

THE ASSIMILATION OF OPENLY  
GAY AND LESBIAN POLICE OFFICERS  
INTO THE LAW ENFORCEMENT CULTURE

Journal Article

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for:

COMMISSION ON PEACE OFFICER STANDARDS AND TRAINING

COMMAND COLLEGE

CLASS 19

JANUARY 1995

## INTRODUCTION

This article summarizes the results of a year-long futures study conducted by the author for the Command College, an educational program for California law enforcement executives sponsored by the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST). The study examined the future assimilation of one cultural group which has recently surfaced in California law enforcement.

The group studied was openly gay and lesbian police officers. Although gays and lesbians are not new to law enforcement ranks, it was not until recently that they have publicly disclosed their sexual orientation in significant numbers outside of the San Francisco area. Now, with social, political, and legislative support, more of these officers are beginning to identify themselves as openly gay or lesbian to their coworkers and department management.

There is every reason to believe that the number of openly gay and lesbian police officers will continue to grow and become more visible and powerful. Law enforcement leaders would be negligent if they fail to recognize that their organizations will be impacted by the emerging issue created by this increasingly visible population within their ranks.

## BACKGROUND

The face of California is changing. The demographics of the most populous state are shifting dramatically and more rapidly than at any time in history. In all the world, the State of California has perhaps the most diverse group of people living within a common boundary. Virtually all ethnicities, religions, economic lifestyles, educational levels, and cultures are represented.

This diversity helps to make California the vibrant, dynamic region that it is. Likewise, this diversity also makes California an extremely challenging area for leaders, both public and private, to manage.

It is the responsibility of law enforcement to police the communities of California. There is a common belief among law enforcement executives, political leaders, and the majority of the public, that police departments should reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. Virtually all community-based policing models include cultural diversity of the law enforcement agency as a basic tenet.

The changing California demographics pose a difficult challenge to law enforcement if a true commitment to cultural diversity exists. Rules, policies, procedures, and statutory law guide law enforcement agencies towards developing affirmative action programs that will assist in the development of diverse organizations. However, these directives require attention to be focused only on those groups that are recognized by Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws.

In growing numbers, law enforcement managers are focusing their attention and limited resources on achieving a workforce which reflects parity with the ethnicity and gender of the civilian workforce of the community served. Forward-thinking leaders, however, recognize that gender and ethnicity are not the only means of identifying the community or workforce. There are a variety of other factors, including religion, age, culture, and sexual orientation that help identify an individual or group within the culture of a community. The prudent leader recognizes that each of these factors, and a host of others, help make up the culture of the community and the organization.

Since the personnel resources of most law enforcement agencies come from the communities served, it is reasonable to assume that nearly all elements of society are represented at some level within the law enforcement profession. Some groups, or elements of society, have surfaced, or become more visible, and are arguing for increased recognition and status. Other groups have remained underground, but may surface in the future.

Historically, as new groups have emerged, their assimilation into the law enforcement culture has not been easy. Forty to fifty years ago, law enforcement was in the midst of an evolutionary wave resulting in racial integration. As late as the early 60's, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) had segregated car assignments, and black officers were assigned black areas with black partners. The transition to an integrated police department required the leadership of William H. Parker, and it was met with resistance by some (1). Most other departments in California experienced similar circumstances, and in many departments, white males still dominate the ranks. A recent study by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) identified several Southern California departments as "segregated" because of their inability to reflect the ethnic diversity of the area served (2).

Nearly all of today's law enforcement leaders have personally experienced the assimilation of the previous last wave. Women began to enter the profession of law enforcement on equal status with men approximately twenty years ago. According to POST, nearly 10 percent of the sworn officers in California are now women. Sheriff's department average 14 percent, municipal agencies average 7 percent, and State agencies average 4 percent.

Neither ethnic minorities nor women had an easy transition breaking into the law enforcement culture. Even though they are currently represented in greater numbers and percentages than at any time in the past, these groups are still not fully accepted or totally assimilated. While the working environment is considerably better now than it was for the "pioneers" of each group, complaints filed with the Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) and law suits directed towards government agencies and chiefs of police are proof that all is not well.

