

The Bill Blackwood  
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Minority Advancement in Law Enforcement

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by  
Kenneth R. Perry

Fort Bend Independent School District  
Police Department  
Sugar Land, Texas  
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## **Abstract**

Minority advancement came to the forefront with other issues of race relations within the civil rights movement. Now, law enforcement agencies are faced with an ever increasing diverse minority population. How the agencies interact with and incorporate these different groups within their ranks can impact the community's image of that agency. The lack of available material dealing specifically with this subject shows there is a need for further research in this area.

In researching "The Advancement of Minorities in Law Enforcement", the author reviews past and present changes in society, with its increasing number and diverse minority population and its affect on law enforcement hiring and promotion practices. By reviewing law enforcement departments of large urban areas and smaller agencies can benefit from their success and avoid litigation and conflict within the community.

This paper includes the comparison of the leadership within different agencies, their advancement through the ranks and a comparison of the factors that helped their advancement. Statistical data is provided that examines the number of years of service and education level of command staff and supervisors of all ethnic groups and gives the results to show what role these two factors have in advancing one's career in law enforcement.

Finally the author discusses what he believes are the barriers and opportunities facing minorities as they decide on law enforcement as a career and choose to advance through its' ranks.

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## **Introduction**

This project will examine the representation and promotion of minorities in law enforcement. The communities that law enforcement serves are becoming more diverse. As an institution funded by the public and existing for the benefit of the entire community, it is important that law enforcement be representative of that community. Agencies representing a diverse population should strive to reflect that community by including minorities in varying positions of leadership. Therefore, it is important that minorities have opportunities for employment and advancement in those institutions they help to fund through taxation.

The purpose of this project is to examine the opportunity for career advancement of minorities in law enforcement. Therefore, it is necessary to examine different views and ideas of leadership and other personnel in law enforcement to determine if barriers exist. By also examining the hiring and promotion procedures of other law enforcement agencies, barriers that affect minority advancement can be identified and solutions formulated.

In looking at this subject, a review of journals, government documents, statistics, other police agency's policies and procedures will be done. Along with this, interviews with police personnel and minority police unions will also be conducted.

In preparing this research, it is believed that minority advancement in law enforcement is affected by different factors. Some of those factors will be education, the minority population of the community, the number of minority applicants and the actual number of minorities hired. It is also believed that the size of a law enforcement agency will be a factor in the number of minorities in leadership positions.

This research will benefit all public entities and help them prepare for an increasingly diverse minority population. Once barriers to minority advancement are identified and solutions found, law enforcement agencies and other public entities can examine the research and monitor its own progress, identify common barriers and utilize common solutions. More specifically, Fort Bend LS.D. Police Department can examine the findings to help develop future departmental policies and procedures to enhance minority representation throughout all levels of the department. Having minority officers at different levels within law enforcement organizations, will create a greater sensitivity and understanding of different cultures and enhance cooperation between the agency and the community.

### **Review of Literature**

In researching, Minority Advancement in Law Enforcement, it is necessary to review a brief history of changes in agencies as they employed more minorities. Adams, et al., v. City of Chicago is an example of litigation that occurred when African Americans and Hispanic officers of the police department felt promotional practices of the department discriminated against them based on their race. This case documents the plaintiffs successful litigation and the court's action to effect changes, with the city adopting changes that increased minority promotion. This case also demonstrates that a review of department's policies is necessary to ensure that those changes are continued, as demonstrated by the complaint beginning in 1973 and grievances documented in 1979, 1987, 1992 and 1994.

Although a police department may have diversity within its ranks that doesn't always mean equity with the supervisory positions. C. J. Chivers in an article for The

Blues, 4/2/01, documents the increase of minority officers in the New York City Police Department. Hispanics, women and black women numbers have increased, while the number of black males has decreased. His article focuses on the decline of black males within the department and especially in its command positions from 1995 - 1999. He also discusses the department's promotional system as a common cause for the lack of representation of minorities within elite units and command positions.

