

N. I. J. ABSTRACT

What Criteria Will Be Used To Select Police Chiefs In Mid-Size Agencies By The Year 2005.

S. Krull. Sponsoring Agency: California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST). 1995. 161 pp.

Availability: Commission on POST, Leadership Development, 1601 Alhambra Boulevard, Sacramento, California 95816-7053

Single Copies Free -- Order Number 19-0386

National Institute of Justice / NCJRS Microfiche Program, Box 6000, Rockville, Maryland 20850

Microfiche Fee. Microfiche Number NCJ _____

This study examined the concept of police leadership in the future. Specifically, what criteria, or strategies, should be employed in the selection of police chiefs, and what characteristics or traits would a successful police chief in a mid-size agency of the future possess. Futures research projected emerging trends and events and was supplemented by interviews with police chiefs, city managers, executive recruiters and experts in the policing profession. This research provides a foundation for the development of a strategic plan to conduct a successful recruitment, selection and introduction of a new police chief into a community. The study concluded that a comprehensive needs assessment of the community and organization are critically important to any recruitment/selection process. The single most important factor in the process is the "fit" between the police chief and the entire organization/community. Extensive charts, illustration of forecasting techniques, end noting and bibliography are included.

POLICE CHIEF SELECTIONS

IT'S TIME TO GET FIT

JOURNAL ARTICLE

STEVEN KRULL

**COMMAND COLLEGE CLASS XIX
PEACE OFFICER STANDARDS AND TRAINING
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA**

JANUARY 1995

EPIGRAPH

The sun was fading from the sky on that September afternoon in 1865. The two men faced each other on the main street of the California Gold Rush town. Their shadows stood frozen for what seemed like a lifetime. Then, movement, a blur, and two shots rang out. One man fell to the ground, mortally injured. The other was wounded but would survive. Silently the townspeople stepped out from the shadows in which they had been waiting -- waiting for a winner to emerge.

The survivor was a physically strong and big man from another town. He had traveled to this place just for the battle. He had no education. Very little was known about him, beyond the fact that he was the fastest gun that day, as he had been on other days in his past. Perhaps that was enough.

One man, the barber/mayor, approached the wounded and bleeding survivor. The barber could see that fresh from the fight, there was excitement, confusion and even anticipation of what was to come on the survivor's face. In his role as mayor, the barber slowly held out his hand. The survivor accepted the unspoken offer and pinned the old and tarnished badge to his vest.

There was a new Sheriff in town.

INTRODUCTION

The preceding scenario of the Old West paints a frightening picture for selecting someone to a position as important as a modern day police chief. Hopefully policing has come a long way since then but, one might speculate, how much further must we go. Or, is this a journey with no destination and many paths to take? It may well be one that continues to evolve at the same pace as the stakeholders, the environment and the respective communities involved. There can be no doubt as to the importance of the task; that of selecting the police leaders. USA Today reports in its August 25, 1994 edition that crime, and the fear of crime, is the one issue that cuts through all parts of the American society and is the main issue of concern.¹ Not only does victimization cut through society but so does our suspect profile. Despite a steady decline in the national birth rate juvenile arrests have increased 400 percent. This group includes youths of all races, social classes and lifestyles.² This should come as no surprise if one considers that the United States has the worst rate of violent crime of any industrialized nation in the world.³ Since 1961 the American population has grown by 41 percent, yet in the same period violent crime has risen at a rate of over 500 percent and crime overall has risen in excess of 300 percent.⁴ Policing has a major role to play in society if there is to be a reversal of these trends.

Because of the enormous importance of these issues, any individual selected to the position of police chief may well have more power and influence over the community than any other public official. What kinds of persons are needed to lead the

policing profession? Is there a set criteria to look for, or is selection merely a subjective guess at best? What means do we have to identify those qualities sought in a police chief?

