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ISSUES IN POLICING

Identifying Barriers to Diversity in Law Enforcement Agencies

Carl F. Matthies, Kirsten M. Keller, and Nelson Lim

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Diversity is critical to U.S. law enforcement agencies. Individuals from diverse backgrounds bring a broad range of cultural understandings and language skills to the force. Diversity is also considered a key ingredient for the successful implementation of community-based policing...

In cities across the United States, however, conspicuous disparities between the racial composition of the police force and neighborhood residents, particularly when accompanied by heavy-handed tactics, have been tied to poor police-community relations and precipitated episodes of civil unrest...

Statistics survey, for example, indicate that women comprised only about 12 percent of police officers nationwide in 2007 (Reaves, 2010).

This paper describes one method that law enforcement agencies can use to better understand and address these challenges: a barrier analysis. Barrier analysis is a method of assessment aimed at identifying potential obstacles to obtaining resources or participating in a program...

In the context of employment opportunities, barrier analysis involves an examination of key points in the career lifecycle, such as recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention practices, to determine where women and racial/ethnic minorities face obstacles that might account for less-than-proportionate representation among applicants, hires, and senior leadership...

Addressing Common Barriers to Diversity in Law Enforcement

Barriers to achieving a diverse workforce can arise at various points in the career lifecycle—the recruitment stage, the hiring stage, or the promotion stage. The table illustrates how barriers might manifest themselves in a fictitious police department...

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**Composition of Police Department X by Race and Gender (percent)**

	White	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Black	Female
Local labor pool demographics	50	30	10	10	50
Applicants	60	20	10	10	30
Patrol officer	65	20	5	10	20
Sergeant and above	70	20	5	5	10

tion in the local labor pool. Meanwhile, Hispanics are a disproportionately low fraction of applicants, Asian/Pacific Islanders are a disproportionately low fraction of hires, blacks are a disproportionately low fraction of promotions, and female representation falls off at each point in the career lifecycle.

**Recruitment Barriers**

The first indication of employment barriers is an insufficient number of women and racial/ethnic minorities applying for the job. In law enforcement, as in other employment sectors, this problem can be traced to one or a combination of three factors: the target population is disproportionately unaware, unqualified, or uninterested. Lack of awareness suggests a deficiency in outreach actions and events; that is, there is not enough recruitment in areas where demographics suggest that qualified female and racial/ethnic minority candidates could be found. Lack of interest and failure to qualify are more complicated issues, but both imply a qualitative outreach deficiency rather than a lack of recruitment effort.

Law enforcement agencies can affect recruitment indirectly by adhering to well-established tenets of policing: keeping cities safe while holding officers to high standards of professionalism and integrity, forging partnerships in the community, and providing guidance to adolescents through outreach and mentoring programs. These practices can reduce crime while having a positive, proactive influence on community attitudes. When a law enforcement agency is seen as fair and trustworthy—in other words, *legitimate*—even people who run afoul of the law have higher regard for the police (Tyler and Fagan, 2008). Although there is no substitute for fair and effective performance, the intent of outreach programs is to enhance perceptions of the police, particularly among groups with historically low affinity for law enforcement. Ideally, outreach programs will have a multiplier effect, winning the hearts and minds not only of participants, but also of skeptical friends and family members.

**Hiring Barriers**

Most law enforcement agencies have strict educational, physical fitness, medical, residency, and background requirements. Health, education, and other socioeconomic statistics show that some of these requirements pose barriers for women and racial/ethnic minorities. Identifying barriers does not imply that all these barriers should be removed; rather, it is a first step to assessing which issues are critical for police work and which processes and standards can reasonably be modified in the interest of diversity with minimal impact on quality.

**Educational requirements.** Most law enforcement agencies require applicants to possess a high school diploma or General Educational Development certificate. However, the national high school graduation rates for blacks and Hispanics are nearly 20 percentage points lower than for whites (Stillwell, 2010). As a result, a smaller pool of racial/ethnic minorities is likely to meet educational requirements.

