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An Analysis of Law Enforcement Recruitment by
the Greenville Police Department

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ABSTRACT

The idea that the recruitment and selection of police officers is related to police minority community relations is generally accepted. The recruitment and selection of police officers is an area that all law enforcement agencies have experience in and are likely engaged in on a continuing basis. The minority community has long held that it is a very important issue that they be represented in the racial/ethnic mix of their law enforcement agencies.

To determine if police officer recruiting and selection is related to police-minority community relations, a review of research revolving around these subjects was completed. This research found that much of the literature on these subjects was generated when there were strong beliefs that college educated police officer candidates would be most likely to improve police-minority community relations. As this subject was revisited over three decades it became apparent that this was not going to be the solution. A sample of Texas law enforcement agencies were surveyed for their activities in regards to recruiting of police officer candidates. A survey of citizens of the City of Greenville, Texas was conducted to determine their opinion on issues surrounding police officer recruiting and minority community relations.

It is concluded that police officer recruiting and selection and minority community relations are related. To achieve the goal of reflecting the racial/ethnic mix of the community police agencies must use all community resources to locate and select recruits.

Introduction

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The City of Greenville has received repeated claims by the minority community that good minority relations are not practiced by the Greenville Police Department. The National Association for The Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and other minority community leaders have been the most vocal in criticizing employment practices, perceived lack of concern for crimes committed against minorities, and the general state of minority community relations. The central problem this analysis will address is the recruitment and selection of sworn peace officers at the City of Greenville Police Department. Recruitment and selection is a relevant issue at most law enforcement agencies.

The purpose of this analysis is to discover whether minority relations and the recruitment and selection of sworn peace officers are related. It is hypothesized that the two areas are linked in ways it would not be prudent or efficient to ignore. Good minority relations have not historically existed and the City of Greenville Police Department has participated in little focused recruiting regarding racial/ethnic minorities and women. It is to be determined whether a profile of an ideal sworn officer candidate can be gleaned from the citizenry and other interested groups. Information derived from this study may facilitate the development of a recruitment policy by the City of Greenville Police Department that impacts departmental culture by formalizing each employee's role as an ambassador of the department and establishing a method to build rapport with the community by involvement in the recruitment of their peace officers in all areas that civil service law is silent or no prohibition exists.

Research for this analysis will be gathered from surveys of minority community leaders and women, surveys with City government leaders, elected City officials, members of a variety of local social organizations and members of other law enforcement agencies. Observations will be compared and compiled in such a way as to lend the information a partial profile of a peace officer candidate. A survey of law enforcement agencies in the geographic area and like-sized law enforcement agencies will be conducted. Law enforcement agencies with active recruitment efforts will be surveyed and solicited for recruitment methods for comparison to the City of Greenville Police Department recruiting/selection methods.

The analysis primarily aims to determine whether there is a link between recruitment and minority relations. Another specific outcome of this research will be the identification of recruitment tools, skills and methods necessary to elicit interest in becoming a member of the City of Greenville Police Department.

The City of Greenville Police Department will benefit from this research and effected by the conclusions. The conclusions from this analysis will give the Greenville Police Department a template that can be adapted for departmental cultural changes in similar areas of concern. Issues of recruitment have far-reaching implications for the selection of peace officers that reflect the values, norms, expectations, roles, and needs of the citizens of the City of Greenville.

While researching the literature associated with the recruiting of police officers and the impact it might have on community relations it was found that this has been a reoccurring theme of research for several decades. Many researchers worldwide have identified that the recruitment and selection of police officers and the need for better community relations are quite possibly linked and require reassessing & frequently. This reassessment is moving forward with the state of policing today. Involving the community in recruiting its police officers is becoming a need just as the need for community policing has become accepted.

Research has noted that in plural societies such as ours the need for police officers to reflect the racial/ethnic make-up of the population they serve will result in better community relations. An excellent example of a plural is Great Britain, where The Home Secretary Jack Straw says, "Every force had been set a target for recruiting black and Asian officers which was in proportion to the ethnic mix of the local population." (Hopkins, 1999). The recruitment of women seems in a category by itself in some discussions and included in some discussions when minority recruiting is reviewed. In the law enforcement workplace women are a minority and the necessity for their recruitment exists.

Past experience has identified many obstacles in the recruiting of minority police officer candidates. Education has been a central point that research into this issue has led to. For many years law enforcement has been striving to increase the minimum

education level for entry-level police officers. Law enforcement agencies have looked to college campuses for a variety of reasons. There is a strong belief that police officers should be required to have at least a bachelor's degree. This idea has generally not been implemented. (California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training, 1975) The Kansas City Police Department took the initiative to begin a cadet program in 1994 that paid for two years of college for minority recruits.