In a comparative article, 4/4/01-NYT, C. J. Chivers examines the Boston Police Department. He shows how the police department, under a federal court's decree since 1973, can by its leadership, have blacks within its ranks, proportionate with that of the city residents. The article discusses some changes mandated by the court and changes that were implemented by the City itself and how these changes benefited the department, the citizenry and other minority applicants.

Further documentation of how litigation brings changes within police departments often comes from newspapers. The News Journal of the University of Delaware published two such articles. One by staff reporter Steven Church, 1/12/02, which briefly reports on the United States EEOC finding the state police discriminated against a black trooper who was fired in 1995. How the state police are facing federal civil rights investigation and an U. S. Justice Department lawsuit. The article reports on the involvement of the State's Senator and the State's Governor and how the department has lost exclusive control over policies for hiring, firing and disciplining officers. The second article listed under Local

Opinion by the paper, 10/1/02, briefly reports on the latest ruling United States EEOC against Delaware's State Troopers, which ruled in favor of another black trooper. The

article also credited changes within the department to a change in its leadership.

Although females are no longer a minority within the general population, the same cannot be said about their numbers within the ranks of police departments. In their journal, *Race, Ethnicity and Female Cop: Differential Patterns of Representation*, Zhao, Jihong; Herbst, Leigh; Lovrich, and Nicholas, July 2001, "examines factors hypothesized to be associated with the employment of female police officers in US municipal law enforcement agencies", examining three primary groups of females, whites, blacks and Hispanics. In their research, they examine two types of categories that they believe have an affect on female representation, the influence of organizational environmental of city government and the influence of internal organizational factors. Environmental factors include city population, minority representation, regional effects and female representation in municipal government. Institutional factors include, affirmative action; percentage change in sworn officers, (department growth means more opportunity), and percentage of female officers-lagged effect, (series of incremental changes). While discussing these factors their journal also gives percentages of female officers from samples of large cities for three years, 1993 -1996.

Newspaper articles that reported favorably on police departments hiring and promotions were also used in this research. In an article for the North County Times, Jo Moreland, 5/29/01 reports on the improvement of the Oceanside Police department hiring of minorities. The article gives statistics that documents the improvements and credits the department success with its cooperation with the local NAACP. The States News of Michigan State University in two separate articles one by Amanda Cuda, 11/3/98, minority supervisors in the police departments of MSU, Lansing and East Lansing,

Michigan. The other by Shannon Murphy, 4/25/02, briefly documents the female police chief of the Lansing Township, 24 years of advancement in the department. It discusses females rising numbers, when they began to join the force and the obstacles overcome.

Lastly, police departments themselves give press releases to the public to publicize their diversity. In a press release, 4/5/00, from its media relation section, the Los Angeles Police Department announced the appointment of its first African-American female Captain. It also gives brief statistics on African American females' rise through the ranks; female officers within the department and history of how long females have been within the ranks of the department. In a letter to the Baltimore news paper, The Sun, Maryland State Police Superintendent, Col. David B. Mitchell, 7/29/00, while defending the department against racial profiling on traffic stops, gives statistics of minorities with the department and the rising number of African Americans troopers.

### **Methodology**

In order to conduct this research, this paper will review news reports, journals and government statistics to analyze the hiring patterns of law enforcement. The news reports and journals will focus on hiring and diversity of various police departments around the United States. This will help established a brief history of what caused police departments and other law enforcement agencies to make changes within their ranks. The statistical data will focus on law enforcement in the state of Texas from cities with a population of more than 250,000. Examining the total numbers of minority officers within law enforcement and comparing them with the number of minority supervisors will help determine if there is a correlation between the two.



This research will also utilize two surveys prepared by its writer in order to refine the statistical data gathered. The surveys will include smaller law enforcement agencies in rural areas and those agencies surrounding the Houston metropolitan area. One survey will compare the total number of sworn personnel and the ethnicity of the supervisors, and it will ask for opinions/reasons of the department's chief or designee for the department's success or lack of success in hiring and promoting minorities. The second survey will be for the commander, chief or their designee in order which will include interviews of those persons to determine if there are correlations between the advancement of ethnic majority and minority head of law enforcement agencies.

