

**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

**The Role of the 21st Century
Law Enforcement Executive**

**An Administrative Research Paper
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ABSTRACT

The role of the 21st century law enforcement executive is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because the era of the old law enforcement system and the uneducated leader has rapidly dissipated. These days, law enforcement is considered to be a respected profession which calls for an array of quality characteristics for police executives. The makeup of police organizations has changed and requires police executives to need a diverse background to oversee the organization.

The purpose of this research is to focus on the role of the executive leader and present relevant information about the qualifications, skills, demeanor, and aptitude one should possess while providing leadership for police departments in today's society.

The method of inquiry used by the researcher included: a review of articles, internet sites, leadership books, periodicals, journals, and a survey distributed to 17 survey participants from different police organizations.

Through a survey conducted, it was determined that officers representing several different agencies across the state felt that police chiefs and sheriffs should have formal education and executive training. Additionally, the majority of the officers surveyed felt their current police chief was an excellent leader. The police chiefs' success was contributed to their experience, executive training, and educational background.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's evolving and complex society, change is inevitable; it comes whether one is prepared or not. Change, for the most part, is unpredictable and unsolicited by those which are affected. With change being a consistent event in the world, one must be adaptable, versatile, receptive, and open-minded in dealing with change, both personally and professionally. Consequently, change has become even more germane for the field of law enforcement. Policing, as a whole, has changed because of the current trends which are taking place in the world today. With the enhancement of technology over the past 20 years, law enforcement has had to keep pace with the trend to remain in tune with the different activities occurring in the world on a daily basis. For instance, the threat of terrorist attacks on United States soil is a real factor when it comes to ensuring the safety of all Americans. Another example would be the crimes that are being committed with the use of computers and other technological instruments, which require law enforcement to have the resources to pursue the criminals who commit these types of crimes. Nevertheless, the two aforementioned crimes are just among a host of other types of crimes that are being committed these days versus those committed in the past. Therefore, this research paper will attempt to frame how law enforcement has transcended over the years and the importance of having individuals in key positions that possess specific qualifications and skills to successfully enhance the quality of life in the community they serve.

Accordingly, the problem or issue to be examined considers whether or not the role of the 21st century law enforcement executive has changed over recent years and evaluates the avenue one should take to ensure they are prepared to lead an

organization. Additionally, issues will be discussed about the type of character, training, education, and tools one should use while maintaining a high level of support from those beneath his/her authority. Moreover, this research is intended to serve as a guide and recommendation to those who have that “burning” desire to become a law enforcement executive in the future.

The relevance of the role of the 21st century law enforcement executive and the relation to the profession is to demonstrate the correlation between a successful organization and an organization which faces challenges due to poor and/or inadequate leadership of individuals overseeing a police organization. More specifically, the author intends to focus on how law enforcement organizations operate more effectively and efficiently with an individual who possesses the skills, abilities, as well as the academic and professional education levels of police required these days to lead an organization. In addition, the author will present theories and leadership styles which have been proven to be effective for other professional organizations and will illustrate how the techniques used in the business world can be transitioned to law enforcement. As a result, the intended outcome will be properly illustrated and the information gathered will be supported by the resources gathered within the research.

The purpose of this research is to illustrate the value of a well-rounded and prepared police executive. The author aims to portray the differences between a manager and a leader and provide appropriate information to support the author’s viewpoints of effective leadership. Furthermore, the author will demonstrate the successes of different profound leaders from the past and present and showcase the characteristics and qualities they exhibited which made them extraordinary leaders.

Additionally, the author hypothesizes that an organization operates more efficiently with a leader who has taken the necessary steps to ensure they were prepared for the job and has the tenacity to continue to learn.

The research question to be examined focuses on whether or not the profession of law enforcement has expanded in recent years, requiring a trained and educated leader. The questions at hand will also depict whether the rank and file expect more of leaders these days versus the expectations of leaders from the past. Finally, the main focus will be to highlight the importance of education, executive training, solid leadership abilities, and that a combination or all of the three are necessary to be successful.