California law enforcement is facing a new evolutionary wave of human resources - openly gay and lesbian officers. The most current and comprehensive study on the prevalence of gays in the population is the study conducted by the Rand Corporation that was sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense for President Clinton's policy on gays in the military (3). The Rand report discusses the problem with surveying the population regarding sexual orientation and concluded that because homosexual behavior is stigmatized, the prevalence of homosexuality in society is probably underreported. A commonly quoted figure is that 10 percent of society is gay. The Rand report, which examined a number of previously conducted studies in the United States, concluded that the figure of 10 percent is probably too high. Regardless of what percentage of society is gay or lesbian, it is an undisputed fact that a statistically significant, yet unknown portion of society is gay or lesbian. And it is from this society that law enforcement draws to fill its ranks.

Gays and lesbians have probably always been within the ranks of law enforcement. It is now believed by many that J. Edgar Hoover, the founder and first director of the FBI, was gay (4). However, the emergence, or "coming out of the closet," of gays and lesbians has been a fairly recent phenomenon. As recently as

1990, the author of an Independent Study Project for the Command College conducted a survey of 21 California police departments and learned that only three (all in the San Francisco Bay area) had openly gay or lesbian officers. Most of the other 18 agency managers contacted assumed that there were lesbians in their departments, but stated there were no gay males (5).

In the short period of time since that study was published, much has changed. POST has published a training syllabus on "Sexual Orientation Training Course for Law Enforcement." The LAPD currently has ten openly gay or lesbian officers and some of them are utilized for recruiting events in the gay community and training for other officers on gay and lesbian cultural diversity.

While the training described above emphasizes educating officers about the diversity in the community and is designed to build bridges with the gay and lesbian community, diversity within the ranks of law enforcement is also expanding. The number of openly gay and lesbian officers in law enforcement is growing. The New York City Police Department (NYPD) has over 100 openly gay and lesbian officers and a fraternal organization known as the Gay Officers Action League (GOAL). Leaders of that organization estimate that of the 33,000 NYPD officers, approximately 3,000 are gay or lesbian (6).

California also has an organization which represents gay police officers. The Southern California Chapter of the Golden State Peace Officers Association has over 200 mostly closeted members representing many departments and officers of virtually all ranks.

Just as the percentage of gays and lesbians in society is unknown and underreported, it is safe to assume that the percentage of gay and lesbian police officers is considerably higher than those that are openly known. The same causes for gays in society to remain closeted exist in the law enforcement profession. In fact, the overall conservative makeup of the law enforcement profession and the stigma attached to being gay provides even more of a reason for a gay or lesbian officer to remain closeted.

While the number of openly gay and lesbian officers is growing, the fact is they probably represent only a small fraction of the gay and lesbian officers in the state. As society continues to become more accepting of the gay and lesbian lifestyle and as the gay movement continues to gain momentum, more people will be willing to disclose their sexual orientation. This will include law enforcement officers. Therefore, the "wave" of openly gay and lesbian officers has just begun.

At the beginning stages of the research, a literature search, series of interviews with experts, and focus group exercise identified an issue question and three sub-issues. The issue question researched in the study was:

What should California law enforcement agencies do to assist the assimilation of openly gay and lesbian officers into the law enforcement culture by the year 2000?

The sub-issues identified and researched were:

What policies should be developed to eliminate discrimination directed toward gay and lesbian officers?

What internal and external training should be developed and provided?

What will be the impact of the assimilation of openly gay and lesbian officers on attitudes toward law enforcement in the gay and lesbian community?

The rest of the project consisted of a look into the future of the issue followed by the development of a strategic plan and a transition management plan.

### FUTURES STUDY

An important part of the strategic planning process is to identify the desired future so that an organization can help guide itself toward that future state. Organizations that effectively plan can help achieve the desired future. Organizations that don't are left to a future which is developed by other influences, the environment, and fate.

To plan for the future, it becomes necessary to study the future to determine potential scenarios. A futures study examines possible trends and events which will impact an issue. Once trends and events are forecast, the strategic planner can identify a course of action to achieve the desired future.