By comparing the articles, journals, statistics, survey data and interviewing various persons in command positions, this writer hopes to find common policies, procedures and practices by both law enforcement commanders and personnel which aid in the advancement of minority officer.

## **Findings**

In researching this topic two surveys were conducted, the first examined the ethnic and gender makeup of the departments surveyed, (see attachments for copy of entire survey). A total of 69 law enforcement agencies were requested to complete this survey, with 35% responding. That 35% represented 24 departments with a total of 1,050 sworn personnel. The ethnic and gender makeup of these sworn personnel is as follows, white males - 69%, white females - 5%, black males 5% black females - 0.86%, Hispanic males - 18%, Hispanic females - 1.28% and other 0.48%. Below is a comparison of the Agencies surveyed, with the Texas State Police, Fort Bend ISD Police Department and departments of comparable sizes surveyed by the

## U. S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>	<u>Other</u>
Texas State Police	2,757	95%	5%	68%	10%	20%	1%
<b>Surveyed Agencies</b>	1,050	93%	7%	74%	6%	19%	1%
Bexar County Sheriff	1,315	84%	16%	34%	9%	57%	0%
Dallas Police	2,817	84%	16%	66%	21%	12%	1%
El Paso Police	1,013	91%	9%	30%	2%	66%	1%
Fort Worth Police	1,200	85%	15%	79%	11%	9%	0%
Harris County Sheriff	2,474	86%	14%	68%	20%	11%	0%
Houston Police	5,355	88%	12%	62%	19%	17%	0%
San Antonio Police	1,867	94%	6%	53%	6%	40%	0%
<b>Fort Bend ISD Police</b>	41	83%	17%	58%	20%	22%	0%

Though the agencies surveyed represented smaller departments, average size of the departments were 44 sworn personnel, together they resemble the norm. Departments with large ethnic populations compensated for those departments with few or no ethnic minorities.

In addition to the total numbers of personnel by race and gender, the first survey also requested additional information. It asks if the agency has a recruiting officer, 36% stated their department did. It also asks the number of supervisory positions within the department and the race and gender of supervisory personnel. This allows a comparison of the percentages of minorities in supervisory positions with the percentages of minority's non-supervisory positions. This portion of the survey indicates a lack of representation of ethnic minorities and women in higher level positions. The factors affecting that representation will be discussed later in the Conclusion section of this

<u>Positions</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>White male</u>	<u>White female</u>	<u>Black male</u>	<u>Black female</u>	<u>Hispanic male</u>	<u>Hispanic female</u>	<u>Other</u>
Asst-Chief	14	93%	7%	-----	-----	-----	-----	----
-Captain	14	93%	-----	7%	-----	-----	-----	----
Lieutenant	65	85%	5 %	1. 5%	-----	7%	1. 5%	----
Sergeant	123	82%	5%	2%	-----	11%	-----	----
Corporal	62	81%	6%	-----	-----	13%	-----	----

The second survey exams the individual peace officer asking three main questions. The number of years the Individual has been a peace officer, the number with the current department and the number years the individual has been in his/her position. The survey was completed by a majority of those individuals that participated in the first survey with the addition of 36 Chiefs of Police who didn't participate in the first survey. The results of those that participated in the first survey are shown below. It indicates the percentage numbers of persons in each rank that participated in the survey and the average of their total years in each category.

Position	Total %	Years Peace Officer	Years with Department	Years in Current Position
Asst. Chief	9%	18	7	3
Captain	9%	21	20	2
Lieutenant	22%	18	15	2
Sergeant	52%	15	13	4
Corporal	8%	12	9	3

The results of the survey of Chiefs are examined differently than that of the command staff survey shown above. It still has the three categories of years of service, but instead of positions, the survey list their number of years as a peace officer, starting at 10 years or less and ending at 60years or less. It then shows the average percentages of Chiefs in each category next to their years of service. The survey also shows their average level of education percentages.