The future of policing holds both challenge and opportunity for the profession, and specifically, the position of police chief. The challenge is in confronting the major issues that threaten the very foundation of American society. The opportunity lies in accepting a leadership role in a nation adrift in a stormy sea.

THE IMPORTANCE OF POLICING TODAY

How important is policing to American society? Is this an area that has profound impact or does it have any at all? In his 1992 biography, Daryl Gates, the retired Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department, recalls his swearing-in ceremony in March of 1978. He remembers saying to himself, "...I realized the safety and welfare of over three million people spread across 467 square miles would fall directly to me."⁵ This underscores the tremendous responsibility that falls to police agencies across the nation. It is one that exists whether the population of the community served is three or three million. The issues are the same. One might wonder if this is an overstatement from Chief Gates' who has high regard for his own abilities and importance. However, further study of current literature supports Mr. Gates. Donald G. Hanna, former Champaign, Illinois police chief and author wrote:

"...local policing is the most essential public service within the community. It involves a unique authority to exercise broad discretion ... The mission is profound because of its breadth, significance and complexity."⁶

He further emphasizes the point made by Mr. Gates suggesting policing is the most important service provided by local government. Considering the wide range of governmental functions, this is a strong statement about the impact of police service on a community.

As the quotes are from police leaders, they might be dismissed as self-serving or aimed at fostering community support during budget deliberations. But, the concept of policing as an essential service of government is shared by those outside the profession as well. Michael J. Kelly, a scholar, legislative assistant and consultant to the International City Managers Association offers this analysis:

"Policing is perhaps the most important function of local government. The power of police to arrest citizens and affect the moral complexion of the community, as well as the duties to maintain public order and protect constitutional liberties, are the most fundamental public functions."⁷

This elevates the importance to constitutional proportions and suggests that the character and health of a community are dependent upon the effectiveness and competence of its police services.

There is no one future out there, but many possible futures. Strategies to meet these challenges do not magically appear, nor do they implement themselves. There must be someone who can harness the forces of change and direct them in a positive manner. There must be a leader.

Who, then, are the ones that lead policing, this "most essential function of government" into the possible futures. This author suggests that in any organization

success or failure rests with its leader. Countless books by noted authors such as Peter Drucker, Tom Peters, Steven Covey and many others all agree that leadership, however defined, is the single most important element in a good organization becoming a great one. It would be difficult to find a healthy and successful organization over the long term without a good leader. This writer believes the field of police work is no different.

The idea of the police leader being essential to the organization is no better stated than by scholars V. A. Leonard and Harry W. Moore. They wrote:

"Leadership is the most important single factor in the success or failure of police operations. Invariably in observing a successful police organization one finds a strong executive who has been the driving force in elevating the level of performance. Conversely, where mediocrity or failure characterizes the work of a police organization, it generally can be traced to incompetence in management. The fundamental basis for the success of a police enterprise is to be found in the ideas and efforts of the police chief executive."⁸

The singular importance of police leaders and their ability to affect the health of a community cannot be understated. It is critical that they must be qualified and competent individuals to ensure the growth and innovation needed to address a complex and changing set of possible futures.

For American society to prosper it must learn from its past to better understand the future. But what is the lesson? This may be summarized best by FBI Special Agent and futurist William Tafoya who says: "Bold leadership today is essential for...law enforcement reform."⁹ And also by retired Deputy Superintendent of Police Services in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, Chris Braiden:

"...police organizations are very difficult ships to turn around....our current chiefs happen to be steersmen at perhaps the most turbulent period in the history of modern policing."¹⁰

It is clear that police are critically important and can influence the very health and welfare of a community. What has been learned is that the leader of such an organization bears the burden of being the most important factor in its success or failure. Police chiefs provide the direction and motivation to get the agency where it needs to go. A leader is not alone in this task, but without one, the organization would fail.

The need for leadership is established beyond any doubt in both past and present literature, signaling a challenge for the future. But who will answer this call? What are these leaders like and where will they come from? How will they be recognized? Or even, how will they be found?

