

LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

A REPORT WITH RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE
INTEREST OF FEMALES IN A LAW ENFORCEMENT CAREER
AND HOW THIS EFFECTS RECRUITING

A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
MODULE II

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I.

INTRODUCTION

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Over the last one hundred years, society's attitude toward women working in previously considered "male occupations" has changed drastically. This, along with successful litigation on the rights of women to secure this type of employment, has caused the increase in the number of females filling sworn positions within police agencies.¹ Despite these developments, there still has been a great amount of resistance within the law enforcement community to admittance of females into the field.

Previous research has focused on the attitude of male police officers toward females, the perceptions of college students concerning women as law enforcement officers, the change in society's attitude toward women, reasons for women entering law enforcement, and stereotyping of female police officers. Since law enforcement occasionally requires physical confrontations and the protection of others, certain capabilities must be met by all law enforcement officers.

Other areas of concern for potential applicants are psychological well being, reading/writing aptitude, and satisfactory background investigation. These areas contribute to the acceptable law enforcement officer candidate. If we assume that the other areas are all equal, attitude toward the job must be defined among the population.

The accepted standard for minority and female

employment within a law enforcement agency is in proportion ²
to the community service area. As most agencies serve
communities which are typically 50% female, is this a
reasonable goal considering the potential interest difference
between males and females?

This research project contains two principal components:

1. A literature review
2. A survey administered to 287 subjects

The primary goal of this project is to determine the interest
of females in a law enforcement career. This may provide
additional information such as:

1. Are women less interested than men
in a law enforcement career,
2. Does their interest change according to
their race,
3. Does their interest change according to
the annual income range of their family
of origin,
4. Does their interest change based on their
perception of advancement within
a law enforcement agency?

If a significant difference is suggested, how does this
difference affect recruiting and how can we target recruiting
to compensate for the disparity?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature shows that the role of women in law enforcement has evolved over the years from that of a social worker who handled female and child victims and offenders to that of a full fledged law enforcement officer whose mandate is to enforce the law, maintain order, and provide for the public's welfare.³

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, municipal police departments opposed using women as police officers with full authority. Instead, police departments afforded women only limited authority. This was partially in response to a growing women's movement that successfully encouraged police departments to use female officers to handle matters involving women and children.⁴ Early positions were in roles subordinate to men. In the first half of the nineteenth century, women were limited primarily to matron positions.⁵⁶

The earliest recorded appointment of a female police officer was not until 1893 when Los Angeles hired a female,⁷ but this was the exception. Although during World Wars I and II female officers replaced male officers who were in the military, it was not until the Civil Rights and Women's Movement of the 1960's that a substantial number of female officers began to perform the full range of police duties. Furthermore, the number and percentage of female officers

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increased significantly only after the passage of the 1972 Equal Employment Opportunity Act, which prohibited the use of sexist and blatantly discriminating personnel practices.⁸

In a 1982 study cited by Bell, there were many cases where it was necessary to initiate legal action in order for females to get assigned to patrol or be promoted. In 1979, although 43% of the labor force in the United States were women,⁹ 70% of all women in the work force held "stereotypically" female jobs, such as nurses, teachers and secretaries.¹⁰ Berg and Budnick suggest three theories of explanations for why women have remained in these stereotypical occupations or, in general, why females in policing are continuing to struggle toward equality.

First, there is a structural-functional approach which suggests that society consists of interrelated parts each performing some function which together maintain the system. From this perspective, women performed the function of raising children, maintaining a household and teaching basic social values. Conversely, men were to provide for and protect the family and similarly made political and economic decisions in the community.¹²

Second, there is a theory which offers an explanation for gender disparities in occupations known as the "conflict theory". Here, women hold lower status positions because they have been exploited by men who have traditionally held power positions in society. Men who made the laws regulated the rights of women with regard to voting, income, property

ownership and even birth control.

Finally, a third explanation is "gender labeling". According to this theory, individuals are labeled at birth as "male" or "female". Throughout early childhood this is reinforced by society and family. Little boys are given trucks, baseballs, and toy guns, whereas little girls are given dolls and cooking toys.¹⁴ Just as the labor force was once male dominated, law enforcement continues to be classified as "man's work."¹⁵ This labeling continues to prevent many women from entering male dominated occupations.¹⁵

A major obstacle for women in law enforcement to overcome is the "police personality". These characteristics include a desire to be in control of situations, an authoritarian attitude, assertiveness, and physical aggressiveness. All of these represent traditionally male stereotypical traits.¹⁶ In order to gain acceptance and trust from their peers, many female officers attempt to emulate male officers. This is commonly called "defeminization".¹⁷

Women may choose to assume traditional feminine roles while working in law enforcement, yet by accepting these roles, women effectively limit their careers and virtually rule out the likelihood of promotion. On the other hand, women who do emulate male officers are frequently seen as a career threat by male officers.¹⁸

Perhaps a reaction to this threat, according to Gross, is to ridicule defeminized female officers by characterizing

them as "bitchy", "castrating", or even "lesbian". In Gross' 1981 study, female academy recruits that displayed masculine rather than feminine mannerisms are more successful.¹⁹

Unlike men, female recruits are faced with several serious decisions. They must decide whether they desire to accept the traditional subordinate role of females, and in doing so limit their career potential, or, whether they are willing to adopt various masculine characteristics which will allow them to pursue more extensive careers, but potentially enlist resentment from their male counterparts.²⁰

The mere presence of women in law enforcement does not alleviate difficulty of women entering the profession and the frequent skepticism of others regarding the ability of women to perform line police functions.²¹ Two basic points of issues confronting women in policing are male officer attitudes toward female officers and the manner in which female officers view their roles.

According to Powers, women enter policing in search of a variety of work assignments, the nature of police work, and fair salary considerations. Women tend to not enter policing for any perceived power or prestige associated with the occupation.²³ Beginning salaries for female law enforcement officers tend to be higher than that of entry level jobs generally occupied by women.²⁴

Research by Meagher and Yentes confirmed that men and
women enter law enforcement for similar reasons, the most
prevalent being the desire to help people and the security
associated with the job of policing.²⁵

It was also noted that their female respondents
perceived that men enter policing to be part of a male
dominated occupation.²⁶

The woman who works as a peace officer must strike a
balance between femininity and competence as perceived by her
male counterpart. If she acts "too feminine", exhibiting a
need for psychological or physical protection, she will never
be accepted on an equal basis. If she tries too hard to be
competent, self reliable, independent and strong, she
threatens her femininity. There is a delicate balance
between competing and femininity which must be balanced in
order to be accepted by male counterparts.²⁷ Younger officers
were found to be more accepting of females in line functions
than the older officers.²⁸ Turko's study indicates that
while females may feel accepted, they also do not get the
respect they deserve. Many experience negative attitudes
because they are women, including, but not limited to sexual
harassment.²⁹

III. METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE

This study consists of survey results from five college in the Dallas metroplex. The subjects surveyed were students enrolled in an entry level Psychology class. A Psychology class was selected in order to obtain a reliable cross section of the population, since this course is required for most degree plans and is a popular elective course. The five colleges are located in different geographic parts of the community in an effort to draw responses from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. (See appendix ?) Of the five colleges that participated, the following number of responses resulted:

Brookhaven College	55
Cedar Valley College	90
El Centro College	33
Mountain View College	59
Richland College	50

total	287

The ages of the subjects ranged from eighteen (18) to fifty-nine (59), though the greatest majority are in the eighteen (18) to twenty-one (21) age group. Fifty-nine (59) percent of the respondents were white, twenty-eight (28) percent were Black, Six (6) percent were Hispanic, four (4) percent were Asian, and three (3) percent were classified as other. Fifty-four (54) percent of the respondents were female and forty-six (46) percent were male.

