

**HOW WILL THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF
GENDER TRAINING IMPACT THE RETENTION OF FEMALE
PROBATIONARY EMPLOYEES AT THE WALNUT CREEK POLICE
DEPARTMENT BY THE YEAR 2005?**

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This Command College Independent Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue in law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future but rather to project a number of possible scenarios for strategic planning consideration.

Defining the future differs from analyzing the past because the future has not yet happened. In this project, useful alternatives have been formulated systematically so that the planner can respond to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing the future--creating it, constraining it, adapting to it. A futures study points the way.

The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College project are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

Issue Identification

A recent study conducted by the Hudson Institute, a well-known research organization, argued that “the gender shift may be the most significant change in the history of the American workplace.”¹ Indeed, the massive influx of women into the workforce over the last fifty years has significantly impacted business policies, programs, and cultures. But how important is this topic to the way law enforcement will manage people in the future? There are two perspectives to this question. Some experts argue that most of the major demographic and workplace changes have already occurred, making this issue less important in the future. Others claim that it will have an immense impact on the way people are managed well into the next century.²

A reasonable case can be made for both of these perspectives. Women represent nearly half (46%) of the U.S. labor force and the percentage of women in the work force (60%) has been steadily closing in on the percentage of men (75%) for decades.³ Most of the effects of these trends, it can be argued, have already played themselves out in corporate America. In fact, virtually all large companies have developed and implemented policies and programs meant to address remaining inequities between male and female workers. Many business leaders seem optimistic about accomplishing gender parity. A 1996 survey conducted by the Human Resources Institute suggested that “most CEO’s of major companies think that it is just a matter of time before women attain the top jobs in corporate America, that they simply haven’t been in the pipeline long enough.”⁴

However, some argue the battle for workplace parity is far from over. Though women occupy about half of all managerial and professional positions, those jobs tend to be in industries dominated by women or are clustered in the lower ranks of organization hierarchies in support

positions. Only about 5% of senior managers are women, and those managers, unlike their CEO's, believe that "male stereotyping" and "exclusion from male networks" are their major barriers to success.⁵ As a population group, women are predicted to become an even more valuable source of future intellectual capital. According to a June 1998 report released by the U.S. Census Bureau, "more women than men now complete college; receiving 55% of the bachelor's degrees, 53% of master's degrees, and almost 40% of doctorates."⁶

The Fact-Finding Report of the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission reported that "despite growing awareness among organizational leadership of the bottom-line value and economic imperative of including women and minorities, progress is still slow and barriers persist which stop able people from achieving their full employment potential."⁷ The three levels of artificial barriers identified in the Commission research were Societal Barriers, Internal Structure Barriers, and Government Barriers.

Societal Barriers

This barrier was identified by the Commission to be influenced not necessarily within the direct control of most organizations. Societal Barriers result from stereotyping, prejudice, and bias that for most people is learned before their affiliation with an organization but with time becomes a factor in the organization's culture.

Historically, the labor force in America has been dominated by white men. With this dominance came certain privileges that have now become so institutionalized that they are taken for granted. Law enforcement has also been composed mostly of white males and as such the efforts of women to gain acceptance in the profession closely parallel those of women in the general labor force.

Internal Structure Barrier

Internal Structure barriers are within the direct control of most organizations. They are reflected in outreach and recruiting practices that fail to seek out minorities and women. They are also evident when employees lack career opportunities, have little or no access to critical developmental or highly visible assignments, are evaluated on special or different standards for performance, face biased rating or testing systems, and experience counterproductive behavior or harassment by coworkers. Findings in the Christopher Commission Report on the Los Angeles Police Department suggest that female officers are frequently subjected to harassment and double standards despite the fact that they are performing effectively⁸.

Government Barriers

Government barriers result from a lack of consistent workplace monitoring, the lack of policy enforcement, and weaknesses in the collection and dissemination of information related to glass ceiling issues. Mirroring the experiences of corporate America, law enforcement has been impacted by changing demographic and workforce representation. Although women have been a part of police service since the 1800's, it was not until the late 1960's and early 70's that a fundamental change in the roles women play actually occurred. Assisted by changes in federal law and litigation, the number of women in American police agencies has risen steadily. The pace of this change is, nonetheless, relatively slow. "Women still constitute less than 9 percent of all police personnel and 3.3 percent at the supervisory level."⁹