A CURRENT VIEW

Characteristics

If, in fact, history is a window to the future, then an examination of what current police chiefs are like should provide some insight as to what would be needed for the successful and effective chief of the future.

In 1985 the California Police Chiefs Association conducted a survey of their membership to try and obtain a basic profile of a police chief. Their data represented a 45% response rate (157 chiefs) and the mean figures are indicated below:

Age		47.4 years
Years Law Enforcement Experience		24.3 years
Time as Police Chief		7.6 years
Education	High School/GED	5%
	Associate Degree	19%
	Bachelors Degree	25%
	Masters Degree	44%
	Doctorate Degree	11%
	FBI National Academy	37%

As part of an independent research project for the Command College, an executive development program of the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST), a similar survey was conducted in November of 1993. This smaller sampling of 22 chiefs, randomly selected from throughout California, was done without knowledge of the results, or existence, of the 1985 California Chiefs Association survey. A summary of the 1993 mean data is presented below:

Age		48 years
	When First Appointed Chief	42.6 years
Years Law Enforcement Experience		25.4 years
	When First Appointed Chief	18.9 years
Time as Police Chief (Present Position)		3.2 years
	Total Time as Police Chief	5.1 years
Education	Bachelors Degree	65%
	Masters Degree	35%
	Command College	35%

While neither survey is scientifically based, or overwhelming in the number of chiefs contacted, there was similar information collected, allowing some basic comparisons. The data suggests that the age of police chiefs is about the same but that the time in the position of police chief has dropped from over 7 years to around 5 years. The basic overall level of education has risen significantly if you consider the number of chiefs with Bachelor's degrees. The Command College was in its early

stages and not part of the data collected in the 1985 survey. However, in 1993, just 8 years later, 35% of those chiefs interviewed were graduates of the program. There is no definitive data on this point, however, POST believes that 25% of the chiefs in California are Command College graduates. Either figure is significant considering the age of the program.

The survey data presented very basic information about police chiefs such as (1) their age, (2) their education level and (3) how long they tend to remain in the position. To broaden the perspective, a series of interviews with stakeholders was conducted. Twenty-two police chiefs, ten city managers, eight executive recruiters and ten persons considered to be experts in the field of policing were personally and individually contacted. Members of the various groups were questioned as to their views relating to the traits and characteristics needed to be both successful and effective as a police chief. The group of fifty interviewees identified forty-two separate characteristics a successful chief would possess.

Table 1 reflects the top 8 characteristics of the composite total of those responses. The first set of numbers in Table 1 represents the total number of times a particular trait was mentioned by the group and the second figure represents the percentage of the total of fifty. The traits of leadership, communication skills and integrity were all named by well over half of the entire group and are noticeably higher than the others. Other categories include being innovative, having broad experience, having a vision of the future, being educated and being a team player. These ranged from 42% to 22% in the order listed.

CHIEF'S CHARACTERISTICS

COMPOSITE PROFILE

LEADERSHIP	33	66%
COMMUNICATION SKILLS	31	62%
INTEGRITY	27	54%
BROAD EXPERIENCE	21	42%
EDUCATED	18	36%
INNOVATIVE	18	36%
VISION OF FUTURE	17	34%
TEAM PLAYER	11	22%

N = 50

Table 1

Table 2 depicts how each group rated the top 8 categories by comparing the percentage that each individual group mentioned a specific trait. There are some interesting relationships in this chart. With one exception, every category is mentioned by each group. What is even more interesting is that there are two distinct