An event is a single, discrete, one-time occurrence which could have an impact on an issue. A trend is a series of related, or similar events by which change can be measured over time.

To forecast the future as it relates to gay and lesbian police officers, the author convened a panel of law enforcement and civilian experts to participate in a Nominal Group Technique (NGT) exercise. The purpose of the NGT exercise was to identify those trends and events which, if they occur, will impact the future of the emerging issue.

The NGT panel consisted of eleven participants. Seven were law enforcement officers representing all ranks between police officer and commander. Two of the four civilians were government employees and two were in the private sector. Four of the eleven were openly gay or lesbian, with two of them being police officers, one being an employee of another government agency, and the fourth being a private businessman who also co-chairs a law enforcement advisory group on gay and lesbian issues.

Using a round-robin discussion, the NGT panelists identified 38 trends and 46 events. The panel then reduced the list of trends and events to ten each. The criteria used to reduce the lists was to identify the trends and events which, if occurred, would have the greatest impact on the future of the issue. The panelists then weighed the importance of each trend and event. The following tables show the top ten trends and events.

#### TOP TEN TRENDS

Level of hate crimes directed towards gays and lesbians

Amount of anti-gay discrimination legislation

Level of gay and lesbian political influence

Amount of backlash directed toward gay and lesbian officers by straight officers

Number of officers disciplined for harassment directed towards gay and lesbian officers

Level of acceptance of gay and lesbian officers by straight officers

Level of Chief of Police support of anti-gay discrimination policies

Level of police officer training on gay and lesbian issues

Number of civil cases based on sexual orientation

Number of domestic partnership policies

#### TOP TEN EVENTS

Passage of domestic partnership law

High ranking officer identifies self as gay or lesbian

Cure for AIDS discovered

Sexual orientation becomes protected under the EEOC

Military ends ban on homosexuality

A church takes a stand supporting gays and lesbians

Mandatory hiring goals for gay and lesbian police officers

Police union takes stand supporting gay and lesbian officers

Chief of Police participates in a major gay event

Major scandal involving gay or lesbian officers

The panelists were also asked to individually forecast the top ten trends and events. For the trends, they looked back and

analyzed the level of the trend three years prior in addition to forecasting where they believed the trend would be in three years and six years. The panelists used a value of 100 for the present time.

To forecast the events, the panelists estimated the number of years before the probability of each event occurring exceeded zero, the probability of the event occurring three years in the future, and the probability of the event occurring six years in the future. The panelists also forecast the positive and negative impact each event would have on the issue.

Following the NGT exercise, the author conducted a cross-impact analysis of the ten events identified by the panelists. This process involved projecting the impact of each forecasted event on each of the other events in the form of a plus or minus percentage change over the original forecast. Once this was done, a computer program was used to develop the final probabilities for each event.

An interesting result of the cross-impact analysis was that the final probabilities of the majority of the events was high. Six of the ten events had a probability above the 90th percentile. This shows that it was the opinion of the NGT panelists and the cross-impact analysis evaluators that most of the events would occur within six years. Only two of the events (a cure for AIDS and a church taking a stand supporting gays and lesbians) had a final probability below the 52nd percentile.

The next step in the futures study was to develop three scenarios. A scenario is a fictional narrative written from a point in the future looking back over time at the forecasted events as if they had occurred. A scenario is intended to clarify the causes and consequences of major developments and

thereby facilitate the identification and evaluation of relevant policies or actions.

Utilizing the computer program provided by the Command College staff, the author developed three scenarios based on the events forecasted by the NGT panel. They were a most likely scenario, in which nothing was done to impact the events; a best case scenario, where efforts were made to manage the issue in a positive manner; and a worst case scenario, where the worst events occur and everything that can go wrong does.

To develop a strategic plan, the best case scenario was used since it was the one based on efforts to manage the issue in a positive manner. The scenario was based on the fictional city of Coyote Valley, a community of 250,000 located in an urban county in the central part of the state. The demographics of Coyote Valley mirror the rest of the state and there is a well organized and vocal gay and lesbian community representing approximately 8% of the population. One of the City Councilmembers is openly lesbian. There is an active gay and lesbian community center and an activist organization known as the Coyote Valley Gay Action League (CVGAL). Coyote Valley also has an assorted variety of organizations representing conservative groups, religious groups, and the business community.