Recruiting women into the profession isn't the only issue facing law enforcement leaders. Once qualified employees are selected, hired and trained, retaining these employees becomes the next issue facing many employers. New values and lifestyles are changing the way employees

view work. “Business is only gradually becoming aware that those workers that they covet the most are the first ones to leave the workplace when things don’t suit them.”¹⁰ Turnover rates for female officers, higher than male officers, result from hostile or unpleasant work environments, difficult choices between police and family life, lack of gender issue understanding, recruiting distortions, unrealistic expectations, and performance pressures related to society’s view of women.¹¹

Walnut Creek

A review of Walnut Creek Police Department hiring practices for a twelve year period, demonstrates a need to examine recruiting, hiring and retention practices, especially as they pertain to women. To continue to be effective, law enforcement organizations must develop strategies that support a positive work environment for all employees.

In 1995, the City of Walnut Creek Police Department became one of many organizations involved in litigation regarding the work environment. Four women, one tenured and three probationary, alleged that the work environment was hostile and discriminatory. As a result of their accusations, the organization is now placed in a position where it must examine past practices to make sure that all employees can work free of discrimination and bias no matter what their gender.

As leaders we must critically examine policies and practices to ensure that the workplace supports the development of all employees. To limit the scope of this study, it focused on the need for developing and implementing training related to the understanding of differences between men and women, including communication styles, learning styles, problem-solving and relationship development. Although the study primarily focused on the needs of the Walnut

Creek Police Department, findings should also develop a supportive, positive work environment for employees of both genders throughout the law enforcement community.

Research Methodologies

The Nominal Group Technique (NGT), used to develop future scenarios for this project, brought together a diverse and knowledgeable group of people to share perspectives. The group identified trends and events they believed could impact the issue in the future. The panel was comprised of nine people: five women and four men. The group represented several areas of expertise including: a female consultant specializing in gender issues; a male Police Lieutenant considered an expert in the diversity field; a female Police Captain representing the Women's Police Officer Association; a female Assistant City Attorney with experience representing city government in discrimination/hostile work environment litigation; a male Human Resources Analyst; a female Police Sergeant involved in litigation alleging discrimination; a male Field Training Officer; a male Police Sergeant with experience as a diversity trainer; and a female Police Officer on probation.

Futures Scenarios

No analysis of factors impacting the issue would be complete without some consideration of alternative futures. Relying on data generated by the NGT and collected in the scanning process, the author wrote several scenarios. The perspectives presented in the scenarios were assumptions made about optimistic, pessimistic and surprise free futures. The following scenario illustrates the need to design strategies to make happen those aspects of the future perceived as beneficial to the issue being examined.

Optimistic Scenario

It's August 24, 2005, and Sergeant Erica Marie reports for work. Today is her sixth anniversary as an employee with the City of Calvin Police Department. Exposed to gender training after accepting a position with the department in 1999, Sergeant Marie has become aware of her own biases as a woman, developed an understanding of gender differences, and discovered the role gender plays in her relationships and responsibilities at work.

Remembering the days of the police academy, Sergeant Marie credits the gender training she received for providing her with the tools necessary for successful completion. The skills she learned in the training helped her assess the best way to learn from, and communicate with, both male and female instructors at the academy and helped her develop professional relationships that continue to assist her in the work she does today.

After graduating from the Police Academy, then Officer Marie began the field training program. The process of field training was made less difficult because all of her training officers had been exposed to gender training and better understood differences in the way male and female employees learn. The male and female trainers were also more aware of their biases that resulted in a positive process of assimilation absent ridicule, predisposed outcomes and lack of acceptance by other employees. The presence of both male and female field training officers discouraged the development of biased attitudes and behaviors in both male and female trainees. Female training officers served as role models for Officer Marie and helped male trainees avoid developing and perpetuating stereotypes of women.

Sergeant Marie remembers hearing stories from employees of the Calvin Police Department expressing frustration with the department's promotional and special assignment

selection processes. These employees perceived gender bias and complained that a lack of understanding barred them from selection. Because an anti-female attitude had existed in the profession, new women employees had to “prove” themselves. Women were tested once through the official process and a second time through the unofficial processes of hazing and harassment. As such, it took many years for women to be accepted, if they were at all.

Because officers at the highest ranks are no longer disproportionately male and attempts have been made to educate both genders about differences, women are no longer regarded as unqualified people who are promoted because they are members of a protected class. Women now enjoy the recognition that they deserve and take pride in knowing that they are viewed by members of the organization as competent police officers, field training officers, investigators, supervisors, and managers. Women applicants and recruits no longer are confronted with “proving themselves” to an all male supervisory and command staff unaware of biases developed during their lifetimes. Selection panels now comprise both men and women, and panel members more clearly understand how both genders can be effective on the job.