INSTRUMENTATION

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A fifteen (15) question survey was distributed to five area colleges in May, 1991 pertaining to the interest level of students in a law enforcement career. The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine the interest of females in a law enforcement career as compared to males.

The survey instrument included fixed-alternative questions, although there were some open-ended questions. The draft instrument was reviewed by four local experts and was pre-tested with twenty-one (21) subjects in the approximate age groups as those targeted for the survey. The instrument was then revised and delivered to five colleges in the Dallas area. (See appendix 2)

The surveys were administered to two-hundred eighty-seven (287) subjects by the instructors of the entry level psychology classes.

STUDY DESIGN

The following research design was selected:

1. Collect and review literature
2. Design survey instrument based on study purpose
3. Develop a systematic random sample survey
4. Contact instructors at five area colleges
5. Distribute instrument for administering
6. Collect completed surveys and enter data into personal computer
7. Perform analysis from questionnaire results
8. Draw conclusions from the analysis

DATA ANALYSIS

A total of two hundred ninety-one (291) surveys were administered, with two hundred eighty-seven (287) used. Approximatel one (1) percent were eliminated from the results due to incomplete or erroneous responses which invalidated the results. Where specific quantifiable data could be summarized in narrative form and reasonable conclusions drawn, an effort was made to do so without impacting the objectivity of the results.

IV. FINDINGS

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In general, the survey showed the following:

1. 46% of those surveyed were male.
2. 54% of those surveyed were female.
3. 12% of the males who responded expressed an interest in a law enforcement career by marking either choice four (I definitely plan on a career) or choice five (I am currently looking for a career) on question 1, part II.
4. 8% of the females who responded expressed an interest in a law enforcement career by marking either choice four (I definitely plan on a career) or choice five (I am currently looking for a career) on question 1, part II.
5. Male and female Hispanics, Asians, and other (American Indian) who responded to the survey marked low interest in a law enforcement career.
6. 17% of the Black females who responded expressed an interest in a law enforcement career by marking either choice four (I definitely plan a career) or choice five (I am currently looking for a career) on question 1, part II.
7. 5.7% of the White females who responded expressed an interest in a law enforcement career by marking either choice four (I definitely plan a career) or choice five (I am currently looking for a career) on question 1, part II.
8. 88% of Black females have a friend or relative who is in law enforcement.
9. 40% of White females have a friend or relative who is in law enforcement.
10. 63% of Black females interested in a law enforcement career were eliminated from the data due to responses concerning physical aptitude and/or individual perception of character as defined in question 5, part III.
11. 40% of White females interested in a law enforcement career were eliminated from the data due to responses concerning physical aptitude and/or individual

perception of character as defined in question 5,
part III.

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12. 63% of interested Black females perceive good to excellent chances for advancement in law enforcement.
13. 100% of interested White females perceive good to excellent chances for advancement in law enforcement.
14. 50% of interested Black females have a family of origin income of \$45,000 per year or greater.
15. 60% of interested White females have a family of origin income of \$45,000 per year or greater.
16. 20% of interested Black males have a family of origin income of \$45,000 per year or greater.
17. 82% of interested White males have a family of origin income of \$45,000 per year or greater.

TOTAL POPULATION OF SURVEY

BY

RACE, SEX, AND COLLEGE

	Cedar Valley	Brook- haven	Richland	El Centro	Mountain View
Black Male	23	0	2	6	3
Black Female	24	1	1	1	8
White Male	18	26	20	5	14
White Female	21	0	22	5	19
Hispanic Male	3	2	0	1	4
Hispanic Female	1	1	1	1	5
Asian Male	0	1	0	0	1
Asian Female	1	2	2	1	3
Other Male	0	0	1	1	2
Other Female	0	1	1	2	1
incomplete survey	1	1	0	0	1
totals	92	55	50	33	61

