

Workforce Diversity
Is diversity and cultural sensitivity the key to success?

By

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The Command College Futures Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue of relevance to law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future; rather, to project a variety of possible scenarios useful for strategic planning in anticipation of the emerging landscape facing policing organizations.

This journal article was created using the futures forecasting process of Command College and its outcomes. Defining the future differs from analyzing the past, because it has not yet happened. In this article, methodologies have been used to discern useful alternatives to enhance the success of planners and leaders in their response to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing it—creating, constraining and adapting to emerging trends and events in a way that optimizes the opportunities and minimizes the threats of relevance to the profession.

The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College Futures Project and journal article are those of the author, and are not necessarily those of the CA Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

Introduction

Earlier today I spoke with a colleague, an African American female Area commander who had just left a bi-monthly Chiefs of Police meeting attended by Chiefs having geographical responsibility within the county. Of no surprise, she was the only female in attendance. Not only was she the only female in attendance, she was the only African American. To top it off, the remaining eight Chiefs were all White and appeared to be at least 55 years old. Typical or Not?

Is it time to shift changing demographics and cultural diversity higher on the ladder of importance to law enforcement agencies? Can a focus on understanding of cultural diversity and changing demographics correct potential problems associated with law enforcement internal and external relationships? Finally, is more cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity training the best means to ensure effective employee relations and in our recruitment efforts?

As you will see, there may be resistance to implementation, but a comprehensive implementation of a cultural diversity system will have a positive impact to reduce internal fears of unbiased recruitment and equitable treatment for all employees regardless of their cultural beliefs, race, sex, sexual preference, religion, political affiliation, language and disability. This article seeks to discuss how far law enforcement has come since the early 1900's, and avenues to enhance workplace harmony and community acceptance from a diversity perspective.

Why is Diversity in Law Enforcement so valuable?

Researchers Taylor Cox and Stacy Blake, authors of Cultural Diversity in Organizations (March 1994), proposed specific reasons that organizations should value diversity. They explained effective management of diversity could benefit organizations in the areas of cost, resource acquisition, marketing, creativity, problem solving and system flexibility. Refusal or inability to focus on these areas may lead to high turnover (cost), smaller applicant pool of

qualified candidates (resource acquisition), devalue of your organization from the community (marketing), constricted ideas that differing experiences, language abilities, and education can provide (creativity and problem solving) and diminished tolerance (flexibility). If an organization develops a reputation for valuing all types of employees, it will become known as an employer of choice, increasing its ability to attract and retain workers from a variety of backgrounds.¹ In spite of these advantages, we still seem to struggle with the issue. Looking back into history, one can see the struggle is not just a recent one.

The History of Diversity in Law Enforcement

In 1908 the Seattle Police Department hired its first Black police officer, and in 1912, the Department hired the first woman police officer in the nation. Seattle has always been on the cutting edge of racial diversity, even though the Black officers hired in the early days were not initially allowed to work in the patrol division. They were, though, transitioned into the general ranks in the 1930s. culturally, the City has also been a flash point for diversity. This began with the women's suffrage movement, the impetus for transforming the Police Department's hiring practices. Police Chief Claude Bannick introduced women to the force, a highly controversial move for the day, not just for Seattle but for the nation. Seattle enjoys the recognition of being the first police agency in the United States to add women to its ranks.² The Seattle Police Department's actions were based on its attitude toward inclusion, rather than current law.

The virtually all-white, all-male police departments of the 1950s and 1960s are shrinking, and many departments have made improvements with large numbers of female and minority officers, as well as openly gay and lesbian officers. The term "affirmative action" was first

¹ Cox, T. & Blake S. (1991). "Managing Cultural Diversity: Implications for organizational competitiveness." *Academy of Management Executive*, 5(3) 45-56.

² The Seattle times, May 24, 2000.
<http://community.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/archive/?date=20000524&slug=4022841>

introduced by President Kennedy in 1961 as a method of redressing discrimination that had persisted in spite of civil rights laws and constitutional guarantees. It was developed and enforced for the first time by President Johnson. Focusing in particular on education and jobs, affirmative action policies required that active measures be taken to ensure that blacks, women and other minorities enjoyed the same opportunities for promotions, salary increases, career advancement, school admissions, scholarships, and financial aid that had been the nearly exclusive province of whites. From the outset, affirmative action was envisioned as a temporary remedy that would end once there was a "level playing field" for all Americans. However, fueled by "angry white men," a backlash against affirmative action began to mount. To conservatives, the system was a zero-sum game that opened the door for jobs, promotions, or education to minorities while it shut the door on whites. In a country that prized the values of self-reliance and pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps, conservatives resented the idea that some unqualified minorities were getting a free ride on the American system. "Preferential treatment" and "quotas" became expressions of contempt.³

In an article written by John R. Lott Jr., in March 2005, he identifies issues associated with the increase in women hiring. Lott notes there are extremely important benefits to having police departments that mirror the characteristics of the general population. He states that, amongst the advantages are:

- Females and minorities are important for undercover work.
- A female victim of crime might feel more comfortable talking to another woman.
- Women might be particularly useful in domestic violence cases.

