope. Lyndon Johnson first used the term in 1965 when he ordered federal contractors to "take

affirmative action" in hiring members of minority groups. The purpose of the affirmative action policies or programs was to overcome the effects of past discrimination (Grolier Inc, 587). In the 1960's the Detroit police department had a long history of racism. At that time more than half the people in Detroit were black but the 5,056 man department only had 491 black officers. (Margolis, 15,16). In Denver, Colorado in the 1960's the situation was much the same, In 1967 the department had 20 black and 20 Hispanic officers. They managed to double that figure in the 1970's but they still only accounted for 8% of the department while this minority group made up 21% of the general population (Margolis, 19). There was a growing animosity between the community and the police and reports of police brutality did much to discourage minority applicants from applying. (Margolis, 19). In Miami, Florida after years of segregation, they tried to integrate its 65 black police officers into its main police force. Until that time, no black man had even been allowed to attend the police academy. The highest rank they could reach was "patrolman" which was a notch below the lowest white rank of "officer" (Margolis, 21). Like other urban police departments, Miami got into minority recruitment after and in response to the riots that had rocked the city (Margolis, 21)." Police agencies today seem to be more aware of the benefits of having a more diverse police unit. The possibility of a reduction of hostility between the community and the police is an attractive prospect. The recruiting of minority police officers is one of the greatest challenges facing law enforcement today

(Williams, abstract). Having a culturally diverse work force has the possibility of making the relations between the police and community better. Community involvement is necessary for effective law enforcement and this involvement to a large extent depends on having a police force that culturally mirrors the community; (Witt, 57,59)

The impact of this negative history has the effect of making it extremely difficult to recruit minorities. Nevertheless police agencies have made some effort. Unfortunately the extra effort to recruit minorities drew some harsh comments. One civil service worker was overheard saying, "All these special promotion campaigns aren't worth a damn. You attract Negroes the same way you attract whites - with a classified ad in the employment section of the newspaper". (Margolis, 19). Since this incident in the 1960's, there has been legislation mandating that affirmative action programs be implemented to increase the number of minority officers in some police agencies. While some police agencies may not have realized all the benefits of having a culturally diverse work force, businesses have long been aware of its importance. As John Fernandez wrote in his book, *The Diversity Advantage*, "America has always been faced with the problems and challenges of managing a diverse work force".. He also noted that before companies can have sustained teamwork for the long term competitive edge they must, "have their employees to value and respect people who are different from themselves in terms of such factors of race, ethnicity, language and culture...., (291). As the corporate environment gets

more competitive, companies are faced with being more innovative in renewing their enterprise. To their list of downsizing, visioning, and total quality management, they have now added managing diversity as a means of staying on top in the 90's. (Thomas, 159).

Affirmative action was thought by many minorities to be the vehicle by which they finally achieved equal opportunities in the work place. Unfortunately there was still negative attitudes and behavior of people toward people of a different ethnic group, as noted in George Henderson's book, Cultural Diversity in the Workplace. He also noted that on the subject of diversity, "the term human relations was more appropriate than race relations" (25). What we are faced with is the reality that affirmative action is primarily viewed as a racial issue.

### **Review of Literature and Practice**

The police profession remains an attractive career choice for many of America's youth. In 1987 the Los Angeles Police Department conducted a survey of 119 males and 38 females who were already enrolled in their police academy. The survey showed that a vast majority of them had made law enforcement a career goal 5 years before that. The motivating factors for them was a desire to server security and pay, and adventure (Slater and Reisner abstract). The Los Angeles Police Dept. conducted another study in 1989 where they contacted 47 police agencies in 50 of the largest cities in the country. This study showed that 45% of the agencies made a major increase. 23 of these agencies were under court order for the affirmative action and 7 had a voluntary affirmative action

plan (Walker, abstract).