TOTAL INTERESTED POPULATION

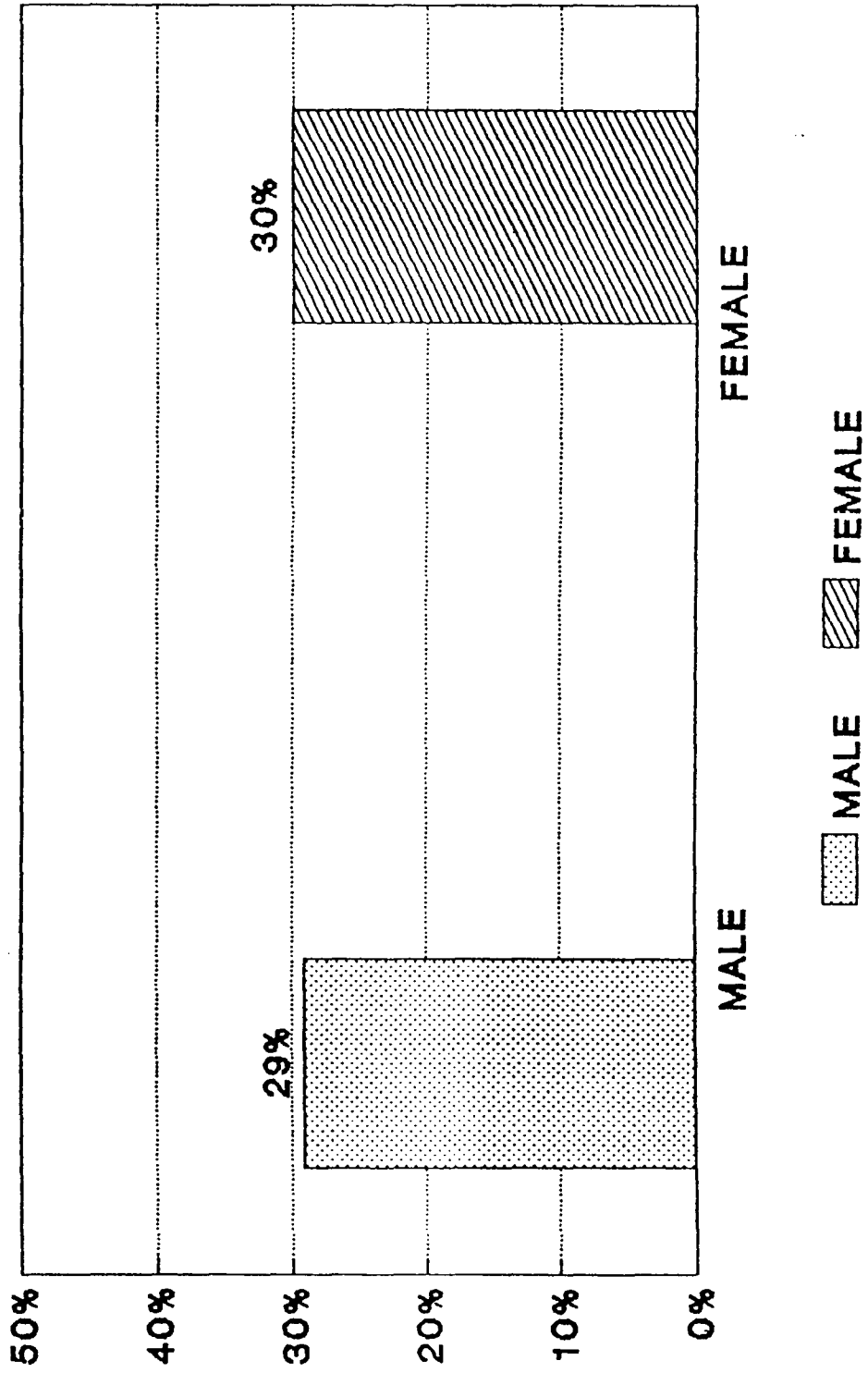
BY

RACE, SEX, AND COLLEGE

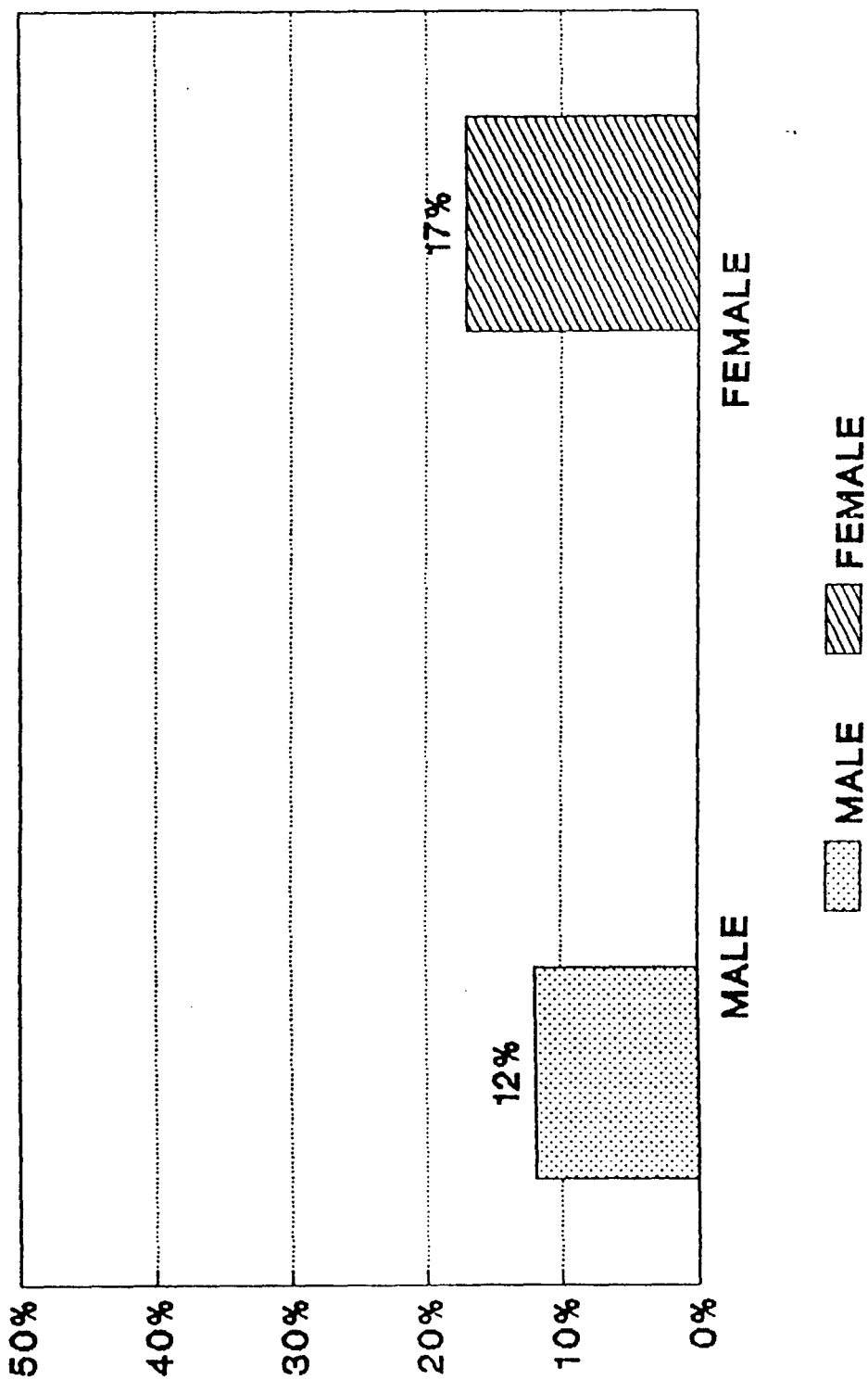
	Cedar Valley	Brook- haven	Richland	El Centro	Mountain View
Black Male	3	0	1	1	0
Black Female	4	0	0	1	2
White Male	4	1	2	2	2
White Female	1	0	4	0	0
Hispanic Male	0	0	0	0	0
Hispanic Female	0	0	0	0	0
Asian Male	0	0	0	0	0
Asian Female	0	0	0	0	0
Other Male	0	0	0	0	0
Other Female	0	0	0	0	0
totals	12	1	7	5	4