Strategic Plan

The development of a strategic plan is critical to defining strategies important to the management of the issue. To focus the efforts of the organization, a vision was created to describe the future. The vision allows members of the organization to look forward from where they are to where they want to be. The statement represents aspirations of both individuals and the organization and assumes the need for change.

VISION STATEMENT

Diversity in our backgrounds, perspectives and experiences broadens our understanding and leads to more creative strategies to achieve our mission. As an inclusive organization, we encourage everyone to contribute their unique energies, talents and skills to their work.

Included in the development of the strategic plan is the creation of the organization's mission statement. The mission statement translates the ideas expressed in the vision and communicates objectives essential to goal accomplishment.

MISSION STATEMENT

To ensure the success of both the organization and its members by encouraging inclusion, assessing differences and creating partnerships at work.

Strategy Development

Strategy development involves the most work and commitment on the part of leadership. It requires leadership to communicate an imperative for change, create a vision and integrate the vision into systems and processes within the organization. This activity may involve the use of collaborative leadership to bring together stakeholders so that all can participate in the development and implementation of training. It requires leadership to move the organization from a reactive state to a proactive and preventive state. The development and implementation of gender training can be a progressive approach to creating understanding of differences and making the culture more inclusive.

While developing and implementing gender training will significantly impact employee retention, it is not the only change component necessary. As described previously, the issue of retention is complex and requires more than training. The organization must also evaluate internal policies and processes such as recruiting, promotional opportunities, informal mentoring,

and benefits associated with scheduling, part-time employment, employee development, and employee recognition.

Transition Management Plan

A Transition Management Plan is critical to the success of any change effort. The plan outlines the steps necessary to move the organization from the “present state” to a “future state.” The plan comprises identifying the organizational imperative, developing a “critical mass”, working in pockets of readiness, developing leaders, and changing the system.

The Operational Imperative

The first step in changing an organization is identifying a compelling reason to change. Unless employees in the organization understand that the organization’s productivity, competitiveness, ability to achieve its mission and vision are at stake, change will not be supported.¹² An imperative for change that allows those stakeholders participating in the change to recognize the benefits must be identified and communicated.

Critical Mass

Within every organization, there exists a number of people whose active support is critical to any change effort. These people, considered champions and allies of the change process, reflect what is called “critical mass.” Critical Mass is the point at which there is sufficient energy and resources for change, where inertia demands change. It is the point where there are enough champions and allies to support change. Successful change efforts focus action plans on the “critical mass” to strengthen their commitment and competencies for supporting change and influencing others in the organization. To accurately identify the critical mass in this change effort, it was necessary to determine which stakeholders most influence others. The

following is a list of individual or groups whose active support and commitment is necessary for successful implementation of the desired strategy:

- Chief of Police
- Males in the organization
- Women in the organization
- City Council
- Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training
- Police Management
- City Manager
- Field Training Officers

It is also important to identify the current level of commitment for each of the key stakeholders in the critical mass. Table 4.1 reflects key stakeholders commitment to change and shifts in commitment necessary to accomplish the strategic plan.

Pockets of Readiness

An important part of the change process is determining groups' or teams' readiness commitment to change. By equipping them with the skills and resources they need to work together they can prove that change adds value to the work unit or organization. Their success will set the standard for others and they can become internal change agents as well as role models.¹³

Leadership Development

The skills necessary for strategic change require learning and practice. The people leading change, need to be supported and coached by people who are skilled and experienced in the issue area. Leadership should ask : What kind of leadership do we need? Where will we find it? How can we develop the leadership we need?

Changing the System

Established rules, procedures, rewards, and other components of the internal organization environment determine to a large extent the outcomes. Management practices, human resources and other systems must enable, encourage, and support people to live the new culture.

Technologies

Technologies that help facilitate the implementation of the desired strategy are often required to assist in the management of anxiety and uncertainty inherent to any change effort. The following technologies are recommended for the selected strategy.

Communication of the vision - The transition manager cannot expect others to follow unless they have an idea of where they are going. Sharing the vision helps others to see how they can participate in its achievement.

Training - A formal review of relevant literature coupled with formal training provided by a consultant specializing in the area of gender differences will help the task force and other critical mass stakeholders to better understand the issue and its relevance to the vision. As the training expands to others in the organization, task force members will be asked to assist in the training effort, thus adding credibility to the curriculum presented. The training curriculum should include issues specific to both men and women in the organization as well as more expansive issues dealing with the history of women's rights, women in the workforce and retention of women.