The Coyote Valley Police Department (CVPD) is led by Chief Frank Wolfe, a 27 year veteran who has been chief for five and one half years. He has a good relationship with the City Manager and the City Council. The CVPD has the highest ranking openly gay police officer in the state, a captain who recently came out of the closet. The CVPD has a total strength of 400 personnel, with 300 of them being sworn officers. The CVPD is progressive in the areas of community based policing and affirmative action. Because the demographics of the city are rapidly changing, the

department does not reflect parity with the civilian population. However, aggressive recruiting has made progress in increasing the representation of Hispanics, Asians, and women.

### STRATEGIC PLAN

A strategic plan is used to help drive an organization towards a desired future state. For the purpose of the research study, the author continued to use the fictional city of Coyote Valley for the development of a strategic plan.

In a strategic planning process, it is important to identify a mission that will define areas of operation, communicate inside and outside the organization, express values, establish a foundation for strategies and decisions, guide behavior, build commitment, and ensure consistency.

The author created an issue-specific (micro) mission statement for the human resource management of the CVPD. It was designed to reflect the Department's commitment towards developing a discrimination-free workforce which reflects the diversity of the city.

The Coyote Valley Police Department (CVPD) recognizes and appreciates the diversity of the residents of Coyote Valley. To better serve the citizens of Coyote Valley, it is a goal of the CVPD to reflect the diversity of the city and to ensure that all groups represented in the community have equal opportunity for employment. The CVPD respects the differences that each ethnic, gender, and cultural group provide to the workforce. The CVPD strives to ensure that the workplace is free of any type of conduct, behavior, policies, procedures, or materials which could create a

hostile environment based on ethnicity, gender, age, religion, disability, or sexual orientation.

Another important part of the strategic planning process is a situational analysis. This includes an honest evaluation of the internal and external environments as they relate to the potential for change. The environment outside the organization presents opportunities and threats to the mission, and the internal strengths and weaknesses of the organization provide the platform for the success or failures of the desired future.

Since the strategic plan was created for a fictional city, the situational analysis was based on the scenario, the trends and events identified by the NGT panel, and the general law enforcement environment in California.

Externally, there are both threats and opportunities for change to occur. On the positive side, society is becoming more accepting of the gay and lesbian lifestyle, resulting in more people coming out of the closet. The political influence of gays and lesbians is growing. Some cities already have anti-discrimination policies. Most chiefs, city managers, and elected officials embrace workforce diversity. In Coyote Valley, the Chief has a good relationship with the lesbian councilmember and CVGAL. Finally, the potential for civil litigation stemming from a discrimination lawsuit could provide an incentive for preventative measures.

The possibility of civil litigation also poses a threat in the form of a potential settlement in case of a lawsuit. The continuing fiscal problems facing California government reduce the potential for outreach and training programs. In society, backlash continues to be a problem. The conservative right continues to be vocal, and most police officers are conservative

and resistant to accept change. In Coyote Valley, there is an organized conservative group that is against gay and lesbian issues.

Internally, there are both strengths and weaknesses. The strengths include an already diverse workforce in Coyote Valley which will be more willing to accept a new group. The Chief of Police is progressive and sincerely wants to improve relations with the gay and lesbian community and create a discrimination-free environment. The Chief has a good relationship with the rest of city government.

The weaknesses include the general conservative nature of police officers. Most officers don't understand gay and lesbian issues and have little desire to learn. The CVPD has no openly gay or lesbian officers. Finally, the prior chief of police was homophobic and he still resides in Coyote Valley and is vocal on various issues.

The next step in the strategic planning process is to identify the key stakeholders and analyze their assumptions about the issue. Stakeholders are defined as individuals, groups, or organizations who are impacted by what an organization does about an issue; are able to impact an organization about an issue; or are concerned about an issue and/or organization.