In response to increase minority participation in the public sector the federal, state and local governments implemented affirmative action programs and varying degrees of success have been reported. Affirmative action has been primarily focused on racial discrimination and on the legal mechanisms designed to force an increase in minority participation. (Maldonado, 1983). Many affirmative action plans have been short sighted and conceived for expediency, and have resulted in both greater organizational conflict and allegations of lower quality personnel. (police Executive Research Forum, 1991). Affirmative action plans did not obtain the goals that law enforcement hopes now to obtain. Law enforcement needs to increase minority participation. The need has evolved from complying with a court mandate or law to a need to be a reflection of the community served. Law enforcement agencies are realizing now that many of the problems related to affirmative action could have been avoided by better planning, flexibility in recruitment and selection and innovation in personnel management. (police Executive Research Forum, 1991). Police executives are taking proactive, goal-oriented approaches in recruiting minorities. The benefits are better community relations and improved policing of their respective communities.

The selection process is an area that must be considered as part of the recruiting process. The selection process has to be fair and must include the greatest number of potential candidates. The selection process has undergone scrutiny over the years and even now receives frequent review. Selection standards must be developed before recruiting in order to identify the potential recruits. Some selection standards can unnecessarily block recruitment so it is imperative that selection standards be realistic.

Education seems central to much of the research that has been conducted in the area of recruitment and minority community relations.

College campus recruiting has long been seen as a possible solution to some of the problems that law enforcement has faced in reducing prejudice within its ranks. Studies have cast doubt on the idea that recruiting police from middle-class, college educated, and minority group members would reduce prejudice. These same studies suggest that prejudices often find support in the "street experiences" of a police recruit. It is also believed that past attention to class-related recruitment patterns and limited educational backgrounds of many police officers, as an explanation of racial prejudice among police has been overestimated, is entirely misleading, and may well be incorrect. (Ford, Meeker & Zeller, 1975).

Some factors make college campus recruiting, particularly making a college education a requirement, discriminatory for minorities. (police Executive Research Forum, 1991). While an education in our society is generally viewed favorably it can be out of the reach of some minorities. There are few reasons but they are indeed stumbling blocks for those people who are not part of the majority culture that has the most experience in obtaining those goals. Factors that make college inaccessible to some minorities are finance related and the difficulty of entering a culture many have not historically been a part of. It would be, therefore, discriminatory to look primarily to

college campuses to recruit minority candidates if the minority students were not there in sufficient numbers. A 1987 survey commissioned by the Police Executive Research Foundation found that college-educated minorities are less likely to apply to be police officers if the positions do not require a college education. (Philadelphia Police Department Governance Study, no date). Many small cities, when recruiting college educated applicants, find themselves incapable of offering salaries that compete with larger law enforcement agencies or even with other employment opportunities. (International City Management Association, 1974).

In Kansas City, the police department's bold plan for paying for two years of college for minority recruits had 51 applicants and 22 were accepted. Of the five remaining, one has become an officer, another is in the police academy and three remain in college. Some call the plan by the Kansas City Police Department a failure. The Kansas City Police Department has found that its attempt to recruit minorities at job fairs on college campuses has not been effective. (Vendel 1999).

Captain Vince Ortega, Kansas City Police Department, who is responsible for affirmative action recruiting, suggests that the department's recruiting effort would be improved by formal training for recruiters and getting community policing officers and community members involved in the process. (Vendel, 1999). Many law enforcement agencies are involved with community policing and use the premise to nurture positive change in their communities.

The research question and the purpose of this analysis is to discover whether minority relations and the recruitment and selection of sworn peace officers are related.

It is hypothesized that the recruitment and selection of sworn police officers do impact police - minority community relations and by involving the community in the recruitment and selection of police officers it will achieve the goal of more closely reflecting the racial/ethnic mix of the community. It is further hypothesized that if the police and community are not successful to this end, then their success will be found in recruiting and selecting qualified candidates to serve as police officers.

The first instrument used in the method of inquiry was a questionnaire survey of mid-level and upper management personnel from law enforcement agencies in the state of Texas represented in attendance at the Leadership and Command College. Those surveyed represented the diversity of demographics in the state of Texas. The response rate was 1000%.

The second instrument used in the method of inquiry was a telephone or personal survey of citizens of the City of Greenville, Texas. City officials, both elected and appointed, minority-community leaders, civic leaders, and women were surveyed.

The information obtained from the first instrument was analyzed by tabulating the response(s) to each question. The tabulated responses were compared to determine the current state of recruiting in the surveyed departments. The information obtained from the second instrument was analyzed by tabulating the response to the questions to determine if the hypothesis is or is not supported by community opinions.

The review of literature identified previous research into recruitment and selection of police officers and how it relates to police-minority community relations. This review of previous and current research showed that since the 1970's the need for the police to reflect the minority population of their communities was recognized as an important step in improving police-minority community relations. Some of the research reviewed introduced several ideas that revolved around higher education.

One of the ideas was that higher education could possibly reduce the amount of prejudice that police recruits brought with them to the workplace or community. There came the theory that reducing prejudice would improve police-minority community relations if those persons recruited came from college-educated, middle-class or minority candidates.