The information gathered for this research will encompass material reviewed in leadership books, journals, police management books, surveys, and other necessary sources of applicable material as needed. The author believes that the research will demonstrate that an organization thrives and benefits from an effective leader in today's police organization. Likewise, the author will provide pertinent information that will support the basis for the overall research. Ultimately, the author's intended outcome is to influence and motivate individuals who have the desire of becoming a distinguished leader in the future and who will utilize this research as a tool. There will be three inextricably linked characteristics introduced that are essential for executive leaders to encompass in today's society having both a formal and professional education, being a diverse leader, and utilizing technology. It is the author's desire that this research will provide a road map for one to follow and incorporate the perspectives given into one's leadership style.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As previously alluded, the career of a law enforcement officer has changed drastically over the past 30 years. Prior to 1970, there were, literally, no requirements or special qualifications in place for one to become a police officer in the State of Texas. During this period, before the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education (TCLEOSE) was established, in many cases, individuals were appointed by the Police Chief who was given his position in the same manner. Note that preference was given to a male as being the chief because, for many years, the field of law enforcement was heavily dominated by males. Now, the profession has become more diverse and females are given the same opportunities as the counterparts. Nevertheless, because there were no training or educational requirements, this presented many challenges for the profession. Many police officers were operating on their own "life experiences" and lacked cognitive skills and abilities. According to TCLEOSE, it was not until 1970, five years after the Commission was established, that minimum standards were put in place, which required all new police candidates to attend a 140-hour basic police officer academy.

As time progressed, the standards and requirements to become a police officer changed. These days, the field of law enforcement is considered to be a profession which employs professional individuals who are highly educated and have the cognitive skills and abilities one would find in the private sector or business world. Additionally, police organizations are now diverse, employ individuals from every ethnic group, and have more focus on providing quality services to the general public. Consequently, these are the primary reasons for executive leaders to have the education, training,

experience, and the cognitive ability to oversee the day-to-day operation of an organization.

Currently, the career of law enforcement is taking on more traits of the business world and requires individuals to deliver decisions on complex issues, which are similar to Chief Executive Officers' of corporations. When one looks at the career of law enforcement now, in retrospect to 20 years ago, it is apparent that the quality of life is much different in the world today. Furthermore, when one evaluates the events occurring in the world today versus the past, there is undoubtedly a need for law enforcement to have individuals in place that have the ability to effectively and efficiently steer a police organization in the right direction. With that in mind, police executives need the cognitive skills and abilities to carry these functions out. Policing today is very complex; therefore, it is imperative that complex issues be addressed with complex education and training. Not only it is important for leaders to be educated; however, for one to reach full potential as a leader, they must maintain absolute integrity, know their job, declare their vision to the organization, show uncommon commitment, expect positive results, take care of their people, put duty before self, and stand out in front (National Institute of Business Management, 2006).

President John F. Kennedy once stated that leadership and learning are indispensable to each other. Just as President Kennedy so eloquently put it, learning is a major part of individuals operating in leadership roles, and there is a distinctive need for one to possess the credentials to be in a key position. Notwithstanding, many municipalities, universities, other private and public organizations are requiring individuals to have at least a bachelors degree and advanced management training for

those who seek executive level positions, which is another indicator that education is important.

During a speech given by H. Ross Perot, he stated that people could not be managed. However, inventories can be managed, but people must be led. When one evaluates the characteristics of an effective leader, there are many traits recommended for a leader to have. For instance, an effective leader is a good listener. Bateman and Snell (2007) stated, "In today's demanding work environment, managers need better listening skills. Although it is easy to assume that good listening is easy and natural, in fact it is difficult and not nearly as common as needed" (p.500). It is not always the message that earns the respect of subordinates; however, there is an inherent need for the leader to hear the message from those under their command and to respond in a positive manner. Another characteristic that a leader should possess is humility for those he/she leads. A leader should be approachable and respectful to those within and outside of his/her organization (Pettinger, 2007). By displaying this type of behavior, a leader can lack in other areas and still have respect of others because of his humbled attitude and demeanor. Moreover, a good leader should have the capacity for love, compassion, sensitivity, and understanding (Cole, 2005). Additionally, a good leader will lead by example. In many situations, people leave managers, not their jobs. In other words, people quit their jobs due to poor leadership, not because they do not like their assignment. Lao Tzu quoted, saying, the best of all leaders is the one that develops their people so that eventually they do not need them any more (Gallagher-Westfall Group, 2005). If a leader operates under Lao Tzu's theory, the relationship between the two will not be strained.