In addition to stakeholders, "snaildarters" should also be identified and their assumptions determined. A snaildarter is an unanticipated individual, group, or organization which could be an unforeseen obstacle that could impact an issue.

The author identified eleven stakeholders and two snaildarters.

Using several members of the Command College class, the author conducted a Modified Policy Delphi panel to identify alternative strategies to assist in the assimilation of openly gay and lesbian officers. An analysis of the nine specific strategies identified by the panel revealed that they fell into one of three general strategies. The first general strategy was to develop a program to improve external relations with the gay and lesbian community. This program would include developing a gay and lesbian community advisory panel, identifying and developing a CVPD liaison officer for the gay and lesbian community, and developing a public relations program to improve relations.

The second general strategy was to develop a program to improve the internal environment for gay and lesbian officers. This strategy included developing and implementing gay and lesbian cultural diversity training, developing a mentoring program for gay and lesbian employees, a recruitment program for gays and lesbians, and identifying a gay role model within the department.

The third general strategy was to develop a program to establish hiring and promotion goals for gays and lesbians. This strategy would require legislation making gays and lesbians a protected class before goals could be established.

A careful analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the three general strategies revealed that the preferred strategy to use for the strategic plan was a combination of the first and second general strategies. The preferred strategy consisted of four elements, each of which complements the others. The benefits of this plan would include improving the environment inside the department for gay and lesbian officers while improving relations with the gay and lesbian community.

The first element of the program would be the development of a gay and lesbian community advisory panel. This would serve as an information link between the chief and the community.

Recommendations, problems, and rumor control would flow in both directions.

A departmental liaison officer for the gay and lesbian community would be the Chief's spokesperson and serve as an ombudsman. The liaison officer would be the pipeline through which most information would flow.

A gay and lesbian recruitment program would ensure that no intentional or unintentional barriers would exist to prevent members of the gay and lesbian community from becoming police officers. Specific goals would not be established nor would people be recruited based on their sexual orientation. Instead, recruitment events would occur within the gay and lesbian community, one that has been ignored in the past.

Finally, a gay and lesbian cultural diversity training and educational program would introduce the CVPD to members of the gay and lesbian community. If possible, an openly gay or lesbian officer would participate in the training. This would help to build a bridge between the officers and the community, breakdown stereotypes, and improve relations.

Collectively, these four elements constitute the CVPD Gay and Lesbian Cultural Diversity Program. Before the program could be implemented, support would have to be gained internally and externally. The Chief of Police would have to meet with the key stakeholders. Internally, this would include the command staff, union president, and rank and file officers. Externally, the Chief should meet with various community groups that would be

interested in the plan. He should also meet with the elected officials and gain the support of the City Manager. Finally, he should keep the local media informed and try to garner their editorial support.

The four elements of the plan should be implemented incrementally. The first two steps would be to create the community advisory panel and identify the liaison officer. A management level individual should serve in that role, and he or she should be selected based on the philosophical support of the strategic plan.

Once the advisory panel and liaison officer are in place, they should work together on developing the training program. This program should include members of the community and if there are any, one or more openly gay or lesbian officers who are respected within the department. The advisory panel should assist in the development of the curriculum.

The final step to be implemented would be the recruitment program. The advisory panel should assist in the development of the recruitment message which should not be significantly different from the regular recruitment message.

To monitor and evaluate the success of the plan, feedback will have to be obtained from the advisory panel, liaison officer, and representatives from within and outside the department.

#### TRANSITION MANAGEMENT

Implementing change within an organization involves moving from the present state, through a transition state, to the desired future state. The next section of the strategic planning process

is to create the process of getting from the current state to the desired future through the use of a transition management plan.

An important part of the transition management plan is to identify the "critical mass" and determine their level of support for change. The critical mass players are different from the stakeholders already identified. Critical mass consists of the minimum number of people who, if they support a change, will likely result in its success; and who, if they are against the change, will cause it to fail. The critical mass are usually members of the stakeholder group, but not all stakeholders are critical mass players because they cannot cause or prevent the success of a program.