The recruiting of police officer candidates from college campuses was determined to be discriminatory because minorities were not sufficiently represented there. It also learned that seeking minority candidates on a college campus could be discriminatory because of the difficulties faced by many minorities in achieving their goals of a higher education.

There is a demand for college-educated minorities. These college-educated minorities are in high demand as police officer candidates but it was found that smaller cities, especially, have difficulty in attracting these candidates because they cannot compete in the salary arena with other larger agencies and with other employment opportunities.

This research also found that the selection process must be constructed in such a way that no barriers exist that block minorities or women from their entrance into law enforcement. All selection processes and methods must be reviewed. Research also found that the processes and methods used for recruitment and selection should be given frequent review.

Affirmative action was viewed as a failure in regards to satisfying the goals that law enforcement has today. Those goals are to better reflect the community make-up and improving minority-community relations. The research conducted over the past three decades is leading researchers and recruiters to conclude or admit that because of the importance of police-minority relations and the move toward community policing that the resource for the police recruits is the community.

From the survey of the police departments it was found that one-third of them had a formal recruiting policy. This same survey identifies that two-thirds of the departments describe their recruitment of women as active. All but one agency reported that there has been no demonstrated concern or interest by community members in regards to the recruitment of police officers. These departments as a whole appear to have moved or are moving towards implementing or improving their efforts to recruit minority candidates.

The balance of this survey will be used to identify methods of recruiting that can be used by police departments and communities to locate candidates and to aid in the implementation of recruiting policies.

The survey of Greenville citizens revealed that the majority of the respondents described the state of police-minority community relations as fair to good. It was also learned that the idea that college educated police officers will improve police-minority relations was held by all but one respondent. The same response was found when these citizens were asked if recruiting minority police officer candidates will improve police minority community relations.

Further analysis found that the citizens were equally divided on whether citizen involvement in recruiting and the state of police-minority relations were related. This same survey revealed that the majority believed that active recruitment of all qualified police officer candidates will improve police-minority relations. What the term "qualified" meant was not learned or solicited. Further research could determine the meaning both to police employers and the community.

As the findings relate to the Greenville Police Department the outcome seems to be somewhere in the future and dependent on many sets of conditions that are subject to external and internal factors not considered or where control will be limited. This research, as an issue, will continue to exist and this is but one step on the way to improve police-community relations.

It was also found that the recruitment and selection of police officer candidates solicited by the use of a proactive recruitment policy, that uses as a crux the idea that police officer candidates should be reflective of community desires, will not immediately resolve the issue of minority and women being hired in sufficient numbers.

The Greenville Police Department has been openly criticized over the past several years that it does not practice good minority community relations. The National Association for The Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) have been the most vocal in criticizing employment practices and the general state of minority community relations. The purpose of this study has been to determine if there is a relation to the recruitment and selection of police officer candidates and minority community relations. It was hypothesized that there is a link between the recruitment and selection of police officer candidates and the state of minority community relations

It is concluded from the findings that the problem of recruiting and selecting police officer candidates is an issue that most law enforcement agencies and communities are still working on to find a format that will achieve the goal of making law enforcement agencies reflect the racial/ethnic mix of the communities they serve.

The conclusions drawn from reviewing the past and current work of others on this or similar problems have seemed to overwhelmingly centered on the college campus and the recruit candidates that find be found there. The college campus for some researchers have been considered the ripe field to recruit college-educated men and women that because of their education would be better equipped to work in a diverse community and least likely to bring prejudice with them that would interfere with police-minority community relations. It was concluded that for the small agency it was difficult to attract candidates, especially minority candidates, because of better financial opportunities and professional growth in larger agencies or in the private sector.

It was concluded from the survey of citizens reported as findings that many of them held a college education to be a positive factor that could improve police-minority community relations as well as recruiting minority candidates. Here again there are economic factors that small agencies cannot overcome easily.

The findings of the research do support the hypothesis that minority community relations can be improved by the recruitment and selection of police recruits when the community is involved in efforts to locate these potential candidates.

Many departments are involved in some level of community policing. Involving citizens in the recruitment of their police officers will satisfy some of the goals of community policing. The efforts to recruit officers via the community can be a small part of each community policing effort made or can be an effort on its own. No research or reports were found where this type of recruitment effort specifically improved community relations but the research did conclude that the recruitment and selection of police officers did have an impact (which can be positive) on police-minority community relations.

The limitations of this study that have hindered the study have been identified to some degree. Research experience and the magnitude of this study have hindered this study. The amount of research and information on the subject of this study that already exists led the research into areas that were not the focus but apparently became the focus of research for the past three decades.

Police-minority community relations is relevant to all law enforcement agencies because most agencies police minorities in their communities. Many complaints

come to police agencies from the minority community that could be reduced if those minorities were at least represented in their police departments. A sincere effort by police agencies to recruit either the best qualified candidates or minority candidates can improve the relationship with the minority community. Improved relations would mean better service and better law enforcement.

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