CHARACTERISTICS

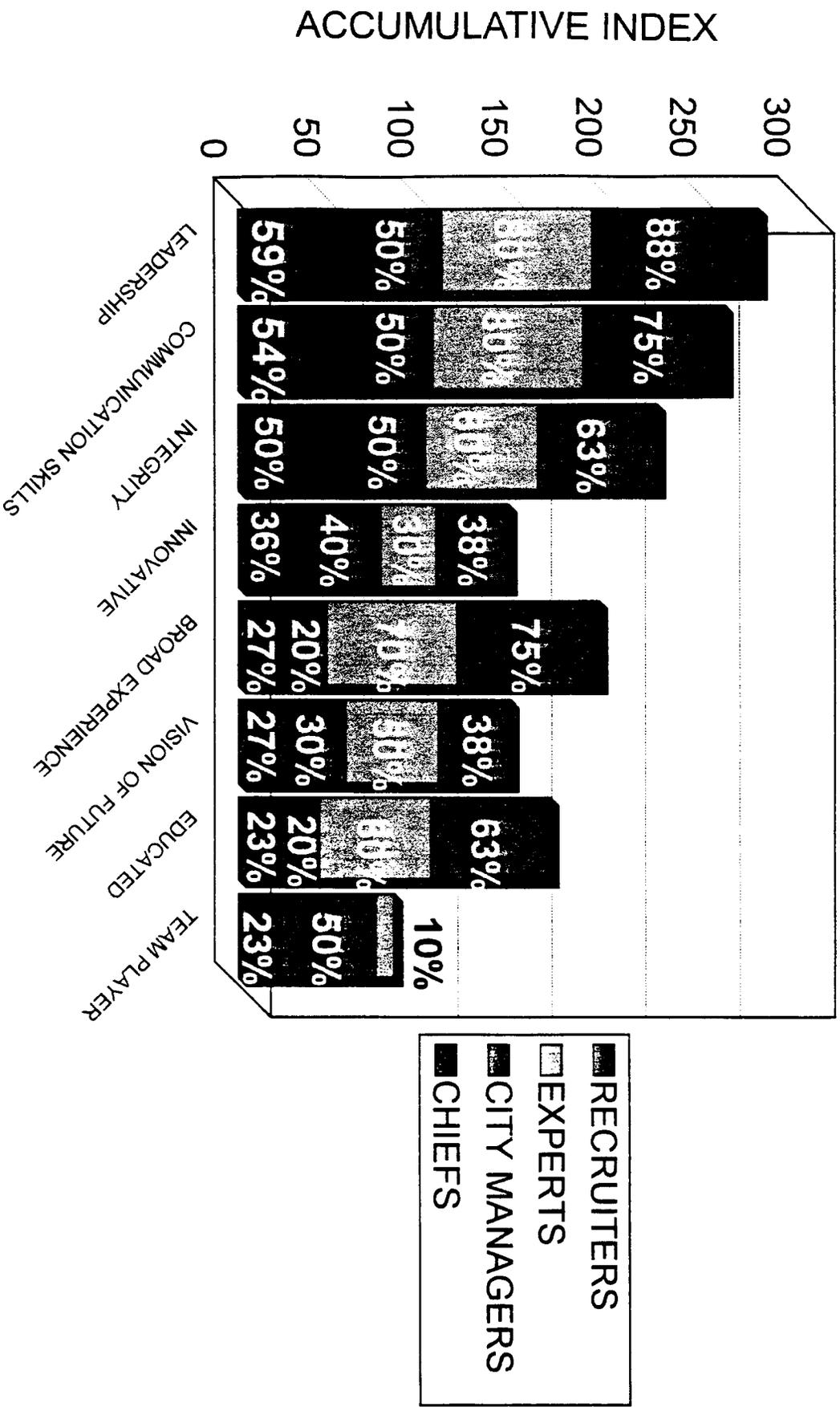


Table 2
9

subgroups among the four groups. In almost every case, the recruiters and the experts agree on the relative importance of a trait as a group, while the same is true for the chiefs and city managers. But, there is no real agreement between the two subgroups. In fact, there are considerable differences between the two subgroups in most categories. Identifying the differences between the groups would indicate that there is no single clear picture of what is needed to be a successful chief. This data could suggest that if recruiters and experts are influencing selection processes by screening applicants using their perceptions, they might be eliminating candidates that would otherwise be seen as highly qualified in the eyes of chiefs and city managers.