RESPONDENTS COMPARISON

BY SEX WITHIN RACE CATEGORY
WHITE MALE TO WHITE FEMALE



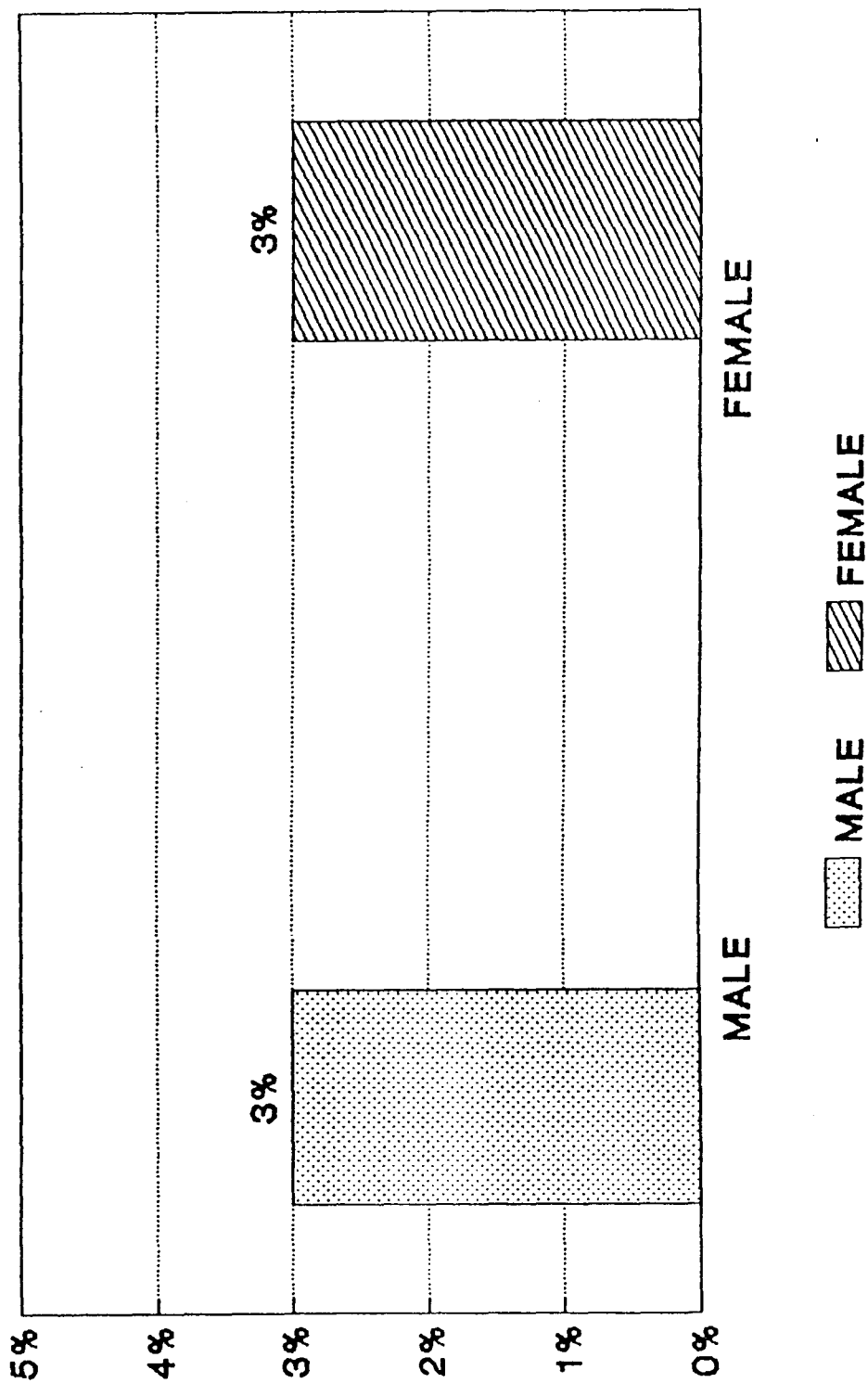
RESPONDENTS COMPARISON BY SEX WITHIN RACE CATEGORY BLACK MALE TO BLACK FEMALE



RESPONDENTS COMPARISON

BY SEX WITHIN RACE CATEGORY

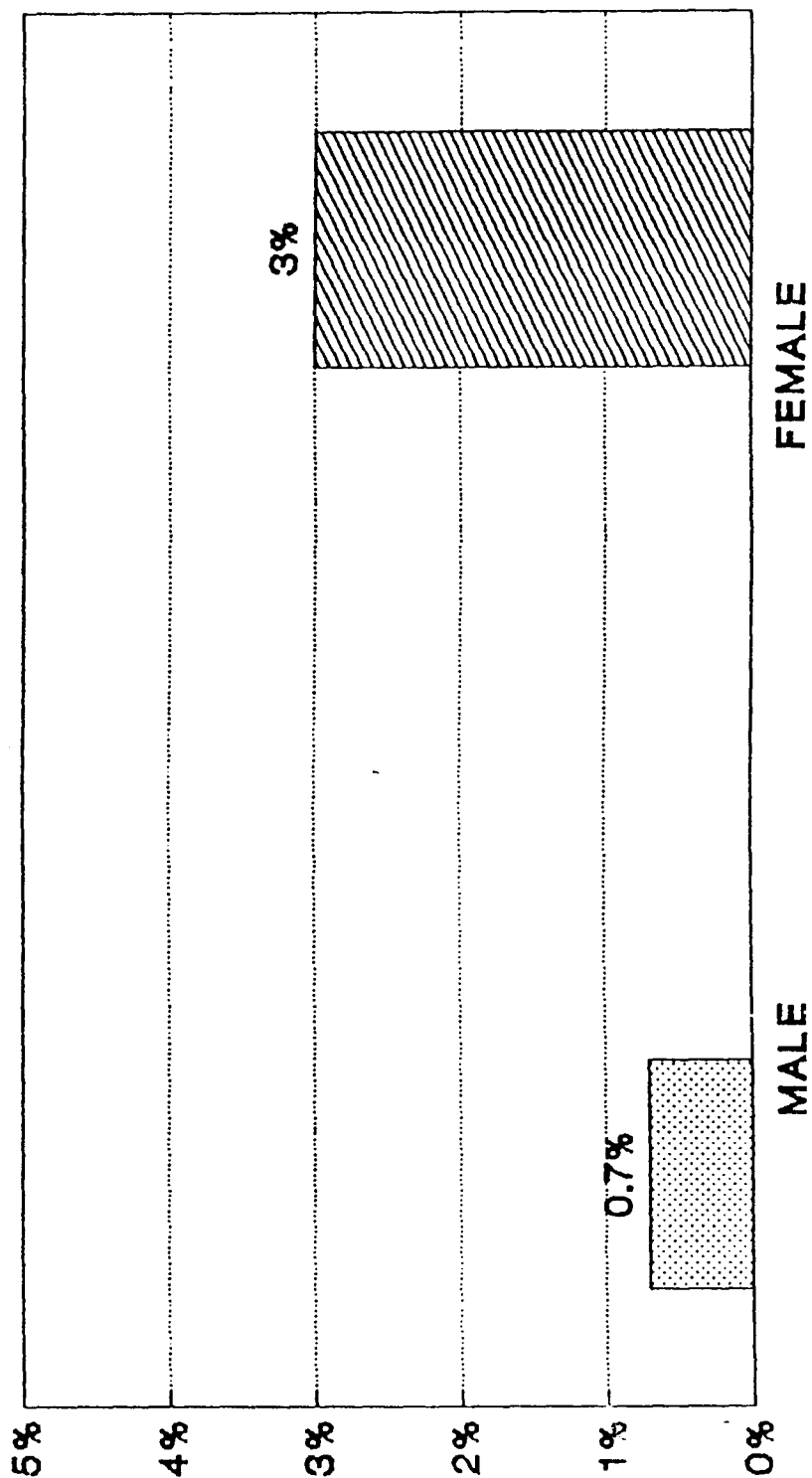
HISPANIC MALE TO HISPANIC FEMALE



RESPONDENTS COMPARISON

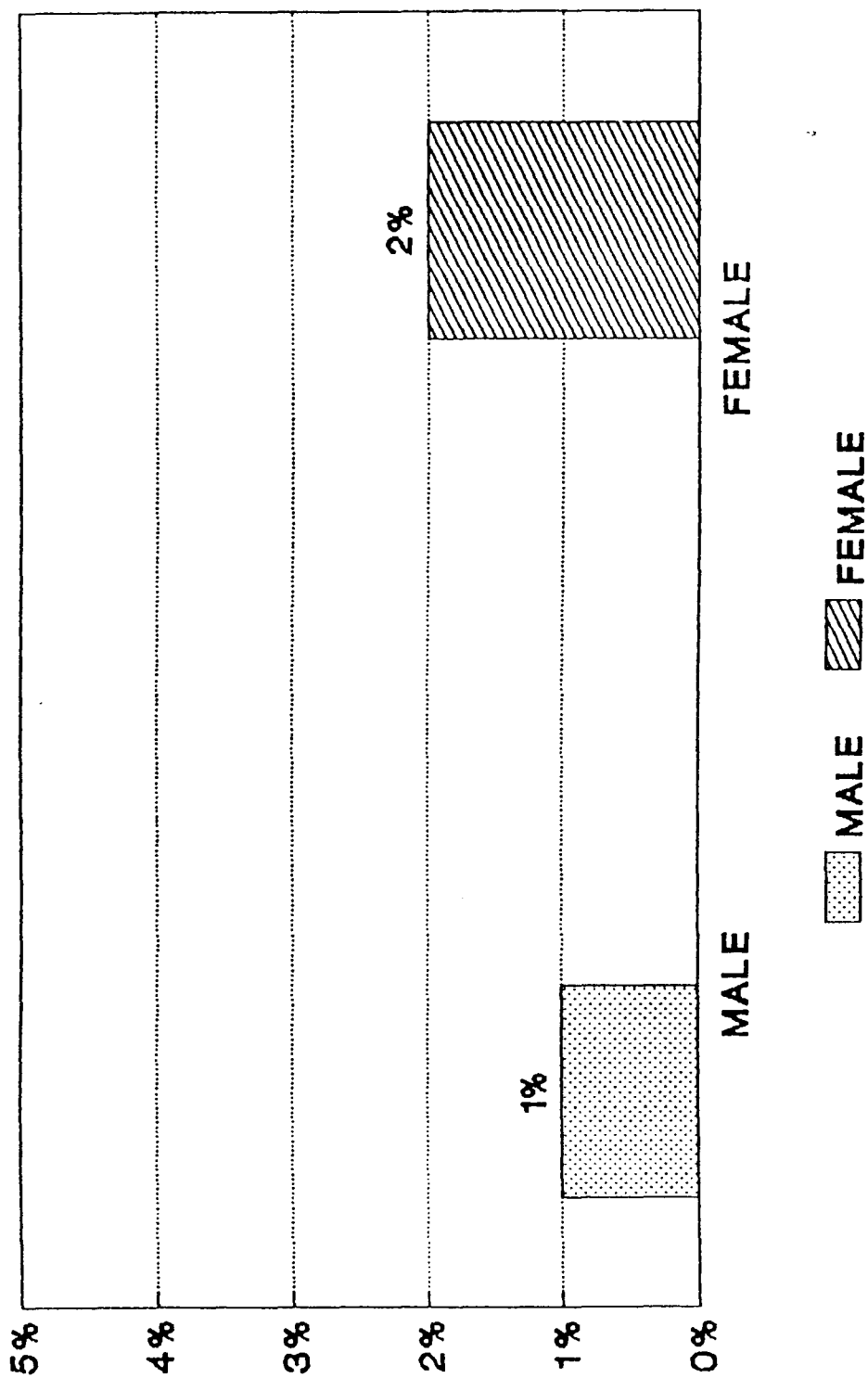
BY SEX WITHIN RACE CATEGORY

ASIAN MALE TO ASIAN FEMALE

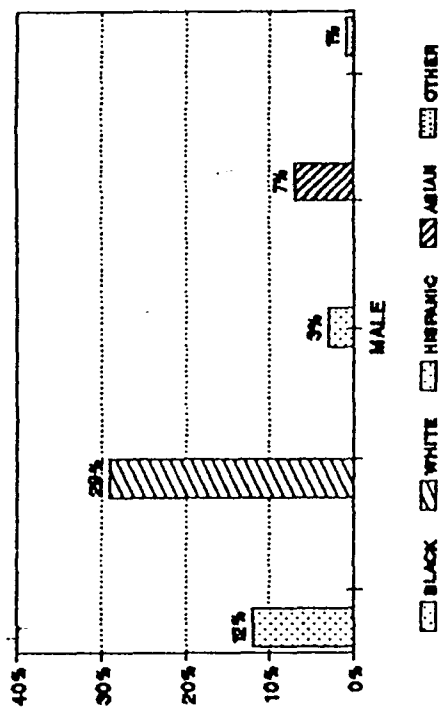


MALE FEMALE

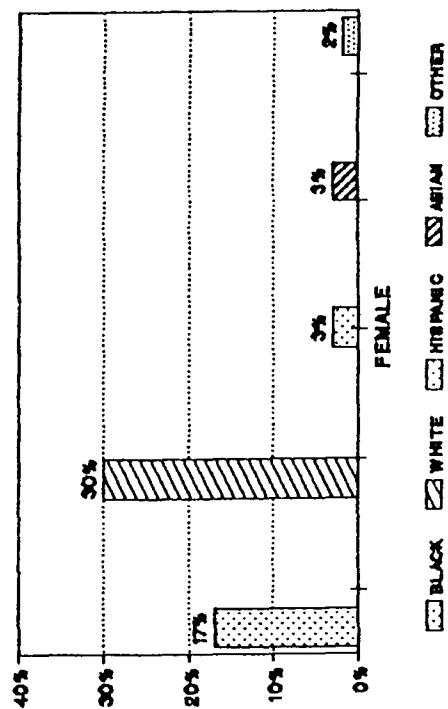
RESPONDENTS COMPARISON BY SEX WITHIN RACE CATEGORY OTHER MALE TO OTHER FEMALE



RESPONDENTS POPULATION BY RACE

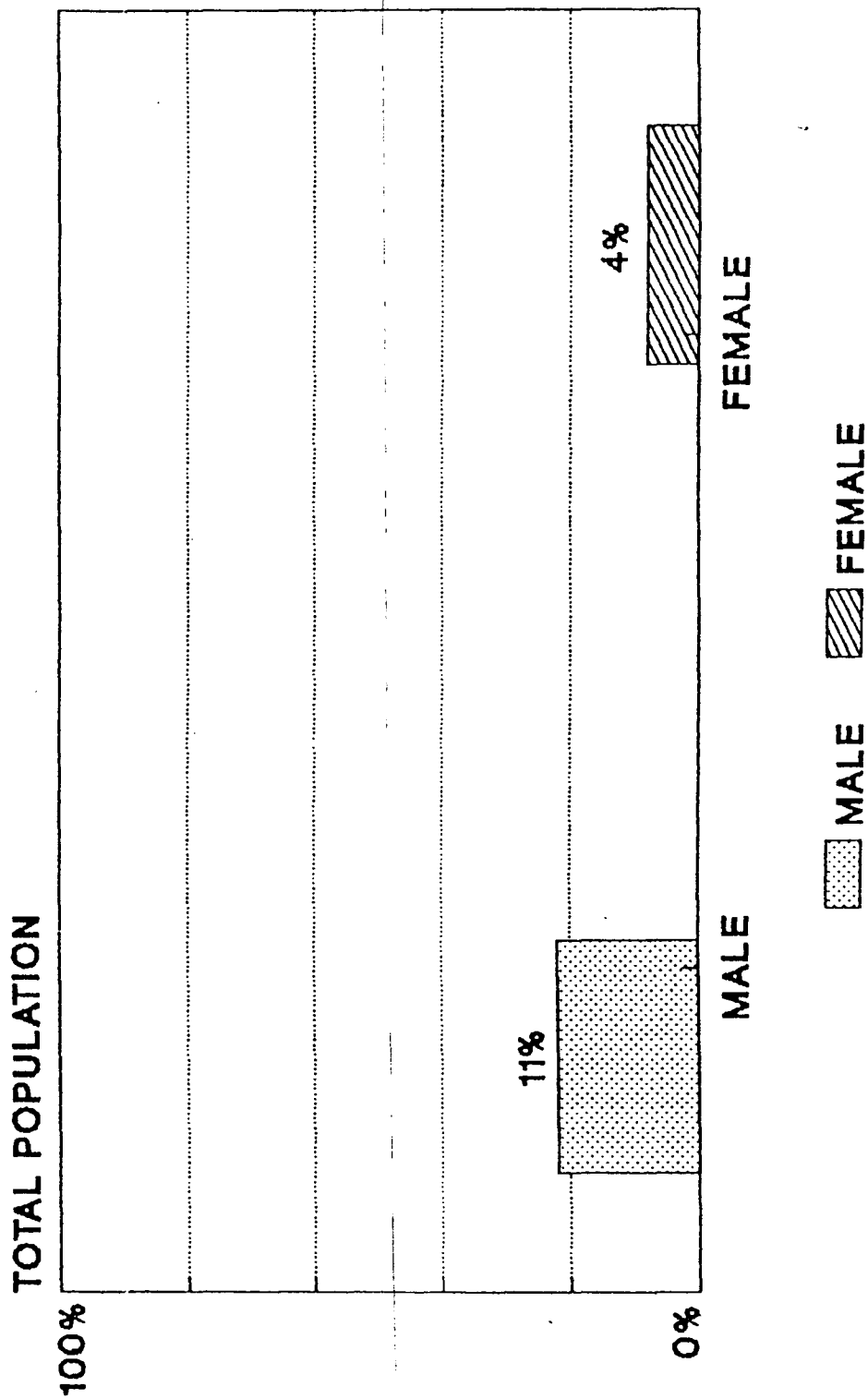


RESPONDENTS POPULATION BY RACE

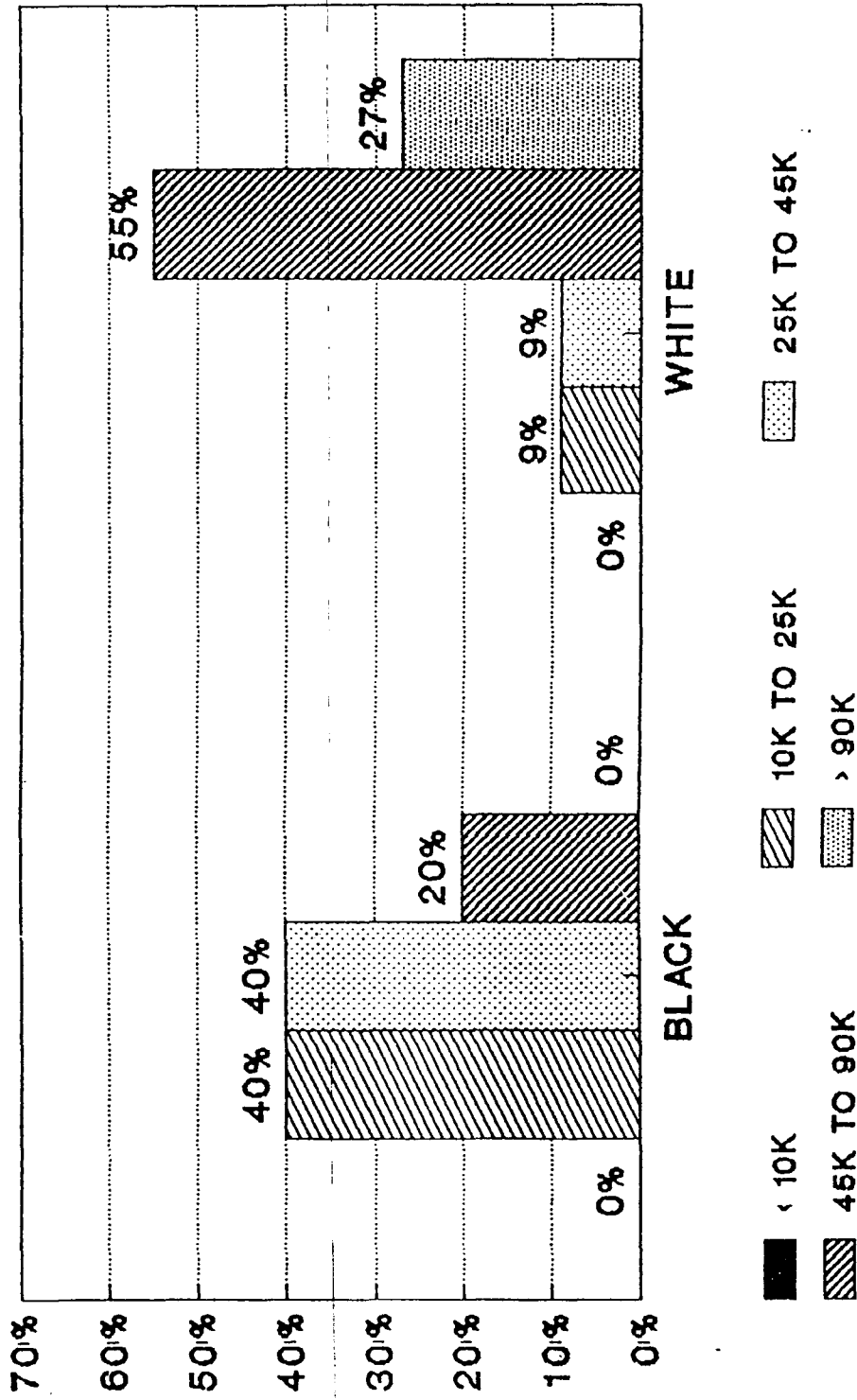


FEMALES TO MALE COMPARISON

INTEREST IN LAW ENFORCEMENT CAREERS

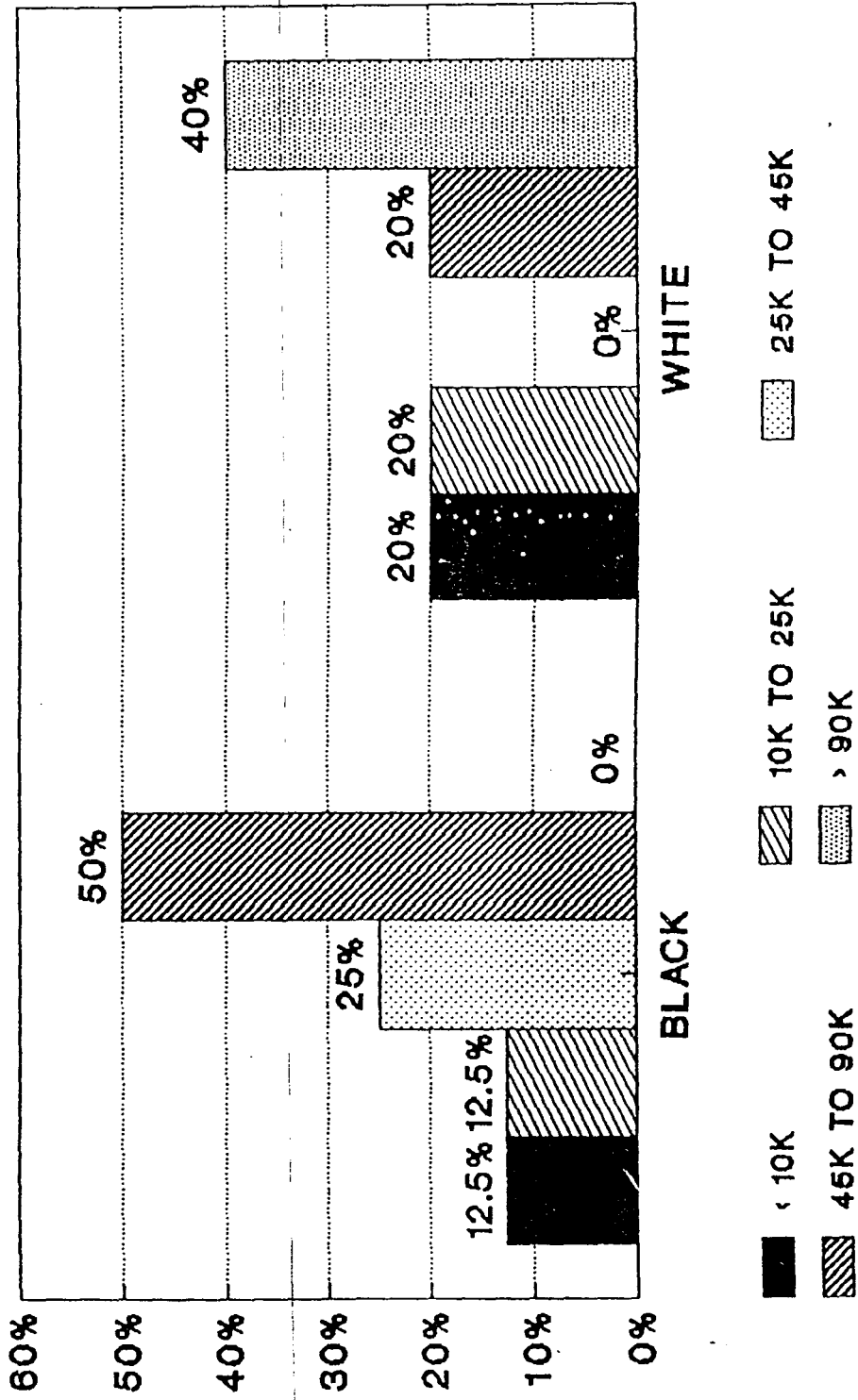


INTERESTED RESPONDENTS BASED ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND MALE



PROJECTIONS BASED ON ANNUAL INCOME

INTERESTED RESPONDENTS BASED ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND FEMALE



PROJECTIONS BASED ON ANNUAL INCOME

**V.
RESULTS**

1. Female respondents showed a significantly lesser interest in a law enforcement career as compared to males. (8% of female population to 12% of male)
2. Only 4% of interested females were considered eligible for a law enforcement career after physical and character disqualifiers were eliminated from the data.