**Fitness requirements.** Meeting fitness and medical requirements also presents a barrier to blacks and Hispanics, who suffer from a higher prevalence of obesity (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010). Within Los Angeles County, for example, white, non-Hispanic school children had an obesity rate of 12.8 percent in 2007, compared to 21.6 percent for black children and 27.4 percent for Hispanic children. Pacific Islanders, who count toward the Los Angeles Police Department’s (LAPD’s) Asian hiring target, have the highest obesity rate among school-aged children, at just under 35 percent (Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, 2008). In addition to its impact on fitness test performance, having a high percentage of body fat is a medical disqualifier at some agencies. Moreover, with elevated obesity rates come elevated rates of related comorbidities, such as hypertension and type 2 diabetes, both of which are potential grounds for medical disqualification (Cossrow and Falkner, 2004).

**Citizenship and residency requirements.** U.S. citizenship is a near-universal requirement for employ-

**The first indication of employment barriers is an insufficient number of women and racial/ethnic minorities applying for the job.**

ment in law enforcement. This requirement bars a substantial percentage of minorities from the applicant pool. For example, in 2009, more than half of the foreign-born residents of the United States were not naturalized citizens. Meanwhile, nearly half of the foreign-born population self-identified as Hispanic or Latino, about 24 percent as Asian alone, and just over 8 percent as black or African American alone (Batalova and Terrazas, 2010). Residency requirements may also geographically limit the hiring of women and racial/ethnic minorities, particularly if a locality's cost of living is high relative to its starting salary. New York City police officers must live in one of the five boroughs or one of the surrounding New York counties on the day of hire, but they cannot live in neighboring counties of New Jersey and Connecticut. Boston police officers must reside in the city of Boston.

**Background history.** The background investigation portion of the law enforcement hiring process poses a particular barrier to racial/ethnic minorities. Any history of contact with law enforcement in a candidate's background is problematic, and felony convictions are almost always automatic disqualifiers (Chivers and Rashbaum, 2008). In 2009, the juvenile arrest rate for blacks was more than twice the rate for whites overall, nearly double for drug-related offenses, and more than five times greater for violent crimes (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2011). Financial problems that surface during the background investigation can also disqualify otherwise promising applicants. A congressional report found that blacks and Hispanics have lower credit scores than non-Hispanic whites and Asians, affecting their ability to obtain loans, and that blacks, on average, have higher delinquency rates than other racial/ethnic groups with similar credit scores (Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, 2007), and this was before the devastating recession that saw blacks and Hispanics lose jobs and homes at even higher rates than non-Hispanic whites (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009; Rugh and Massey, 2010).

Given these potential hiring barriers, outreach to and recruiting of qualified racial/ethnic minority and female applicants are especially important. Law enforcement agencies can also examine their hiring requirements to ensure that all requirements are predictive of key job performance outcomes and do not unnecessarily disqualify any applicants.

### Promotion Barriers

Barriers to promotion are probably present when a law enforcement agency has adequate numbers of female and racial/ethnic minority applicants and

hires but their representation is conspicuously low in the upper ranks. As with the hiring process, the promotion process may consist of both formal exams and informal assessments that could potentially impact the demographics of who gets promoted. For example, tests used to select for promotion (and hiring) should be examined to ensure they do not exhibit any *predictive bias* (American Educational Research Association et al., 1999). A test can be biased *against* a particular group (such as women or racial/ethnic minorities) when it underpredicts how well those individuals will perform in the future. In other words, the test underestimates their true ability.

Often, analyses of barriers in this stage are unpublished because of their sensitive nature. A handful of studies, however, have investigated officers' reasons for declining to take the promotional exam for sergeant. In surveys and interviews, both male and female patrol officers indicated concern about a net decrease in income through loss of overtime opportunities, but female officers were particularly concerned that the difference in compensation would be insufficient to cover additional childcare expenses incurred on the evening or night shift (Whetstone and Wilson, 1999; Archbold and Hassell, 2009). Another study found that a significantly higher fraction of black officers at one large Midwestern police department perceived themselves as not having the support of management (Whetstone, 2001). Left unaddressed, these issues may cause chronic underrepresentation of women and minorities in leadership positions, which could eventually affect target group recruitment as well.

### Retention Issues

Barriers to promotion may also eventually lead to turnover. But even when a law enforcement agency has adequate numbers of female and racial/ethnic minority applicants, hires, and promotions, departmental diversity goals may not be maintained if women and/or minorities leave at higher rates. Although retention is also a function of the external job market, aspects of the organizational environment and specific policies may influence who chooses to leave. For example, Haarr (1997) found that women and blacks in one Midwestern department felt marginalized despite their strong representation in leadership roles, and that white male patrol officers resented the department's affirmative action policy. More recently, women who resigned from law enforcement agencies indicated that gender discrimination was a factor in their decision (Haarr, 2005).