The three traits of leadership, communication skills and integrity are clearly consensus picks of the composite group. Beyond that, the question arises as to what type of person will be a successful and effective chief. The data suggests there are many divergent views about the appropriate characteristics and traits needed to be a successful chief. The individual or specific experience and perceptions of those interviewed appear to dictate the responses, and those varied greatly. Based on this data the individuals or groups that are responsible for selecting police chiefs, or at least knowing what it takes to be one, cannot agree how what criteria is essential. How, then, can any single process or person accomplish the complex task of selection?

Issues

The recruiters were not questioned about their views on the significant issues facing policing in the future leaving forty-two interviewees for this category. Those individuals interviewed identified over thirty different issues. There was not only wide spread

ISSUES

COMPOSITE PROFILE

ECONOMY	29	72.5%
COMMUNITY POLICING	20	50%
DIVERSITY	13	32%
RECRUITMENT / RETENTION	13	32%
VIOLENCE IN COMMUNITY	12	30%
POLITICAL INTERFERENCE	8	20%
POLICE OFFICER ASSOCIATIONS	7	17.5%
TRAINING	6	15%
REGIONALIZATION	6	15%

N = 42

Table 3

between the groups, but also divergent views within each. However, in looking at the composite total there is consensus on some topics. Table 3 depicts the top 9 issues as selected by the forty-two interviewees. The first number represents the number of

times the issue was selected and the second represents the percentage of the overall group of forty-two. Clearly, according to these results, the economy and community policing emerge as the biggest issues facing policing. The second level of issues include diversity, recruitment/retention and violence in the community. The remaining issues are below this second level, but closely grouped.

The significance of this information is not in the composite list, but in comparing the differences between the three groups. Table 4 represents each issue by group in bar graph form. The numbers represent the percentage of times each issue was mentioned by each group. For example, 81% of the chiefs felt that the economy would be a significant issue, while only 40% of the experts felt the same. This information suggests the chiefs and experts agree generally on the issues with the differences coming to light on how strongly each group feels on a given topic. Seventy percent of the experts felt that community policing was a significant issue but only 40% of them thought the economy was worth mentioning. Conversely, just over half of the chiefs identified community policing with over 80% naming the economy. Perhaps the most surprising data here are the issues not identified by the city managers. No city manager raised the issues of violence, training, regionalization, police associations or political interference as being significant. That city managers as a group identified less than half of the nine most significant issues (of the composite group) could lead to any number of suppositions. The same could be said for the divergent views within the other groups relative to the importance of each issue. These differences would seem to be a product of the experience and environment of those interviewed within the