³ Affirmative Action History & Timeline (Civil Rights Act, Supreme Court Cases, etc.)
Infoplease.com <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/affirmative1.html#ixzzIHELTHkc>

One problem Lott addresses is that because of large differences in strength and size between men and women, different standards are applied to ensure that there are more female officers.

Interestingly, increasing the number of women officers under these reduced strength and size standards consistently and significantly increases the number of assaults on police officers. In general, every 1 percent increase in the number of women in a police force results in a 15 to 19 percent increase in the number of assaults on the police, because women tend to be weaker than men.

Mr. Lott's research uncovered another interesting finding. Female officers are more likely to accidentally shoot people. Each 1 percent increase in the number of female officers in a police force increases the number of shootings of civilians by 2.7 percent. Because of generally less physical strength, female officers have less time to decide on whether to fire their weapon. If a man makes a mistake and waits too long to shoot a suspect who is attacking him, the male officer still has a chance of using his strength to subdue the attacker. Female officers will lose control of the situation at that point.⁴ Mr. Lott's article appears to suggest women have a place in law enforcement, but overall their usefulness is limited.

The author Adam Eisenberg has a slightly different view of women in law enforcement.⁵ He suggests women in law enforcement bring a lot to the job, including offering different ways of dealing with conflict. Women may not have the brute strength of men, but their bravery, creativity and verbal skills make them ideal for the job. Many male police officers could learn a lot from their female counterparts. Some women now teach self-defense at police academies, since it's been proven that size has nothing to do with being a good police officer. Given the dramatic demographic changes in California, and the expected increase in our diversity, it is

⁴ John R. Lott Jr., Affirmative Action and Cops, March 30, 2005 Retrieved from <http://www.lewrockwell.com/lott/lott39.html>

⁵ Adam Eisenberg "A Different Shade of Blue: How Women Changed the Face of Police Work"

fortunate we have long-settled these contentious issues of who can and should be in the ranks of our police.

California's expected demographic changes

California's population is far more ethnically diverse than that of the rest of the US. In 2000, California was already a "majority minority" state. In 2006, Whites accounted for 42.8 percent of the population, compared to 69.4 percent in the rest of the US. Latinos constituted 35.9 percent of the population, compared to 11.9 percent in the rest of the US; Asians constituted 12.1 percent of the population, compared to 3.2 percent in the rest of the country. Blacks were a relatively smaller share of California's population, comprising 6.0 percent of the state's population, compared to 13.0 percent in the rest of the US. By 2020, whites' share of the population is expected to drop further, to 37.4 percent.⁶ Official census counts provide a basis for understanding community composition. As demographics of a community change so should the recruitment focus. Department's need to recognize the shift in census data and be fluid enough to adapt and adjust. In spite of that, effort sot enhance diversity have been a combination of legal action and sporadic resistance, followed by a number of instances of progressive change.

What has the State of California done relative to law enforcement diversity?

In 1981, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights found that the "serious under-utilization of minorities and women in local law enforcement agencies continued to hamper the ability of police departments to function effectively and earn the respect" of the communities they serve, thereby increasing the likelihood of tension and violence . The experts at the Commission's June 2000 briefing on national police practices and civil rights again echoed the call for increased

⁶ California QuickFacts from the US Census Bureau <http://www.quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06000.html>

diversity.⁷ In 1996, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) increased its recruitment team from two officers to include the supervision of an Employment Lieutenant, Recruitment Sergeant, five Police Officers, one Corrections Officer, one Law Enforcement Support Technician (administrative support), and two Office Assistants (receptionists). Additionally, the Department expanded its recruitment efforts across the United States. Before each trip, a strategy team would visit the community to establish liaison and community contacts followed by a team to attend events and to meet applicants.