Years of Service	Percentages of Chiefs	Yrs/Department	Yrs as Chief
10yrs or Less	8%	53%	69%
20yrs or Less	25%	28%	17%
30yrs or Less	47%	19%	14%
40yrs or Less	14%	-----	-----
50yrs or Less	3%	-----	-----
60yrs or Less	3%	-----	-----

#### Education Percentages

Graduate Degree	Degree	College Hours	High School / GED
14%	31%	22%	33%

## **Discussions/Conclusions**

While researching this subject it became apparent that there wasn't a lot of material written specifically about it. It then became necessary to examine the factors that have an affect on minority advancement within law enforcement. Those factors include, litigation, recruiting and hiring, size and location of the departments, training and education, years of service as a peace officer, years of service with a department and finally, the leadership of a department. Upon examining the factors it became apparent that they were interwoven with each relying on and having a significant affect on one another.

As shown in the review of literature, litigation was a significant factor once the civil rights movement began. Federal Courts were instrumental in forcing agencies to hire and promote minorities to remedy past discrimination against them. Although litigation carries a negative connotation, it highlights another factor, recruitment and hiring. The first step towards advancement in law enforcement is to be hired to an entry-level position. In the first survey conducted by this author participants were asked if they had a recruitment officer and whether they were having success hiring minorities. The few that had recruiting officers were the same agencies that stated they had success in hiring minorities. Reasons given for being unsuccessful were location, size of the department, and salaries, while others stated they didn't know why they weren't successful. Are these reasons valid, in most cases I believe they are. Not many officers coming out of the academy want to go a small rural department. Larger departments are generally more attractive to new recruits, have more specialized divisions and generally have recruiting officers and advertisement to promote ,their department.

In a survey of the Houston Police Department, (HPD), (Michelle Allen, Recruiting a

Qualified Police Officer, July, 2002, Table III page 10), three main sources were tied at 28% as contributing to the officer's employment with HPD. They were, an officer already employed with HPD, college or high school recruitment and the newspaper. The number one reason given for choosing HPD at 40% was the size of the agency, salary and benefits was second with 36%. In the same research Michelle Allen conducted the same survey with the Sugar Land Police Department, (SLPD), which is located on the west side of Houston, Texas, has a population of approximately 68,000 with approx 130 sworn police personnel. The results of that survey were slightly different and may explain why some departments may be unsuccessful with recruiting minorities without realizing the reason. In that survey, (Table I page 8), salary and benefits were number one with 45% and agency size was number two with 31 % responding as the reason they chose SLPD. A close third was the reputation of the department at 29%, the most telling difference was in the results of the Sources Contributing to Present Employment section of the survey.

The number one contributing source given by respondents at 47% was an officer employed with the agency, (SLPD), the second contributing source, friend or relative, at 33%. Combine the two figures with the 29% of reputation of the department and a reason for a small, rural agency success or lack of success may be found. In this researcher's opinion a smaller or rural agency that has a small minority population or a perceived reputation of not hiring minorities won't receive qualified applicants. Even if the agency is perceived as being okay, but the town or community is perceived or has a reputation of being hostile to minorities that department's chances of hiring minorities is slim. Simply stated, who would want to put up with the perceived hassle or hostility when there are larger more integrated departments willing to hire minorities with better salaries and

greater opportunities for advancement. Areas with a large minority population tend to be more politically active and have representatives of their ethnicity in local government to petition for more equity in public institutions, which includes law enforcement. Another avenue for minorities in large metropolitan areas is the Constable office. A county with a large minority population living in close proximity of one another generally elects a Constable of their own ethnicity. Examples of this is Harris County's precincts 6 and 7 minority Constables and Fort Bend county's precinct 2 which also has a ethnic minority as Constable that was elected because of the large minority population within their precinct. In this researcher's opinion they are generally viewed as being highly politicized and advancement limited to how much political influence you have to help the Constable's re-election. But even these agencies have limits on the advancement opportunities of minorities, which leads into other factors of advancement, education and training.