ISSUES

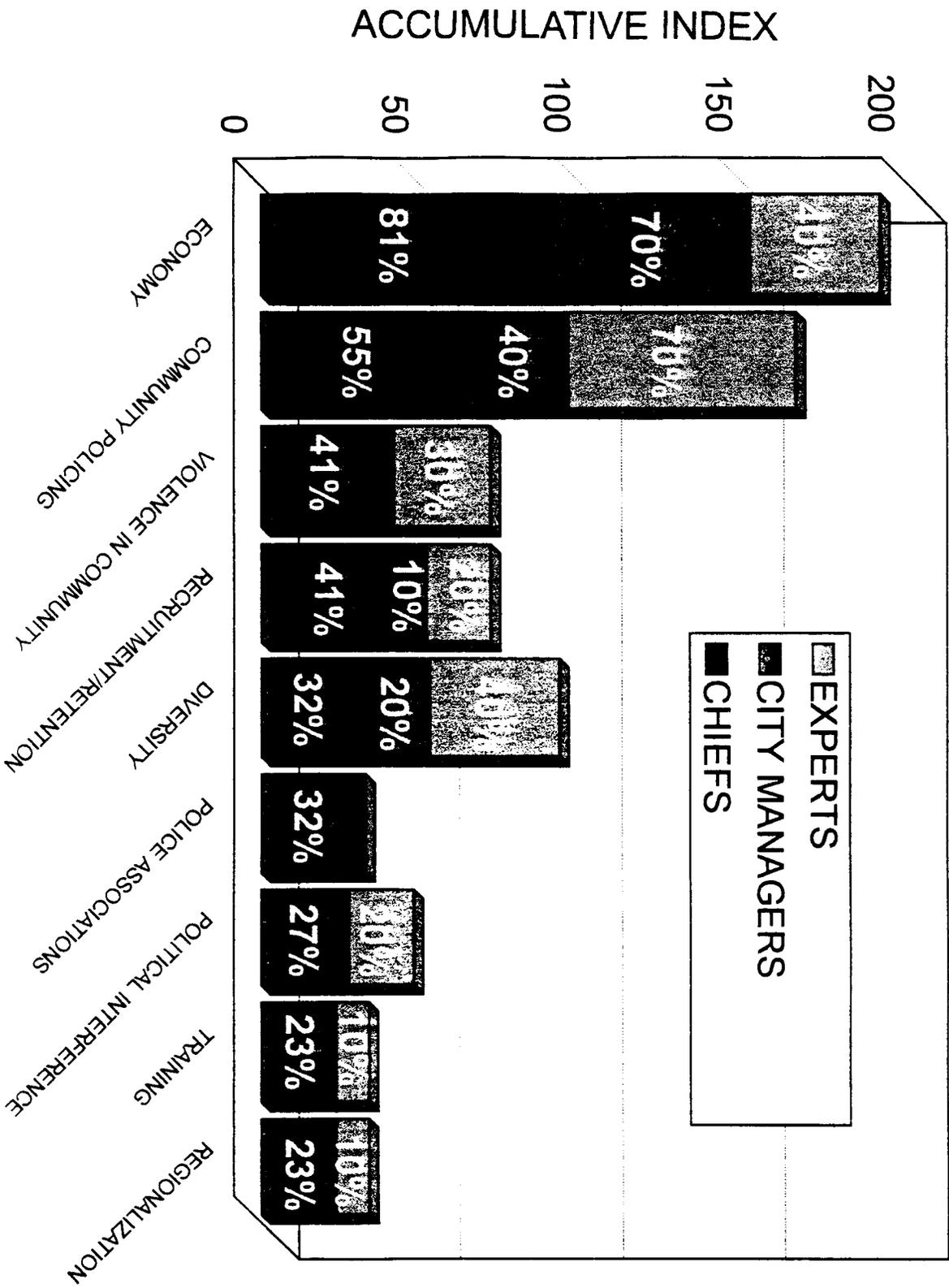


Table 4

framework of their roles.

Selection Processes

In interviewing the fifty individuals there was no one process that was used by a majority. The alternatives ranged from appointing a person utilizing no process at all to an elaborate multi-day assessment that sounded more like an ordeal than a test. What did seem consistent was that the type of assessment instrument or process used was not dictated by any factor other than the individual preference of the person directing the selection. What this suggests is that the process is not being used to identify or test for a particular trait or characteristic, but only for what information the person directing the process feels important. During the interviews, the questioning was expanded on this point to determine what it was the process was trying to accomplish. What need was being met? In most cases it was only being used to separate and rank candidates on a general basis, rather than to look at any specific characteristics or talent. This gives the process a distinctly subjective quality, which may not be the best method for selecting an individual as important as a police chief. Further examination revealed that what was believed to be important in any given process was the subjective beliefs of the decision-makers, who were city managers in most cases. It is a reasonable assumption that most city managers are familiar with the issues within their city but, are their perceptions based on objective data? As can be seen by the interviews there are any number of biases and differences of opinion which could adversely affect any given process.