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**Outreach to and recruiting of qualified racial/ethnic minority and female applicants are especially important.**

Thus, understanding why there may be differences in who chooses to remain in the organization is also critical to ensuring diversity.

### Using Barrier Analysis to Improve Diversity

A barrier analysis is one method law enforcement agencies can use to examine whether any barriers to diversity, such as those just described, are present in their agency. As illustrated in Figure 1, a complete barrier analysis consists of five phases. Phases 1 through 3 are diagnostic, helping agencies determine whether barriers exist. Phases 4 and 5 are then carried out when representation of any gender or racial/ethnic group is found to be lacking in the agency's workforce. The dashed line arrows in Figure 1 indicate that periodic reassessments should be conducted even if no significant discrepancies are found between the workforce and the local labor population. Together, each of the five phases can help agency leaders identify key barriers and take proactive steps to build a more diverse workforce.

#### Phase 1: Develop a Detailed Flow Chart of the Workforce Management Process

The objective of Phase 1 is to map out workforce management processes at key points in the career lifecycle in order to identify potential barriers to diversity. This framework also serves as a foundation for further analysis and change. Phase 1 involves gathering information on roles, responsibilities, policies, and procedures at such key points as recruit-

ment, hiring, and promotions/succession planning. Information can be gathered through structured interviews with key personnel involved in each of the key points identified and by reviewing administrative databases and policy documents. For example, Figure 2 shows a flow chart of the San Diego Police Department hiring process, which is typical of metropolitan law enforcement agencies. Each of the hurdles in the process may be a barrier if success rates differ significantly by gender or race/ethnicity.

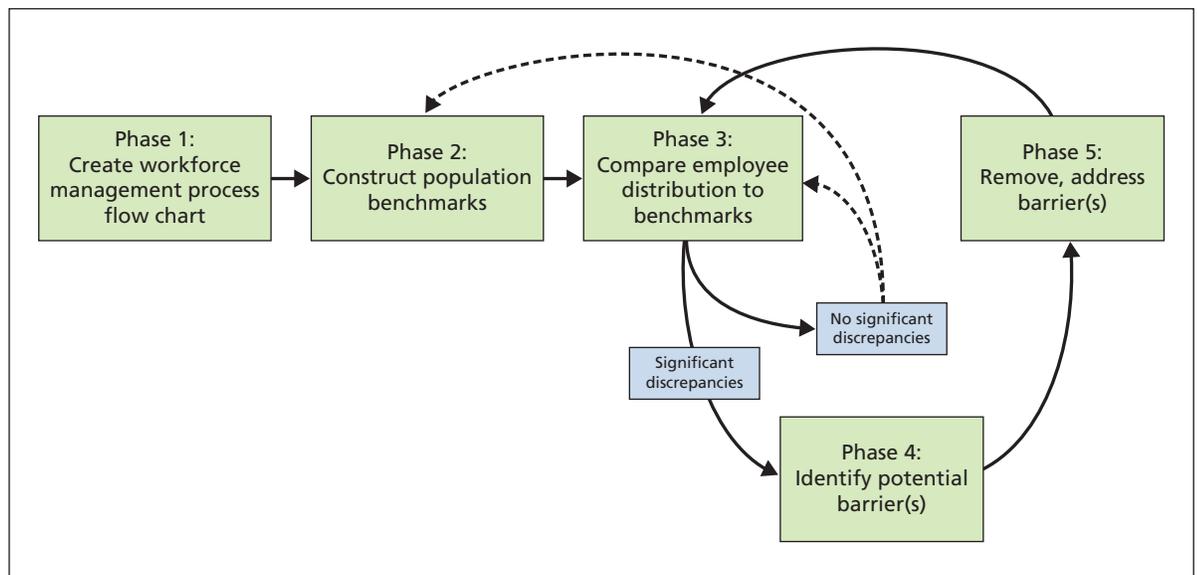
It is not necessary to repeat Phase 1 with every iteration of the barrier analysis if workforce management processes at the key points of the career lifecycle have not changed substantially from one year to the next. However, barrier analysis may lead to substantial changes in workforce management processes, which should be incorporated into a revised flow chart.