Lorraine Grubbs-West (2005) explained and provided complete details about how Southwest Airlines team members were treated and respected by the senior leadership team. Grubbs-West, a retired executive of Southwest Airlines, illustrated throughout the book the different avenues and creative leadership styles that were exhibited by top administrators on a daily basis. At Southwest Airlines, upon being hired, one would be immediately immersed into the culture, which was to be fun-hearted, candid, and willing to help out wherever needed. Grubbs-West (2005) claimed, “the moment new employees walk in the door they experience the Southwest Airlines culture, a culture embraced and fostered from the top down” (p. 21). This is a prime example of how law enforcement can take a page from the private sector, or the business world, and incorporate the aforementioned strategies into a police organization.

Cottrell (2005) stated, “character is the foundation upon which one must build to win respect. Just as no worthy building can be erected on a weak foundation, so no lasting reputation worthy of respect can be built on a weak character” (p.13). Many organizations today are being lead by individuals with weak character, inabilities, and inequalities that negatively affect the morale of an organization. In respect to character, the author is not focusing on morale or judgment issues but on the leader’s ability to withstand the good and bad aspects that comes with the job. The leader must be courageous, fearless, and willing to stand for the right things all the time. A good leader must understand that people are capricious and will not give any leeway to them while being confronted with a challenge. Therefore, it is paramount for the leader to remain vigilant and unwavering while performing their job.

METHODOLOGY

The research question to be examined considers whether or not individuals who hold the title of Chief should be degreed, have executive management training, and possess a comprehensive leadership style. The author argues that the aforesaid skills are required to effectively administer a police organization in today's society.

Furthermore, it is the author's viewpoint that an untrained and undeveloped executive leader will negatively impact the organization and create an abundance of problems because of his/her inabilities.

The researcher hypothesizes that an organization operates more efficiently with a leader who has taken the necessary steps to prepare themselves for an executive position. The author also believes that the research will provide valid and detailed information to persuade the reader to adopt the concepts introduced. Additionally, it is the author's desire that this research serve as a motivational tool and encourage those who really want to take that next step in their career.

The method of inquiry will include: leadership books, journals, police management books, surveys, and other necessary sources of applicable material as needed. The material used will assist the author in providing clear and concise examples of the theories and ideas presented. The material used will also serve as a reference point for one to readily use.

The instrument that will be used to measure the researcher's findings regarding the subject of the role of the 21st century law enforcement executive will include a survey. The researcher anticipates that the survey will support the author's theories and further exemplify the author's viewpoints. Furthermore, the survey will be designed

to provide a true comparison of effective leaders and those who are considered to be sub par in their leadership roles based on the answers given by the participants.

The size of the survey will consist of 10 questions, distributed to 17 different police agencies that were represented at Module II of LEMIT in May 2007. Each administrator will complete the survey and return it during the module.

The response rate to the survey instrument resulted in all 17 participants returning the survey. After reviewing the participants' responses to the questions, one of the surveys was not utilized because the department the administrator was representing did not currently have a permanent police chief. The police departments which were represented in the survey ranged in size from small (less than 50 sworn officers) to large (more than 2000 sworn officers) departments.

The information obtained from the survey will be analyzed by how the survey participants responded to the questions. The author will use the participant's answers to highlight some of the views discussed in the research. There will also be a comparison of the responses to the questions, and specific details will be pointed out that support the author's theories.

FINDINGS

From the survey conducted, it was discovered that 81%, or more specifically, 13 of the 16 officers surveyed, provided an above average rating for their respective police chief's leadership effectiveness and abilities. Overwhelmingly, the theme of the officers who provided a high rating for their police chief was that he/she was very innovative, proactive, creative, and well-respected. In addition, those who scored their chief high

stated that he/she has a diverse management style which was very effective and contributed to their overall success as a leader.