Observations

When attempting to identify the chiefs candidate who has the best potential to be both successful and effective, what happens if the characteristics of the different cities or environments differ from one to another? Would it affect the issues to be faced or the traits needed to be a successful chief for the individual jurisdictions? The information supports the view that it would alter both of those factors. Is the process of selecting a police chief about discovering a universal profile that is generic to the position, or, is it obtaining the best fit between traits/skills and context? Looking at the wide range of issues identified by the different groups gives some general direction but emphasizes that each city is unique and therefore has unique needs. If there are unique needs in each situation then there are going to be traits and characteristics that are also unique to that given situation. Simply put, there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all chief. A particular individual might be a perfect selection for a given city based on his or her unique capabilities and talent. At the same time they might not be suited for another position that has different needs. This is not to say that the person is unqualified, but, it is saying that they may be better suited to one position than another. Thus, the chances of being successful in one venue over another depend on context.

The conclusion is evident that the **single most important factor** in criteria for selection of a police chief is the **fit between the individual and the organization/community, and vice versa**. It would appear that the key is to determine what those critical needs are in advance and then recruit and select with them in mind.

GETTING FIT

Someone once said:

"If you don't know what you're looking for, anything you get will do."

With that in mind, completing a comprehensive needs assessment prior to beginning any recruitment should be considered an integral and critical part of the selection process. This can provide valuable information about the specific characteristics and skills that an ideal candidate should possess. The importance of this phase should not be underestimated. If a thorough, accurate and objective analysis is not done in an impartial and professional manner, the chances of having a successful process, and potentially a successful chief, are severely diminished. For this reason, it is recommended that a professional consultant be considered to conduct this phase of the process. Professional consultants add credibility and objectivity as well as being familiar with the techniques and methodologies helpful in completing such an analysis.

The scope of the assessment is the next critical factor. It should include both internal and external stakeholders and incorporate as much data as possible. If the particular police agency is small enough, consideration should be given to interviewing everyone, both sworn and non-sworn, from all levels of the organization. If that is not practical, there should be input from representatives of all those groups and levels mentioned. Other city departments that interact with the police department on a regular basis should be contacted for information. Some to be considered include public works, traffic engineering, parks and recreation, city attorney's office and the fire

department. Other governmental agencies should not be overlooked. The District Attorney's office, county, state and federal law enforcement, county government officials and the local police chief's association can all provide valuable data and insight.

Involving the overall community in the process will be important to its success. Gathering information from the various factions involves them in a meaningful way in the selection of their police chief. This not only makes sense by creating better buy-in within the community, it follows the basic principles of community oriented policing. Some suggested groups or individuals would be the various minority associations or representatives, religious groups, educators and the medical community. Other possibilities include the different professional service organizations such as Rotary or Lion's Clubs, the Chamber of Commerce and the local media.

There are many other potential sources of information. Just as there are unique characteristics for any candidate, so to are there unique characteristics to any community. The specific types of individuals and groups that should be contacted will vary from community to community, depending on the demographics and individual makeup specific to it.

The city council has a critical role in the process. It will obviously provide valuable insight to the consultant on the needs of a police chief from the elected official's perspective. But, more importantly, they must be committed to an independent and objective process, believing in the need to select the best individual for the job. They must provide an appropriate atmosphere (and quite possibly funding) for this

effort. Without their support, the most critical person in the process will not be able to effectively implement this strategy. The city manager.

Most city managers interviewed for this project agreed that the selection of a police chief was the most important personnel decision they could make in their community. Recognizing that, city managers must seek to have the best information upon which to base their selections. This places the manager in a position of trying to control the pace and scope of a process without influencing or affecting its outcome. At the same time, he or she must provide valuable perspective without allowing it to have more weight than is appropriate. While some of this responsibility rests with the consultant, the manager's position can be persuasive. The professional city manager can accomplish this task.