#### Phase 2: Construct Population Benchmarks

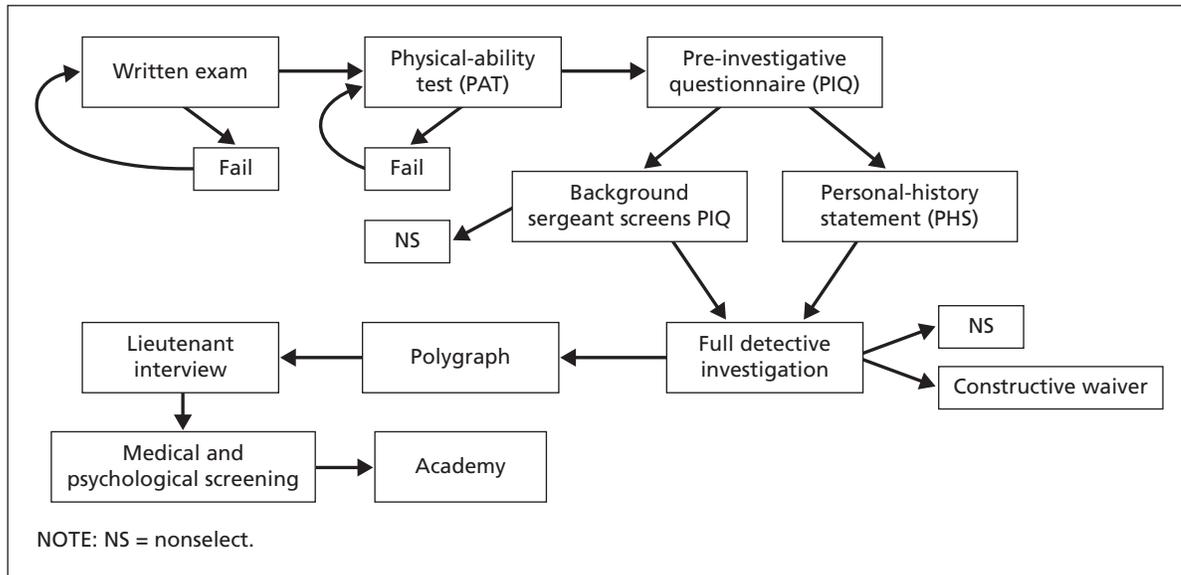
The objective of Phase 2 is to define population benchmarks in order to compare whether certain groups are under- or overrepresented at certain points in the career lifecycle. For example, are applicants representative of the qualified labor pool? For recruiting and hiring, population benchmarks should be based on local labor market populations by estimating geographical distributions of potential applicants using Geographic Information System mapping software and a variety of other data sources. These sources include the American Community Surveys, the 2010 Census, and the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. Benchmarks built from such data are better suited for pinpointing

**Periodic reassessments should be conducted even if no significant discrepancies are found between the workforce and the local labor population.**

**Figure 1**  
**The Barrier Analysis Process**

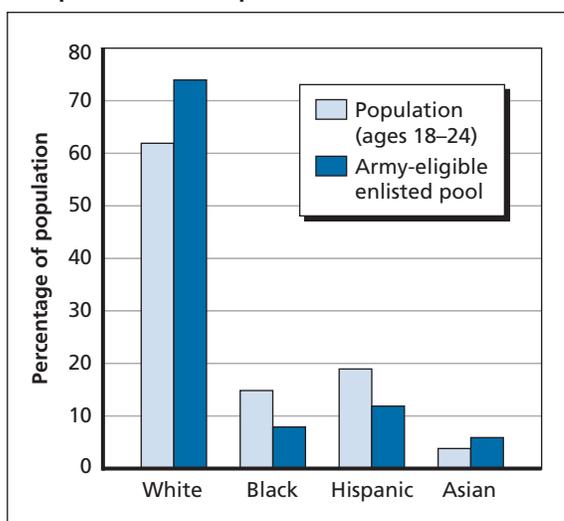


**Figure 2**  
**The San Diego Police Department Hiring Process**



actual barriers in the process and for gauging their impact than population benchmarks available from the Census Bureau for Equal Employment Opportunity, which offers less precise demographic information. For example, Figure 3 uses data on Army requirements (which are similar to many law enforcement requirements) to show racial/ethnic representation in the U.S. population and the pool of eligible or qualified candidates for enlistment. As the figure shows, if only data on the overall population are used without taking eligibility requirements into account, the population benchmarks for recruiting and hiring are much less accurate.