3. Black female respondents were significantly more interested in a law enforcement career than white females. (17% of Black female population to 5.7% of White female population)
4. White male respondents were slightly more interested in a law enforcement career than Black males.
5. 11% of interested males were considered eligible for a law enforcement career after physical and character disqualifiers were eliminated from the data.
6. 69% of interested females have a friend or relative in law enforcement as compared to 75% of the males.
7. 23% of females believe they have a fair to poor chance for advancement in a law enforcement career as compared to 13% of the males.
8. 54% of females have a family of origin income of \$45,000 per year as compared to 63% of the males.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Of all female respondents interested in a law enforcement career, 69% have a friend or relative who is in law enforcement. This appears to be a potential determining factor in interest. With this in mind, police agencies should consider targeting possible females from among friends and relatives of officers. This is especially true for recruiting Black females. While 40% of the White females had a friend or relative in law enforcement, 88% of the Black females had a friend or relative in law enforcement.

As 50% of the Black females and 60% of the White females have an income of origin greater than \$45,000 per year, recruiting should be targeted in this socio-economic area for interested females. As a correlation of knowing officers appears throughout the socio-economic scale as a factor of potential interest, programs that acquaint minorities and females with officers should be initiated to possibly increase interest levels in law enforcement as a career field.

Black females are initially more interested in a law enforcement career than White females. This may be due in part to the Black culture which may reflect more of a matriarchic society. Another possible reason may be to improve their socio-economic position by obtaining a stable career.

Recruiting of females in the future will continue to be difficult due to the current lesser interest of females as

compared to males. Some of this may be compensated for by recruiting in specific target areas according to socio-economic factors indicated in this study.

Typically, women and minority group members are significantly underrepresented in police agencies. Preferential recruitment should be directed toward approximating the minority composition of the community within the sworn ranks. If the available minority work force underrepresents the makeup of the minority service community, the agency should recruit outside its service area to attract a minority work force equal to the makeup of that community.

For more effective minority recruiting, police agencies should target their recruiting to specific locations. According to the data collected within the Dallas County Community College system, Black females and Black males should be targeted at Cedar Valley College and White females should be targeted at Richland. The data also indicates that Hispanic, Asian, and Other males and females show very little interest in a law enforcement career.

This issue should be addressed by using Hispanic, Asian and other minority recruiters from within the agency. The agency's recruitment literature should depict women and other minorities in law enforcement roles. Women and minorities should also be used in student intern programs and police educational programs in schools. Agencies should nurture student interest in the law enforcement

field by providing them with first hand experience in law enforcement. This would lend credibility and sincerity to members of protected classes or disadvantaged groups by setting an example to children at an early age. It further demonstrates the agency's commitments to the minority community and enhances the receptivity of the minority community to the recruiters. Successful recruiting should

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Successful recruiting must include strong management commitments, and analysis of demographic/geographic features of the agency's service area and specific knowledge of past efforts to attract minorities by similar agencies. An analysis of these program's effectiveness or ineffectiveness should then be done and adjustments made in order to ensure that the performance meets program objectives.