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

Once the needs assessment is completed and the composite profile of the ideal candidate becomes clear, the process can proceed with a more defined purpose. With the specific characteristics and traits identified a recruitment should be more focused and efficient. After the initial screening of candidates, specific testing methodologies can be employed which will evaluate individual needs rather than general information. For example, if your assessment identified a need for your new chief to be highly skilled in critical incident management, an instrument to test that capability in all candidates could be incorporated into the process. This offers objective criteria and a meaningful purpose to those exercises. Information from the needs assessment can also be used to identify areas of a candidate's past performance that can be evaluated during the

background portion of the process.

Armed with specific, objective criteria and data, a city manager will be able to reach a more informed decision in a domain considered critical to the community. To attain this, the integrated system described is suggested. This scenario creates the unique opportunity to place an individual into a position for which he or she has the specific characteristics and traits needed to be successful. This success is likely to be shared by the chief, the city manager and, most importantly, the community itself.

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

This unique approach carries with it several other benefits. This assessment will provide a new chief with a good insight into the community and organization. It will assist in a quicker assimilation into both, and may provide direction as to where his or her initial efforts should be applied. This can serve the same purpose for an insightful city manager. It also gives the city manager a means to evaluate the performance of the new chief in the first year. One that is clear to both parties and objectively established prior to the position being accepted. Without a doubt, there are challenges associated with this approach. This process takes more time than normally associated with a selection and the potential exists for "paralysis by analysis". An effective manager aware of the potential should be able to prevent those effects. Initially, the possible budget implications might appear too great to overcome but, when one considers the importance of the decision and its impact on the community, it appears to make it money well spent.

CONCLUSION

The position of police chief is one that can have a great impact on the health and moral character of a community. As such, the selection of an individual to that position must be carefully considered. There is no one-size-fits-all-police-chief because there are specific and unique needs for each community. Those needs must be identified before an effective search process can be undertaken. An objective and comprehensive needs assessment is not only an integral part of any selection process, it is arguably the most critical component. If conventional methods continue to be employed, they will likely be subject to the individual prejudices and biases of those in control of the process. The information presented here shows a high probability that personal or group agendas and perceptions might prevent the most qualified persons from ever being considered. This could result in a city manager selecting the right person, but for the wrong position.

A city manager needs objective data for an accurate perspective about the needs of the total community and organization. Further, the community should be meaningfully involved in the selection of **their** police chief. Additionally, If he or she is to be successful, a new police chief needs to have as much information about current issues as possible when assuming his or her post. A comprehensive needs assessment meets these needs and creates an environment where the new chief is more likely to be a success, than a failure.

"Knowing what you are looking for makes it easier to find."

ENDNOTES

1. Celinda Lake, "Voters Want Action on Crime", USA TODAY, (August 25, 1994).
2. "Crime in the U.S.", Federal Bureau of Investigation, (Washington D.C., 1991).
3. William J. Bennett, The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators, (Washington D.C.: Empower America, The Heritage Foundation and Free Congress Foundation, March 1993), p. 2.
4. "Crime in the U. S."(Years 1960 through 1991), Federal Bureau of Investigation, (Washington D.C.: 1991).
5. Daryl F. Gates, Chief: My Life in the LAPD, (New York: Bantam Books, 1992) p.178.
6. Donald G. Hanna, Police Executive Leadership, (Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing, 1990) p.xiii.
7. Michael J. Kelly, Police Chief Selection: A Handbook for Local Government. (Washington, D.C.: International City Managers Association, 1975.) p.3.
8. V. A. Leonard and Harry W. Moore, Police Organization and Management, (Unknown), Re-printed: Eugene J. Hernandez, "The Future of Police Chief Capabilities", (Sacramento, CA: POST Command College Paper 15-0299, January 1993) p.ix.
9. William I. Tafoya, "The Future of Policing", FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, (Special Futures Issue, January 1990), p.14.
10. Chris Braiden, "Bank Robberies and Stolen Bikes: Thoughts of a Street Cop." Canadian Police Journal, (Vol. 10, No. 1, 1986), p.ii-iii.