**Figure 3**  
**Comparison with Population Benchmarks**



Population benchmarks for later points in the career lifecycle can be created based on the actual demographics of the agency workforce to see how representation varies across certain positions and within senior leadership compared with the lower ranks. Of course, the quality of population benchmarks depends on the availability of information and data, such as data on applicants who participated in the hiring process. Again, as with Phase 1, it may not be practical or necessary to redo these benchmarks every time a barrier analysis needs to be conducted, but agencies should avoid using benchmarks that are likely outdated.

### Phase 3: Compare Employee Distribution to Benchmarks

The objective of Phase 3 is to determine whether there is a discrepancy between the population benchmarks created in Phase 2 and demographic representation within the agency workforce in order to identify points in the career lifecycle and related workforce management processes where there may be important barriers to advancement. This phase of the analysis thus also discloses whether adverse or disparate impact is present, such as in hiring or promotions. Adverse or disparate impact is considered to be discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. It is present when an employment practice that is not intended to discriminate has an adverse effect on members of a particular race, ethnicity, religion, sex, or national origin. For example, a particular promotion qualification may result in fewer women being promoted than men. Adverse

**Population benchmarks for later points in the career lifecycle can be created based on the actual demographics of the agency workforce.**

impact is generally considered to be present if the proportion of applicants who are selected from a protected group is less than four-fifths (80 percent) of the proportion of applicants selected from the group with the highest selection rate.<sup>1</sup> If there is no evidence of adverse impact and there are no discrepancies with population benchmarks, the analysis is, for the time being, complete. Employment barriers may still be present, but they would likely be very difficult to diagnose. If, however, adverse impact or other significant discrepancies are found, the analysis proceeds to identify potential barriers leading to the discrepancy and ways to mitigate or eliminate them.

#### Phase 4: Identify Potential Barriers

The objective of Phase 4 is to identify the specific barriers affecting the advancement of racial/ethnic minorities and women. Barriers can be identified through a variety of means. Often, after diagramming the career lifecycle and related workforce management processes and observing a discrepancy in Phase 3, the barriers are evident. For example, it would come as no surprise if an agency's minimum height requirement excluded a greater proportion of women than men. Other times, the barriers are less obvious, such as the presence of test bias or differences in work-family conflict that may affect retention. These barriers may be elucidated through an examination of administrative data or exploratory interviews or surveys with workforce members, such as exit surveys, to further explore the differences in turnover decisions.

#### Phase 5: Address and Remove Barriers

The objective of Phase 5 is to develop solutions for removing or at least attenuating the barriers identified in the previous phase. For example, if a particular hiring requirement is a barrier, the validity of that requirement should be examined to ensure that it is a strong predictor of future job performance and that there are no alternative tools that are equally valid but show less adverse impact.<sup>2</sup> If the problem is identified at the recruitment stage, the agency can experiment with changes in the type and/or targeting of recruiting. For example, the Long Beach Police Department (LBPD) removed a 150-lb dummy drag from its phys-

ical fitness test in order to qualify more women for careers with the police. Otherwise qualified women were failing to meet this particular standard, and the LBPD leadership chose not to lose these candidates over a requirement deemed not imperative for good police work (Raymond et al., 2005).

### Case Studies: Lessons in the Way Forward

This section provides further guidance for conducting barrier analyses by way of example. In the case studies described below, each agency was willing to confront the lack of diversity among its ranks; conduct an analysis to identify where barriers may operate to exclude or disadvantage any group based on gender, race, or ethnicity; and take steps toward remedying the lack of representation. While we assert that there is no single quick-fix remedy, each case offers options that may be adopted and implemented by other agencies.

#### Case Study 1: The San Diego Police Department's Recruitment Barriers

The San Diego Police Department (SDPD) had been operating below its authorized force strength for a few years when it sought assistance from the RAND Corporation. Ridgeway et al. (2008) examined the recruiting and hiring processes of the SDPD to identify potential barriers and propose ways to address them. Below, we describe some of the key findings of their study.