In several of the cities, the recruitment team was joined by a selection team who would administer Police and Correctional Officer fitness, written and oral examinations. Although these trips showed some encouraging results, the struggle for diversity continued. LVMPD held a Diversity Recruitment Summit and invited Department representatives from the Black, Hispanic, Asian and Female Police Officers Associations; National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives; alternate life style representatives; and employees from the Recruitment Team in the Personnel Bureau. Several recommendations were made by the panel members and incorporated into the LVMPD recruitment philosophy. LVMPD's recruitment story has no ending. The efforts continue to find the most effective way to recruit qualified applicants. A helpful suggestion--listen to your recruiters! They have great ideas, many of which LVMPD has implemented with success.⁸

Although California law enforcement has made great strides to attempt to create a workforce representative of the population, the sheer numbers are inadequate in many agencies based on census reports. On August 7, 1990, the Governor signed into law Senate Bill 2680 which required POST, by January 1, 1991, to develop and disseminate guidelines for peace

2.⁷ Revisiting *Who Is Guarding the Guardians?* A Report on Police Practices and Civil Rights in America November 2000

⁸ Achieving Diversity Through Marketing, <http://www.neiassociates.org/diversity.pdf>

officers in California on the racial and cultural differences of people in the State, so that peace officers can be better prepared to deal with the racial and cultural diversity of their citizenry. In February 1992, POST prepared, disseminated and monitored the Statewide training program.⁹ The most significant change, though, came from a tragedy and required legal action to implement it.

In July 2009, the Los Angeles Police Department completed one of the most ambitious experiments in police reform ever attempted in an American city. After a decade of policing crises that began with the beating of Rodney King in 1991 and culminated in the Rampart police corruption scandal in 1999, the U.S. Department of Justice announced in May 2000 that it had accumulated enough evidence to sue the City of Los Angeles over a pattern-and-practice of police misconduct and discrimination. Later that year, the City entered a “consent decree” promising to adopt scores of reform measures under the supervision of the Federal Court. Among the dozens of provisions of the decree was data collection in a variety of categories that included demographic data on every police contact with the public, whether or not searches were performed, arrests made, citations or verbal warnings issued and a host of other categories.¹⁰ Many other law enforcement agencies within the state began to mirror the requirements of the LAPD consent decree to monitor the conduct of their own departments. This even includes action in Federal law enforcement agencies.

To be maximally effective, the FBI realized they have to look like America. The FBI had to understand and reflect the communities they serve. The need for an employee base that reflects the U.S. population is necessary to respond to diverse international and domestic

⁹ Guide for Law Enforcement's Design of Cultural Awareness Programs
<http://lib.post.ca.gov/Publications/53985851.pdf>

¹⁰ Christopher Stone, Todd Fogleson, Christine M. Cole, Policing Los Angeles Under a Consent Decree: The Dynamics of Change at the LAPD, May 2009, <http://www.lapdonline.org/assets/pdf/Harvard-LAPD%20Study.pdf>

concerns.¹¹ On a State and local level, the same should apply. When attention is applied to this subject, the future of law enforcement will close this gap and narrow the numbers of the officers and citizens who still possess the “us against them” mentality. The message is clear: diversity at all levels is the goal. The issue remains, though; how do we increase the diversity of those we recruit.

Contemporary law enforcement recruitment techniques

The recruitment web pages of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD)¹², the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LASD)¹³, the Oakland Police Department (OPD)¹⁴, the San Diego Police Department (SDPD)¹⁵ and the California Highway Patrol (CHP)¹⁶ display images of a diverse workforce. In fact, LAPD and LASD have departmental demographics accessible from their websites. To examine and evaluate how California’s changing demographics might impact the future of law enforcement in a large California law enforcement agency; a six-member panel of civilian and law enforcement professionals identified the trends impacting community perspectives of policing. Five trends directly correlated to recruitment. The panelist believed budget constraints affect hiring, that there is a lack of tolerance for alternate lifestyles, the current outreach programs lack diversity, children now fear law enforcement rather than embrace them, understanding of cultural differences need improvement, and the media depicts a larger number of minorities in management positions than there really are.

If, like most Americans, you’ve watched any major sporting events on TV over

¹¹ Robert S. Muller III, Director of the FBI, September 17, 2002 <http://www.fbi.gov/news/speeches/fbi-diversity-employment-in-a-new-age-of-global-terror>

¹² Los Angeles Police Department website, <http://www.joinlapd@lapd.lacity.org>

¹³ Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department website, <http://www.lasd.org/recruitment/index-sworn.html>

¹⁴ Oakland Police Department Website, <http://www.opdjobs.com>

¹⁵ San Diego Police Department website, <http://www.sandiego.gov/police>

¹⁶ California Highway Patrol Website, <http://www.chp.ca.gov>

the past couple of years, there are a couple of ads I'm sure that you'll recall. One is that of a young man, struggling to ascend to where a dragon awaits him...the young man prevails, slaying the beast with his sword, and changes into the image of guess whom? A United States Marine, and the ad goes on to urge young people to consider if they are up to the challenge! And you probably also remember another ad, also regularly seen on the shows young people are likely to watch, of U.S. Soldiers carrying out their duties, while the voices say "You are my sister, my father, my brother...and the ad urges young watchers to "be all that you can be". The television is an excellent marketing venue, costly, but produces good results. There is no shortage of volunteers for the US Marines.