The research was conducted in order to ascertain if the role of a leader in today's society has indeed changed and to facilitate the author's argument regarding the qualifications one should have to lead a police department. In highlighting this viewpoint, a survey question was asked of the participants if their respective chief or sheriff had attended an executive management training course such as LEMIT, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) National Academy, or any other training course. As a result, all 16 participants indicated that their chief/sheriff had attended an executive management training course. After a closer review of the surveys, it was noted that 81%, or 13 of the 16 administrators, liked their chief's management style. The researcher examined the participant's answers and discovered that the four participant's chiefs who did not have a degree had attended an executive management training course and possessed a diverse management style, which further emphasizes the author's viewpoints that a combination of characteristics are needed for today's leaders.

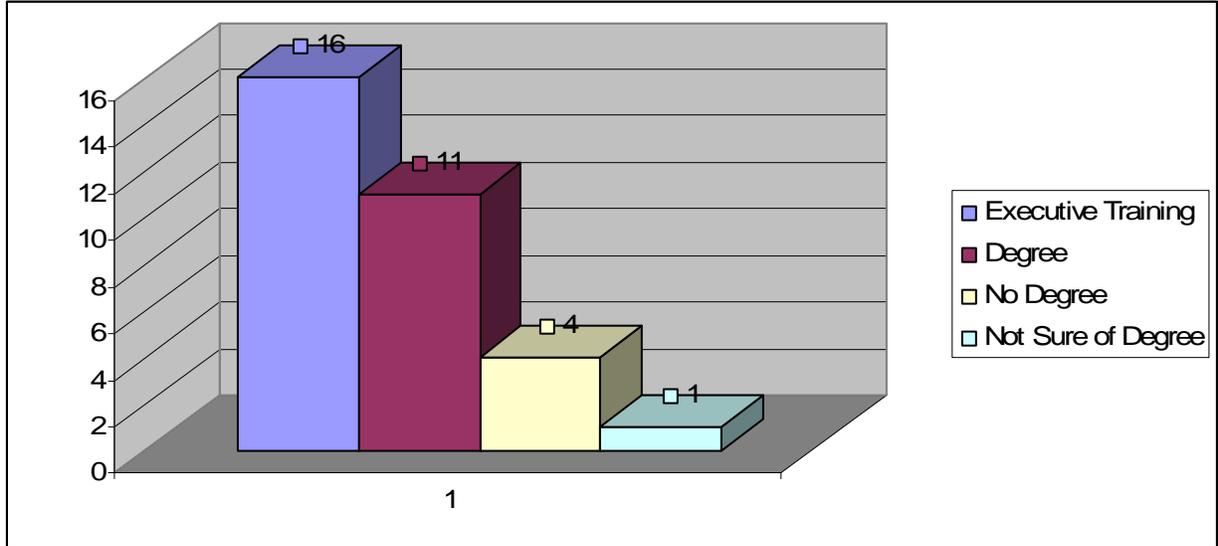


Figure1. Type of education held by chief/sheriff's

The survey also contained data that illustrated how many of the participants felt that a chief or sheriff should be degreed to hold the position. Overwhelmingly, 87%, or 14 of the 16 surveyors, felt that a chief or sheriff should have a degree. Of the two who stated that a degree was not necessary, they still felt that an executive leader should attend an executive management course to expand their administrative skills.