**Recruiting information should be encouraging and easy to follow.** The department's recruitment website emphasized formal requirements over the benefits of a SDPD career. Additionally, it was difficult for potential recruits to locate upcoming test dates. Both the content and organization of the website worked to discourage potential recruits from applying. The SDPD modernized its website to reflect the professionalism of the SDPD team and to provide sample test questions that offered applicants the opportunity to prepare for the written exam.

**Testing should be culturally unbiased.** The written test required by potential SDPD recruits was in need of revision. Review of the test suggested that some questions could be culturally biased, preventing potential recruits from moving further in the application process. RAND recommended that the SDPD assess for "differential item functioning," a method of testing for gender or racial bias in exam questions. This would allow the SDPD to rework the test and hopefully improve the demographic diversity of recruits. Second, the SDPD was advised to adopt the California Peace Officer Standards and Training

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**If a particular hiring requirement is a barrier, the validity of that requirement should be examined to ensure that it is a strong predictor of future job performance and that there are no alternative tools that are equally valid.**

<sup>1</sup> This is commonly termed the "four-fifths rule." For more information see "Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures," 43 Fed. Reg. 166 (1978), 29 C.F.R. part 1607 (2006).

<sup>2</sup> According to Title VII, employers are not liable under disparate or adverse impact if they can demonstrate that "the challenged practice is job related for the position in question and consistent with business necessity" (Civil Rights Act of 1991, sec. 105).

written exam, which had already been extensively validated. Third, RAND proposed lowering the pass point for the written exam, which screened out roughly 40 percent of applicants in 2006 and 2007. The SDPD could lower the pass point a few points (or not) and track those candidates who scored just above the new (old) threshold to see if they actually had more difficulty downstream in the hiring process and at the training academy. Failure to find significant differences in either case would constitute fairly convincing evidence that the pass point could be lowered without compromising quality standards.

**Target recruitment efforts.** At the time of the study, out-of-state hires were relatively rare for the SDPD. This may have had something to do with purchasing power. When RAND compared the starting salaries for police officers with the cost-of-living index in 116 metropolitan areas, the SDPD's starting salary ranked 91st after adjusting for cost of living. Perhaps more significant, its starting salary, adjusted for cost of living, was the lowest among the agencies in California, Arizona, Oregon, and Nevada for which data were available. The SDPD was advised to confine its long-range recruiting efforts to areas where it held an economic advantage—in particular, areas with criminal justice degree programs that graduate more people than local agencies could absorb. Of course, this effort might prove to be cost-effective in terms of increasing force size, but it may not, in the end, increase force diversity.

**Be ready to tailor the application process for diversity.** Two noteworthy differences were observed when researchers examined the management flow of applications. First, black males were nearly 20 percent less likely to have their applications approved by sergeants in their initial background review. Sergeants most often rejected applicants on the basis of applicants' financial problems, drug use, and poor driving records. RAND proposed that the SDPD make the applicant packages "race blind" at this stage, as sergeants should not need this information for that part of the applicant review. Second, women were 2.6 times more likely than men to receive constructive waivers, which are issued when applicants have not been disqualified but have withdrawn from the process. This large discrepancy could reflect a lower propensity for policing or a greater number of women being lured away from the SDPD by other law enforcement agencies. The SDPD's protocol at the time was to have the background investigator make one phone call to remind the applicant of his or her remaining obligations in the process. RAND proposed having recruiters call these applicants instead, urging them to continue, and then assess

whether this encouragement had any impact on the number of constructive waivers issued and the number of women ultimately hired.