For change to occur, none of the critical mass actors can be in a position to block the change. If they are, they must be moved to a position of at least letting change happen. There must be at least one person in a position of making the change happen.

The author identified the critical mass actors, their degree of commitment to change, and the minimum commitment needed from each for change to occur. The president of the police union and the co-chairs of the Coyote Valley Coalition of Christians and Jews were in a position to block change and needed to be moved to a position of letting change happen. The City Manager, the openly gay captain of detectives, and the other two captains were in positions of letting change happen. All of them needed to move to positions of helping change happen. The lesbian City Councilmember was in a position of making change happen, and she needed to be backed off to a position of helping change happen. If she were to take the lead, she could actually prevent the change from occurring. Finally, the Chief of Police needed to move from a position of helping change happen to one of making it occur.

Each of the critical mass actors would have to be convinced, using a variety of leadership and communication styles, to move their positions. The majority of this would be done by the Chief of Police.

There are a variety of management structures which can be used to implement change within an organization. This program attempts to change the "culture" of a police organization. To change the culture of any organization, and particularly a police agency, is challenging and must be handled thoughtfully. This program would be controversial in some circles. Hence, the management structure must be sensitive to "selling" the program.

The Chief of Police would have to be the driving force behind the implementation of the program. He would have to be personally committed and involved to some degree. However, as chief executive of a 400 person department, it would not be practical for him to assume the role of project manager. In this case, it would be most effective for the Chief of Police to identify, solicit, and form a committee consisting of representatives of the effective constituencies to implement the program. Once organized, a committee chairperson would be selected and that person would be the conduit of information to the chief. An additional role for the Chief of Police would be to deal with concerned parties who were not part of the committee and run "political interference" if necessary.

Among the individuals to be solicited to participate on the implementation committee would be the openly gay commanding officer, president of the police union, co-chairs of the Coalition of Christians and Jews, and a representative of the Gay Action League. The implementation committee's work would consist of overseeing the development and implementation of the four elements of the program.

Resistance to the implementation of a new program in large organizations is a natural occurrence. A variety of techniques would be required by the committee to effectively implement the program and its resultant change in the culture of the department. Among the technologies that could be utilized would be a Responsibility Chart which shows the required behavior of each actor towards the activities. The behavior classifications are 1) responsible to see that decisions or actions occur, 2) approval of actions or decisions, 3) support of actions or decisions, or 4) being kept informed of actions or decisions.

Other technologies would include pre and post surveys to measure the effectiveness; an on-going statistical analysis of data on trends such as sexual orientation hate crimes, personnel complaints, and discrimination complaints; regular feedback reporting; internal communications mechanisms; and a public/media relations program.

A transition management plan should have a timeline to serve as a roadmap. It provides a guide with milestones that help keep a change process or the development of a new program on course.

The author created a proposed timeline that would take one year for full implementation. Among the key milestones established were the selection of the liaison officer and definition of roles, identification, selection, and training of the advisory panel; design and obtain POST approval of the training curriculum; train the trainers and implement the training program; develop and implement the recruitment strategy; and obtain necessary budget support. The timeline also included the development of information systems to educate key people throughout the process.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research study addressed the issue of the assimilation of openly gay and lesbian police officers. When this issue was selected by the author as a topic for this independent study project, some skeptics questioned whether or not it was a futures issue. The argument being that gays and lesbians are not new to society, or to law enforcement.

A futures issue is one that is currently emerging and will impact the future of an organization. The futures issue that was researched was not whether there will be more gays and lesbians in the future of law enforcement. It is unknown how many officers currently are gay, not what the future for them will hold. What makes this a futures issue is the presence of openly gay and lesbian officers who are just beginning to make their presence known. What law enforcement leadership must do is manage the assimilation of this group better than the way previous groups have been, and continue to be managed. If law enforcement management fails to recognize that this "new wave" of employees is entering the profession, the mistakes of the past will repeat themselves.

The study identified one main issue and three related sub-issues. The purpose of the study was to answer the questions raised by these issues.