The United States is not the only country where its police agencies are struggling with work force diversity. Foreign countries are also dealing with the recruitment of minorities. A 1991 study on race relations and police recruitment in England and Wales showed that moderate gains were made when special attention was given to minority recruitment (Holdaway, abstract). In 1991 a study in London, England surveyed 67 minority children between the ages of 14 and 15 and also some community leaders. This study showed that there was a fear of alienation from family and friends so they did not apply. There was also some fear of racism within the department (Doyle, abstract).

With the dawning of the 21st century one might think that police agencies have made an effort toward more progressive thinking and would be ready to include minorities and women into their work forces. For some reason however, some agencies do very little in the way of active recruiting. The results of an informal survey of agencies around the Tyler-Longview area showed these results, The city of Longview, which has a population of approximately 71,000, hires its police officers exclusively from its reserve unit. There is little done to recruit minority candidates. While the city of Tyler is active at career fairs at minority institutions, cities like Jacksonville and Lufkin are not. There are some cities like Dallas, Austin, Carrollton, Denton and DPS that are almost always traveling to ethnic colleges and universities. Minority recruitment is viewed as worthy of the best

efforts of any police agency. (Witt and Robinson, 57, 59). Agencies with affirmative action plans recruit more minorities than agencies who do not. In an effort to diversify its police department, the Dallas Police Department has started to admit 1 black, 1 white and 1 Hispanic into its academy regardless of their score on the entry level test (Muncie, interview). While this may not be the best way to get "qualified applicants", it does get more minorities into the hiring system. Dallas has also adopted a very liberal work fitness test for entry level which also makes it easier for new recruits. The police department in Wichita Falls finds that by recruiting in plain clothes minorities are more willing to talk to them. The Denton Police Department has success recruiting at army bases, specifically Ft. Hood. The Houston Police Department expects that as a direct result of increased minority recruitment, they will have a lower crime rate and better relationships with the minority community (Houston (TX) , abstract). A report by at least one author however has stated that employment equity will not always be counted on to improve relations between police and minority groups (Jayardine and Talbot abstract). In project M. O. R. E. (Minority Officer Recruitment Effort) , the Los Angeles police department advocated a minority recruitment plan that called for advertising in minority communities and initiating a liaison with minority leaders (Williams, abstract). The fact that police agencies in 50 of the largest cities in the United States, made progress by using affirmative action, there would appear to be some merit to using this plan to move toward work force diversity (Walker, abstract).

In writing her Personnel Journal Jennifer Labbs stated that another technique might be to "use a diversified recruiting staff in order to add sensitivity and credibility to the recruitment effort" (qtd. in Morrison, 66).

### **Discussion of Relevant Issues**

After a long struggle, minority officers are now represented more proportionally with their population. They have the same rights and responsibilities as non minority officers (Sullivan, abstract). Minorities still face obstacles however. In an effort to hire minorities some police agencies have made changes in the written test to make it easier for the recruits to pass it. Some non minorities have complained about the lowering of the standard to admit minorities. In this instance it was in order to comply with court mandates (Sullivan, abstract). According to R. H. Stebbins, in his book Minority Police Officer Recruitment, "there is no need to prostitute validated standards for employment since the principle of merit selection and equal employment are compatible" (abstract). Despite its discriminatory impact, a pen and paper test can be valid if the content of the test is representative of and related to the content of the job (Moran, 274,287). Police agencies have traditionally had problems with minority applicants failing some area of the selection process and therefore attempt to justify their low numbers by pointing to this fact. It is not enough to point helplessly to the small number of applicants who survive the screening process. Underrepresentation of minorities is prima facie evidence of racism or institutional

racism (Carte, abstract).

By the year 2010, women and minorities will make up 75% of the available work force, ready to move into the 24 million new jobs created in the United States (Loden, cover). Unfortunately, this fact has caused some concern for non minorities. There may be some that fear that they are being pushed out. Not everyone accepts the theory that non-minorities are being forced out of the work force and becoming an endangered species. In a 1995 study, it was shown that this group only makes up 43% of the work force but, holds 95% of the senior management positions in the work force (Loden, 23) To say the least, progress toward diversifying some organizations has been slow. Despite three decades of affirmative action, glass ceilings are still firmly in place for women and people of color above the mid-management level (Loden, 23).