Transition Evaluators - Evaluators who will periodically assess progress. Evaluators should be employees representing various levels of the organization as well other appropriate stakeholders. During the process of assessment, evaluators will be responsible for feedback, both

positive and critical, which will allow the transition manager to monitor both the short and long term impact of the strategy. As successes are identified they should be communicated to all stakeholders.

Implications on Leadership

Law Enforcement organizations have experienced many changes over the last twenty-plus years. Achieving a successful, inclusive organization in the future depends on the vision created by our leaders today. New styles of leadership, thinking, communication, problem-solving and strategic planning will be critical to success. “When both men and women can work as partners and each contribute the full extent of their talents, ideas, and creative energy our organizations become more effective.”¹⁴

Recommendations and Conclusions

As children become adults, family systems define their relationships with members of the other sex. This socialization is reinforced in intimate relationships and in many institutional experiences. Within the family framework, children learn preferences, biases, and stereotypes about women and men. Family paradigms teach children the “basic rules” in personal relationships. They teach them how to communicate with each other, how to engage in conflict, how to interact, and who is responsible for which tasks.¹⁵

The “rules” define positions in relationships, identifying the leaders and the followers and who will decide the norms. The family framework provides deeply held sets of norms and values about women and men; they shape our prejudices. For years, interactions between women and men at work reflected these models. Family-based models of rank, interdependency, and intimacy function less well in today’s workplace, where men and women work together as peers

to accomplish organizational tasks.¹⁶

Family-based skills, norms, and values actually prevent work partnerships from functioning as effectively and productively as they could. Today, new “rules” need to be developed with new sets of skills to move Law Enforcement beyond the traditional framework toward a system in which equals work together and are free to use unique talents, skills and abilities.

In the years to come, the Walnut Creek Police Department and many other law enforcement agencies throughout California will encounter issues relevant to the recruitment and retention of women. Based on identified trends, the recruitment of women will become increasingly more competitive and will involve not only other law enforcement agencies but private organizations as well.

Although recruitment efforts to attract the best and most competent of the recruitment pool will be common and leaders will need to design new recruiting strategies to be successful, retention of experienced female officers will be even a greater challenge. The conflict for women between career and family will not likely diminish in the years to come. Women entering the profession in the future will continue to seek career fulfillment with both professional challenge and personal flexibility.

Some examples of strategies to increase retention rates of probationary and non-probationary women are as follows:

- Consider the image of the organization. Ensure the organization has strong policy statements that prohibit unlawful discrimination and support women in non-traditional jobs. Women considering your organization for employment will be interested in how many women work there, the organization’s reputation around gender issues, and what benefits will assist women with the competing interests of family and children.¹⁷

- Address key issues that commonly affect women, such as job assignment and promotion, family care and transportation, and health and safety concerns.
- Develop support mechanisms for women on the job. When possible place women in work situations where they can work with other women. Encourage workplace support groups, and place women with a mentor.
- Ensure that women have access to resources and equipment to do their jobs.
- Monitor progress in the workplace by women. Conducting informal assessments of the environment and exit interviews.
- Provide women access to training to further develop them for special assignment and promotion.
- Review current policies, procedures, and eliminate gender biased assumptions.
- Modify current training systems to provide for gender differences in learning and communication.
- Implement training for both women and men designed to develop awareness and understanding of differences.
- Monitor mentoring systems to ensure they include women.

Change can be handled well or it can be handled poorly. Those law enforcement leaders who have successfully assessed and fully addressed the barriers that prevent the advancement of women are those who have squarely confronted the realities of our traditional systems. These are the leaders whose organizations have made the transition to inclusion and they are the organizations that will remain effective by recognizing women, not as a substitute for men, but as possessors of particular skills that have growing relevance to the complex problems and processes occurring now and anticipated in our future.¹⁸

Gender training is a contemporary issue critically relevant to the profession. If my daughter decides to become a police officer and has to choose a department, I hope she will select mine to work for and that she is selected for her talents and skills, not because she is my daughter. I would hope that the organization would welcome her, provide her equal opportunities, and would encourage her to apply that which is uniquely hers to the organization and community.

The Walnut Creek Police Department has the opportunity to take a leadership role in educating both genders regarding differences. By understanding the way that men and women learn, communicate, problem-solve and develop relationships, the organization can become more effective and both women and men can be successful.

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