The main issue question was, "What should California law enforcement agencies do to assist the assimilation of openly gay and lesbian police officers into the law enforcement culture?" The answer lies fundamentally in developing a proactive attitude that there are gays and lesbians already employed. Departments should develop a program which focuses on training and education, recruitment, community input, and liaison. A program containing

these key elements and developed and implemented strategically will assist in the assimilation and reduce the potential for discrimination.

The first sub-issue question was, "What policies should be developed to eliminate discrimination directed toward gay and lesbian officers?" The answer to this question is that departments should establish a mission statement that guarantees equal opportunity for all employees. Departments should also develop anti-discrimination policies which include protection for employees based on their sexual orientation. The study showed that policies which focus on recruiting in all communities, including the gay and lesbian community, the development of a liaison officer to community advisory groups, and providing continuous training to department employees focusing on breaking down stereotypes and biases, will help create an environment free of discrimination.

The next sub-issue question was, "What internal and external training and continuing education programs should be developed and provided?" A continuous educational program which focuses on attitudes as well as behavior will improve the assimilation of gay and lesbian officers. The training should include representatives of the gay and lesbian community as well as openly gay and lesbian officers, if possible.

The final sub-issue question was, "What will be the impact of the assimilation of openly gay and lesbian officers on attitudes toward law enforcement in the gay and lesbian community?" The answer to this question was perhaps the most profound. The study showed that all elements of the recommended program to assist the assimilation of openly gay and lesbian officers will have a positive impact on the gay and lesbian community.

The goals of the training/education program were to create an environment inside the organization which reduces the likelihood of discrimination while improving relations with the gay and lesbian community at large. Both of these goals complement each other. As relationships improve externally, the internal environment will also improve. This will likely result in gay and lesbian officers feeling free to self-identify. The presence of more openly gay and lesbian officers and the absence of discrimination directed towards them will have a positive impact on relationships with the community.

The recruitment program would also have a positive impact with the community. It too, would also improve the environment internally for both closeted and openly gay and lesbian officers.

Simply stated, the ultimate goal of a gay and lesbian cultural diversity program would be to have an environment where a gay or lesbian officer could make a decision to identify him/herself without any fear of recrimination. Their decision should be based on other personal factors. Perhaps the best measure of success would be shown in the number of officers who come out of the closet. That, in itself, would indicate a change in the environment.

When the author initiated this project, he had hoped to identify some innovative ways to deal with an issue his own department was facing. The study did not identify any "leading edge of technology" approaches to solving a human resources problem. Some elements of the program developed in the project have already been implemented in departments in California. Recruitment in the gay and lesbian community and cultural diversity training are not unique. Yet, problems still exist. As recently as August, 1994, two officers filed suit in Los Angeles alleging discrimination based on sexual orientation (7).

While progress has been made, the problem still exists.

Future research in the area of gay and lesbian police officers could address the following areas:

Backlash directed toward gay and lesbian officers

Sexual harassment complaints involving employees of the same sex

The administration of discipline involving gay and lesbian officers, and misconduct based on sexual orientation issues

The impact of family leave policies

The impact of openly gay and lesbian officers on employee assistance programs and other support systems

Measurements of success, such as promotions and performance evaluations, comparing gay and lesbian officers with others

It is commonly believed that people are an organization's most valuable resource. No one can doubt this, yet employers regularly ignore efforts to address personnel issues. The reduction, or elimination, of discrimination requires continued emphasis. As a new group of employees enter a profession, their needs must be addressed. When this group consists of people who have historically been shunned by much of society and experienced discrimination, the potential threat is even greater. That is why the development of policies and procedures to eliminate discrimination and training are issues that must be addressed before problems surface. The improvement of relations with a portion of the community is an added benefit.

before problems surface. The improvement of relations with a portion of the community is an added benefit.

Law enforcement is facing many important issues. The assimilation of a new group of employees may not be the most burning one. Law enforcement tends to be reactive, waiting for issues to become problems before being dealt with. By addressing issues such as the assimilation of a new group into the culture, law enforcement leadership can prevent small problems from becoming big ones. That is one of the many challenges facing California law enforcement leadership as the millennium approaches.

## ENDNOTES

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