A friend of mine recently applied for a chiefs position at a historically black university, even though he has a college degree and is working on or completed his graduate degree he wasn't accepted as a final applicant because he hadn't gone to the FBI academy or the LEMIT Leadership Command College and was told the University wanted someone who had graduated from one or the other. This is an example of the level of education and training, communities expect of their top leaders. Another good example is the mayor of Houston, Texas Lee P. Brown, who was once the police chief of Houston, 1982-1990. Although there were other political factors that played a part his becoming police chief, the chief of Houston is appointed by the Mayor, in the opinion of this researcher the community wouldn't have accepted then Mayor Katy Whitmire's

choice if his credentials weren't so impressive. He has a Bachelor in Criminology, a Masters in Criminology, and a Masters in Sociology with a Doctorate in Criminology. As shown in the results of the chiefs surveyed in this research 14% has a Masters and 31% has a Bachelors Degree, 21 % has college hours and 33% are High School graduates. While these statistics may lead a reader to believe a person can advance to the top level position of a department without a college degree, it is important that the reader doesn't over look another statistic of the survey, the years of service as a peace officer.

The results of that portion of the survey showed 67% of the chiefs have served twenty or more years as peace officer, with an additional 25% having served 20 years or less and more than 11 years, which is a total of 92%. This is why years *of* service with the department are listed as a factor of minority advancement. Most of the departments that completed the first survey only require a high school education as one of their criteria for applicants, so it is possible for persons without college hours to become a peace officer. But minorities with or without college degrees that desire to advance in law enforcement must understand that time and experience will be factors affecting that advancement. The percentages of officers in command position that completed the second survey indicate that those persons in the higher ranks on average have a higher number of years of service as a peace officer and years with their current department.

In conclusion the researcher of this paper has shown that there are several factors that contribute or hinder the advancement of minorities in law enforcement. This research has demonstrated how all of the factors are interwoven and how each factor benefits and leads to another. But the one factor that binds and brings the others to fruition is Leadership. It is Leadership that gives people the opportunity to apply and compete with

others without litigation or courts forcing them. It is Leadership that directs the recruiting and hiring of persons with diverse backgrounds and ethnicity. It is Leadership that ensures the reputation of the department welcomes all who qualify and desire to become a part of and advance in it. It is Leadership that ensures the availability of training to all within the ranks of the department. While conducting the first survey at Module II at Texas Women University, the Chief of Texarkana ISD, Todd Warren, (July 25, 02), returned a completed copy to this researcher. Upon looking at it I noticed the department had nine sworn peace officers, four were white and five were black of which one was female. During a break I asked him how he, a young, white police chief in a small town, was able to find and hire that many blacks, without hesitation he said "I go out and actively recruit them, " Our community is about 50% black and I want the department to reflect the community we serve", **Leadership.**



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## Survey for Command Staff

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Years as a Peace Officer: \_\_\_\_\_ Years with present department: \_\_\_\_\_

Position/Rank: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of years at present rank: \_\_\_\_\_

Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Education Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly catalog by years your advancement to your present rank in each category that is applicable.

1. Corporal: from: \_\_\_\_\_ to: \_\_\_\_\_ total number of years: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Sergeant: from: \_\_\_\_\_ to: \_\_\_\_\_ total number of years: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Lieutenant: from: \_\_\_\_\_ to: \_\_\_\_\_ total number of year: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Captain: from: \_\_\_\_\_ to: \_\_\_\_\_ total number of years: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Major: from: \_\_\_\_\_ to: \_\_\_\_\_ total number of years: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Asst.Chief: from: \_\_\_\_\_ to: \_\_\_\_\_ total number of years: \_\_\_\_\_
- 7.Chief: from: \_\_\_\_\_ to: \_\_\_\_\_ total number of years: \_\_\_\_\_

Finally, briefly discuss the factors that you believe contributed to your advancement to your present position.