### Case Study 2: The Los Angeles Police Department's Recruitment and Hiring Efforts

One hundred miles north of San Diego, the LAPD was experiencing recruitment challenges of its own. For years, the LAPD had the distinction of being one of the smallest big-city police departments in the nation. In 2006, it fielded one officer for every 426 residents—a modest number compared to New York, which had one officer for every 228 residents, or Chicago, which had one officer for every 216 residents (McGreevy, 2006). As Chief William Bratton put it, "[The Department has] been asked to do too much for too long with too little" (Bratton, 2005). To address this problem, Chief Bratton and Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa spearheaded an ambitious five-year campaign to increase the LAPD's force strength by 1,000 officers. As part of this campaign, the LAPD asked RAND to examine its recruitment and hiring practices to ensure that its limited resources were being used in the best possible manner. RAND assisted the LAPD by recommending a number of actions:

**Reevaluate how potential recruits perceive recruitment materials.** All persons interested in becoming a sworn member of the LAPD are encouraged to complete an online Preliminary Background Assessment (PBA). This short evaluation is designed to help recruiters immediately assess a candidate's respect for the law, financial record, drug and alcohol use, and driving proficiency. Designed to screen out individuals with checkered pasts, the PBA may have worked too well. Only 17 percent of persons with some PBA issues appeared for the written exam, although the majority of test takers fell in this category. Many candidates with slight PBA issues are ultimately hired after investigators determine the issues are not very serious, but applicants were unaware of this fact. This may have particularly hurt the diversity of the LAPD force composition because three-quarters of black applicants had some background issues on their PBA.<sup>3</sup>

**Consider location when planning recruitment efforts.** RAND also identified potential recruitment voids—promising neighborhoods that may have been underexploited in LAPD recruitment efforts. These voids were visualized by creating maps with zip codes

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**Black males were nearly 20 percent less likely to have their applications approved by sergeants in their initial background review.**

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<sup>3</sup> By comparison, only about 60 percent of non-Hispanic white and Hispanic applicants and 54 percent of Asian applicants have PBA issues.

**Long-range recruitment programs can mitigate barriers in the neighborhoods around them.**

color-coded according to whether the zip code yielded more, less, or approximately the same number of target-group applicants predicted by its demographics. The distribution of recruitment events throughout Los Angeles County was then overlaid on this map. For example, Figure 4 shows the map for female applicants in Los Angeles County. Green zip codes yielded substantially more applicants than expected, orange/red zip codes yielded substantially fewer, and yellow yielded close to the number expected.

As Figure 4 shows, the conspicuous recruitment voids are along the 710 freeway (between the 5 and 405 freeways), and in the Eastern San Gabriel Valley—Baldwin Park and Irwindale areas (along the 605 freeway between the 10 and 210 freeways).

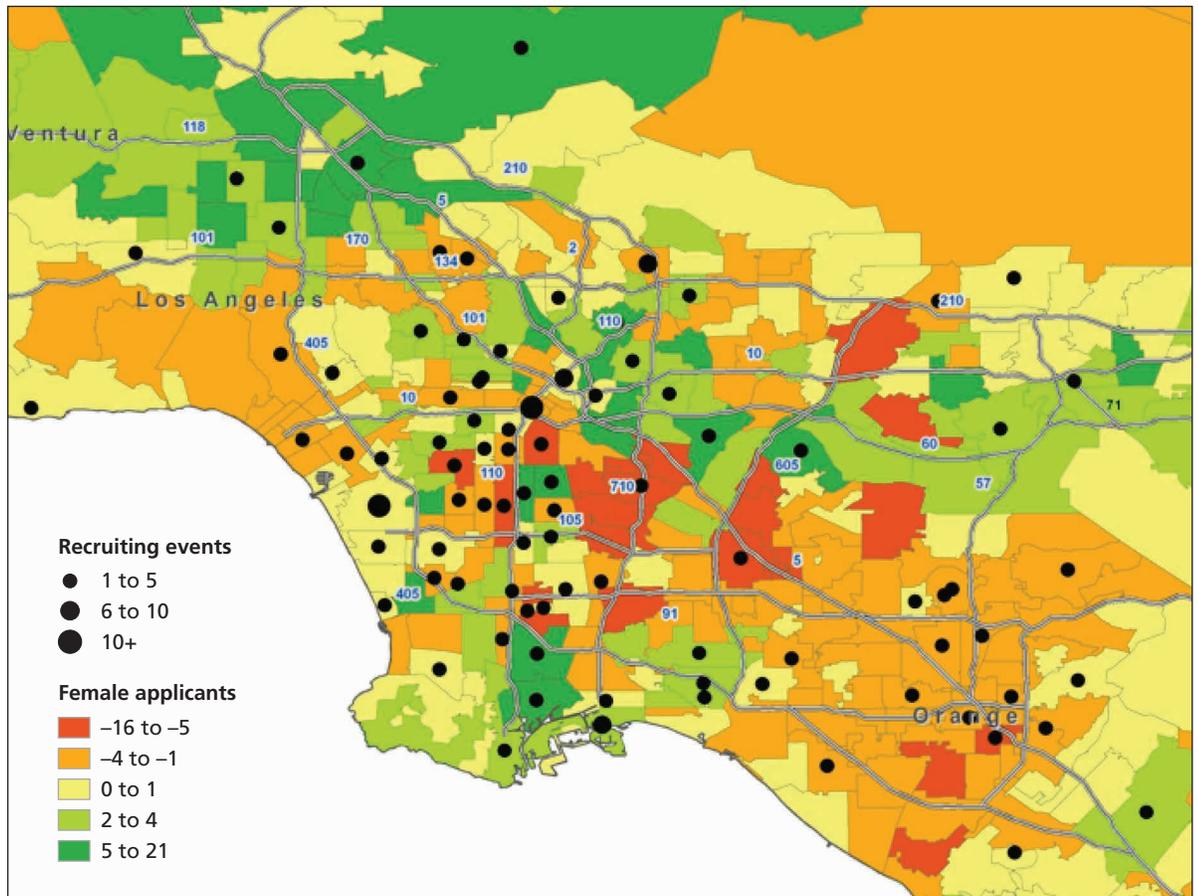
**Design long-range programs for appropriate neighborhoods.** Additionally, law enforcement programs, such as the Police Explorers (PE) and the Police Academy Magnet Schools (PAMS), have the potential to increase the quantity and quality of applicants by providing law enforcement training, discipline, and a positive environment to keep youths out of trouble. Yet, because the programs are volun-