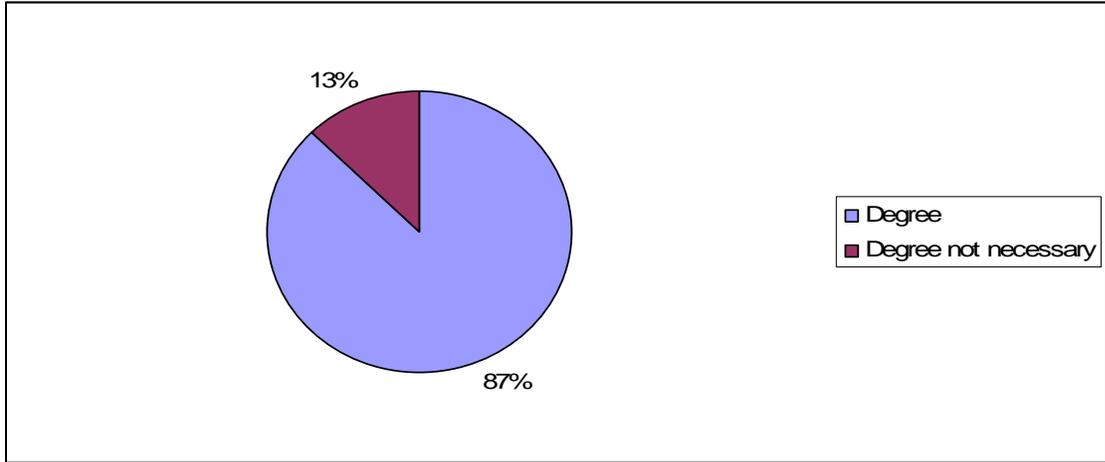


Figure 2. Chief/sheriff having formal education

When asked of the participants why or why not a police chief or sheriff should be degreed, some of the responses were the following: a chief should be an intelligent balanced individual that exhibits desire to excel; a chief should be intelligent and well informed; a chief needs education commensurate with level of responsibility; a chief should have a masters or higher to promote higher education within the profession; and a chief should lead by example to include knowledge base with definable education.

The two participants who felt that a degree was not necessary indicated that experience and managerial training was sufficient for a chief/sheriff to have, which also supports the overall theme of the research.

DISCUSSIONS/CONCLUSIONS

The problem or issue examined by the researcher considered whether or not the skill levels and responsibilities of law enforcement executives are more demanding these days. The purpose of this research was to specifically point out the change in the profession of law enforcement and illustrate the demand placed on the career and those who are in key management positions. Furthermore, it was intended to illustrate the need for those in the field to ensure they have taken the necessary steps to obtained a leadership role.

The research question that was examined focused on whether the profession of law enforcement has expanded in recent years, requiring a more trained and educated leader. The questions also depicted whether the rank and file expected more of leaders these days versus the expectations of leaders from the past. The main focus was to highlight the importance of education, executive training, and solid leadership abilities of those currently in high level executive position and those who desire to obtain the

position. Nevertheless, based on the information provided, there was sufficient evidence presented that supported the hypothesis.

The findings of the research did support the hypothesis. The reason why the findings did support the hypothesis is probably due to how members in the profession, as well as the general public, view the direction law enforcement are headed. This analysis is not an all inclusive map to becoming an executive. However, the information presented merely reflects the current trends and illustrates the relevance of the steps one should take to advance.

Limitations that might have hindered this study resulted from the lack of data and detailed information surrounding this topic. Nevertheless, sufficient information was presented in the analysis which supported the hypothesis. Additionally, through the research, surveys, and statistical results, it is obvious that leaders of law enforcements agencies are now held to higher standards than before.

The study of the role of the executive leader in the 21st century is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because of the evolution of the field and how the profession has transcended over the years. Nevertheless, the author ultimately intended to provide relevant information to support the theories and to promote the career of law enforcement as a profession.

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APPENDIX

RESEARCH SURVEY

1. How would you rate the leadership of your Chief/Sheriff?

Rating/ 1 to 5 (5 being the highest)

Answer: _____

2. Please briefly explain your answer to question #1.
3. What style of leadership does your Chief/Sheriff utilize?
- The Directive Leader – highly authoritative
 - The Participative Leader – seeks ideas and suggestions from subordinates and allows them to participate in decision making
 - The Collaborative Leader – leader who works well with other organizations and constituents of your organization
 - A mixture of each the management styles
4. Do you believe his/her management style is effective?
- Yes
 - No
5. Why? Or; why not?
6. Has your Chief/Sheriff attended LEMIT, FBI National Academy, or any other executive management training course?
- Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
7. If you answered yes to question #7, what course(s) has he/she attended?

Answer: _____

8. Does your Chief/Sheriff have a degree?
- Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

9. Do you believe a Chief/Sheriff should have a degree?

- a. Yes
- b. No

10. Why? Or; why not?