LAW ENFORCEMENT CAREER INTEREST SURVEY

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This survey is intended to measure the interest level of college students in a career in law enforcement. The data will be compared by sex and race to help determine better recruitment strategies.

Part I. Demographics

1. First Name _____
 2. College or University _____ number
 3. Age _____
 4. Race:
 - African American
 - White
 - Asian
 - Hispanic
 - Other _____
 - (1) Mt. View
 - (2) North Lake
 - (3) Cedar Valley
 - (4) Richland
 - (5) Brookhaven
 - (6) Eastfield
 - (7) El Centro
 5. Sex: (Circle)
Male Female
 6. What is the zip code of your permanent address? _____
 7. Mark the annual income range which best describes your family of origin.
- _____ less than \$10,000 _____ \$10,000-\$25,000 _____ \$25,000-\$45,000
 _____ \$45,000-\$90,000 _____ \$90,000 or more

Part II. Interest in Law Enforcement.

1. Rate your interest in a full time law enforcement career:
 - (1) I am definitely not interested in a law enforcement career.
 - (2) I am not interested in a law enforcement career now, but I might be someday.
 - (3) I might like to be a police officer when I graduate.
 - (4) I definitely plan on a law enforcement career when I graduate.
 - (5) I am looking for a law enforcement career now.
2. If you indicate an interest, mark the probable amount of time before you would seek a full time law enforcement career?

Not seeking	3 years or more	2 years	1 year	6 months	currently seeking
X	0	1	2	3	4
3. Do you have a close friend or relative who is in law enforcement?
Circle one:

Yes No

Part III. Law Enforcement Qualifications

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1. How would you rate your physical conditioning:

Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Superior
0	1	2	3	4

2. Mark the hobbies and leisure time activities in which you participate.

_____ jogging	_____ football	_____ boating
_____ baseball	_____ tennis	_____ flying
_____ raquetball	_____ horses	_____ scuba
_____ handball	_____ computers	_____ snorkeling
_____ reading	_____ archery	_____ music
_____ cooking	_____ motorcycling	_____ skating
_____ sewing	_____ dancing	_____ golf
_____ hunting	_____ gymnastics	_____ crafts
_____ fishing	_____ skiing	_____ firearms
_____ aerobics	_____ travel	_____ collecting
_____ weight lifting	_____ billiards	_____ gardening
_____ martial arts	_____ swimming	_____ other _____

3. How well do you feel advancement is open to your race and sex in law enforcement?

Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
0	1	2	3

4. List your height and weight.

Height _____ Weight _____

5. Based on your personal characteristics, such as physical conditioning, reading writing skills, psychological wellness, no felony convictions and generally clean background, do you believe you meet the standards required to achieve a law enforcement career.

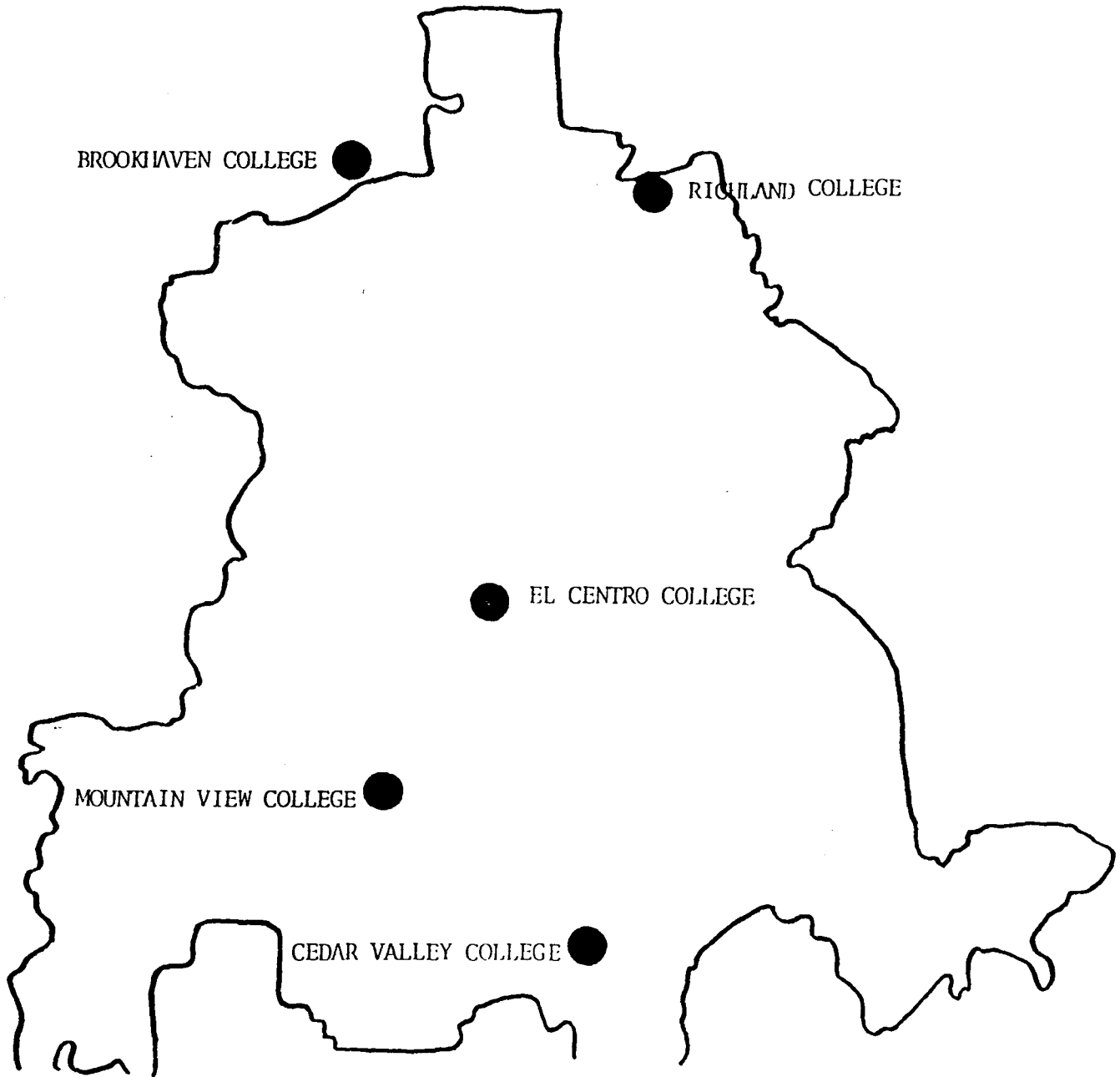
No	Not Sure	Possibly	Probably	Definitely
0	1	2	3	4

MAY I CONTACT YOU BY PHONE FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, IF NEEDED?
Circle one:

Yes No Phone Number (____) _____

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF COLLEGES

WHERE SURVEYS ADMINISTERED



DALLAS METROPLEX

VII.
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