The negative perception of minorities by non-minorities continues to be an important issue. Black Americans in particular are distinguished from other groups due their visibility of color (Blank, 15). For some non-minorities, prejudgment is tinged with fear or hate and the reaction is strong. This often leads to avoidance, oppression, ridicule or harassment of entire groups of people (Loden, 62). There are also negative feelings toward the police that the minorities have to deal with. The country must address the inequities in employment and work toward a more representative utilization of minorities and women (Goff, 16, 21) . This researcher has found that some agencies still struggle with the problem of having only a small number of minority applicants.

Although some agencies have affirmative action plans, some minorities are uncertain of the sincerity of effort expended by the recruiters (Hochstedler, 227, 240). Although minority officers enjoy a more representative number than in years past, they still face discrimination in duty assignments and promotions (Sullivan, abstract). According to one writer, "many organizations are in the grip of racism, sexism and other forms of oppression, even after the civil rights act (Cross, cover). If the minority employer is hired for his ability rather than for his race, he could help the employer change the prevailing image of the minority community (Young, 29).

Unfortunately, for the minority applicants, the police profession traditionally has been reluctant to welcome minorities into their departments. An organized recruiting effort may be one way to overcome some of that history. The cost of recruiting is minimal when compared to the benefits. Research has shown that much community good will comes from the increases recruiting effort. There is also the possibility of reduced crime (Houston (TX) , abstract). Some recruiting efforts could be as simple as contacting minority community leaders or recruiting at minority institutions (Reynolds, abstract). The Tyler Police Dept. has approximately half of its \$5,500.00 recruiting budget designated for recruiting at minority universities and job fairs. There is potentially a huge cost for those organizations who are viewed as perpetuating the status quo. There have been law suits filed against companies for discrimination in their hiring practices.

Civil rights suits have also successfully challenged the many aspects of the merit civil service system which some police agencies use in their selection process (Moran, 274, 287). These costly litigations may have been avoided if these agencies had a more diverse work force. Monetary cost could be minimal and as simple as posters and brochures in minority neighborhoods and the assistance of community leaders. The benefit to the community and to the organizations far out weighs any cost expended.

### **Conclusion/Recommendations**

The purpose of this research has been to explore the benefits of a cultural diverse work force for a modern police agency. This report is intended to explore the best recruiting methods for achieving cultural diversity, and this research will serve as a guide to other police agencies or business that desire to diversify their work forces.

Despite making up a large portion of the population, minorities are not well represented on most police departments. Historically they were excluded because of their differences and now the efforts by some agencies to recruit and hire them has had little impact. Despite the relative small number of minorities employed by the police agencies, there have been some very real benefits to the communities and the police agency due in part to their employment. It is this researchers intent to attempt to discover if there are recruiting methods that may be beneficial to those agencies who are not making much progress with their recruiting efforts. As stated in this research, the work force is

changing culturally and will be mostly minorities and women by the year 2010 (Loden, cover). Businesses and police agencies tend to have a higher approval rating when their work forces resemble the communities they service.

The conclusions and recommendations this researcher has come to is simply this. There is a relevant and viable business reason for seeking the good will of the communities served by the respective agency. Having a culturally diverse work force generates good will. For those agencies having trouble recruiting, it is very important to seek assistance from the community leaders and to recruit at those institutions where there is the most likelihood of contacting the most qualified applicants. BY using recruiters who are sincere in their desire to work toward a cultural diverse work force, the chances of success are much greater. There may also be some benefit in recruiting in plain clothes rather than in uniform. The military bases have always been occupied by a high number of racially diverse individuals. For those agencies who have been having trouble recruiting, it is very important to seek the aid of minority community leaders. The end result should be a organization that more closely mirrors the community culturally and one that enjoys an improved relation with the community. Although progress may be slow, the benefits are worth striving for and these methods should assist your agency in moving toward workforce diversity.

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