And what about the entertainment industry and the news media? There are certainly many Hollywood and TV stars that have achieved fortune and fame through roles in series about law enforcement. Could we not ask them to give back something by helping make ads that would encourage their young fans to consider a career in law enforcement service?

To meet the generational desire of our younger generational pool (Gen Xers and Nexters), departments should consider increasing their shifts to 12 hours. Working 12 hour shifts increases the amount of time away from work. Many departments have already adopted this approach and most have been successful in its implementation. As used in professional sports, how about signing bonuses? Signing bonuses have often been looked at as a recruitment tool for executives or athletes. However, the new recruit pool will literally have many options available to them and money is a motivator to almost all people on some level. Most labor agreements do not have signing bonus options. Police administrators may want to negotiate some type of labor language allowing this option if it becomes necessary. Gen Xers and Nexters are demanding

higher wages and will “go where the money is”. Signing bonuses are definitely out of the norm for law enforcement at this time but could be a viable option for future recruitment efforts. None of this will help much if we do not continue to work to sustain closer relationships with those we serve.

Many California law enforcement agencies have developed cultural awareness or cultural diversity programs for their employees. In the past, police academies taught traditional law enforcement culture; however, due to significant curriculum changes to reflect the growing diverse population by the California Commission on POST, enforcement academies now teach cultural diversity. The curriculum design incorporates self-assessment inventories, individual and group exercises, and group discussions that help students understand their personal attitudes toward diversity. These exercises are designed to help students be more congruent between the cognitive and affective components of their personalities.

Based on a report published by the International Association of Chief's Police (IACP) in 1995, of police current recruitment efforts in place to increase diverse recruitment, some techniques used by the agency's involved in the report include recognizing elementary school children need to be introduced to the option of a career in law enforcement and planting this seed early is key to keeping kids on the right track. Recruiting needs to be implemented in criminal justice classes at colleges and at gyms and on sports teams. Recruiting needs to be a repeated process. Offer training programs to encourage women to practice physical skills before taking the entrance exams. Make an effort to involve women and minority officers in recruiting events so that women and minorities can see their reflection in the department. The administration needs to be supportive of officers participating in recruiting efforts. The administration should provide funding or pay whenever possible. Officers rely on the administration to circulate

information about opportunities for them to recruit. Advertising, especially advertising that features women or minority officers, is a key tool for attracting laterals. A recruiting message should include the positive elements of variety, challenge, and honor that the career offers. It should also convey empowerment of the recruited— “you can do it” attitude.¹⁷

Despite the best of intentions, there are sometimes unforeseen circumstances that may negatively impact efforts underway. Budget concerns have forced many departments to lay off recruits and officers. This will impact efforts to advance minority recruitment and hiring service-oriented officers. However, what was accomplished through the IACP report can still be utilized once the cities are in a better financial position to resume its officer recruitment efforts.

Conclusion

The overriding premise of this article is that diversity is valuable to individuals and to organizations and that people with varying backgrounds should be afforded to reach their potential as employees, managers, executives and leaders. Research indicates that job applicants, employees and the community will respond positively when organizations value diversity and negatively when they do not.

In taking the perspective that diversity is valuable to individuals and organizations, individuals should be aware of both overt discrimination and the unconscious processes that result in discrimination. Willingness to listen, think, understand and grow in diversity learning will be helpful in improving positive outcomes of diversity.

Public safety officials have little control over the social, economic, educational, and other characteristics that shape the communities in which they work. Yet they have the inherent responsibilities of protecting the rights, property, and physical safety of all persons and of

¹⁷ Ibid pg 12

upholding the law. When a community's demographics change, it inevitably creates a challenge for public safety officials to communicate and coordinate with new employees and applicants. A diverse recruitment team will be able to communicate and coordinate with those future applicants. Some of the negative outcomes of diversity may include dysfunctional communication processes between different group members, discrimination, harassment, perceptions that nontraditional workers are unqualified, lowered attachment, commitment, and satisfaction.¹⁸ Command oversight and a repeated positive reinforcement of the values of diversity should quail those negatives. Researchers suggest that as employees get to know one another and exchange job-relevant information, negative effects of surface-level differences are reduced.

Understanding cultural diversity is now and will be more essential as the demographics of California continue to change. How the public accepts law enforcement begins with the parents and their influence on the minds of their children. In the long term, today's children are the future of law enforcement. They must first embrace law enforcement, obtain the education level required for employment, achieve an above average level of life's personal responsibilities and characteristics, and be able to adapt to the culture of law enforcement. Law enforcement must play an active role in their development. In the short term, acceptance and understanding of the many different cultures we come in contact with is an excellent starting point.

¹⁸ Beyond relational demography: The time and the effects of surface- and deep-level diversity on work group cohesion." *Academy of Management Journal*, 41: 96-107