tary, it is possible they are “preaching to the choir,” largely attracting youths already set on a career in law enforcement. To find out, Matthies (2011) compared PE and PAMS zip codes to “synthetic control” zip codes (weighted composites of several ostensibly untreated zip codes) to estimate their local recruitment impact. Results varied from one site to another, but both programs were associated with net positive local recruitment effects. In other words, zip codes with recruitment programs yielded more applicants overall than the most demographically similar zip codes with no recruitment programs, suggesting the programs actually turn young people on to law enforcement. At some locations, positive effects were also detected for women and minority applicants. Further study is needed, but the analysis indicates that long-range recruitment programs can mitigate barriers in the neighborhoods around them.

**Case Study 3: Learning from the Latest Law Enforcement Recruits**

The U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Community Oriented Policing Services asked RAND to

**Figure 4**  
**Map of Recruiting Event Coverage and Female Candidate Distribution for Los Angeles County**



conduct a survey of recent police officers and sheriff's deputy recruits to help improve recruitment efforts. Of the 1,619 new recruits who responded between September 2008 and March 2009, 45 percent were from a racial/ethnic minority group, and 16 percent were women. Castaneda and Ridgeway (2010) developed a host of recommendations based on their findings that will be of special interest to the law enforcement community:

**Reshape negative perceptions and misperceptions among recruits and their potential influencers.** Not all demographic groups are equally inclined toward work in law enforcement. The survey results suggested that Asian recruits were more than twice as likely as other recruits to indicate friends' negative attitudes toward law enforcement as a reason their peers did not apply. In the same survey, black recruits were more than twice as likely as white recruits to indicate friends' and family's negative views toward law enforcement as reasons for not pursuing a law enforcement career. Recruits from immigrant families (defined as recruits who are immigrants themselves or are first-generation Americans) were also significantly more likely than recruits from nonimmigrant families to cite family members' negative views as a disadvantage to joining the ranks of law enforcement. Recruitment programs that display the agency's diversity, demonstrate effective community policing, and celebrate the achievements of officers can help change these unfavorable perceptions.

One surprising result of the survey was that new recruits, regardless of race or gender, believed that the threat of death and the threat of injury were the two biggest reasons their peers did not apply. However, at 12.9 fatalities per 100,000 workers in 2009, law enforcement was roughly three times safer than farming and ranching and 16 times safer than fishing (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). To allay such fears and improve recruitment efforts, the report recommends that recruiters should make prospective recruits aware of the actual risks involved in policing.

**Adapt recruitment approaches to attract candidates in target groups.** The survey also revealed that, to a significant degree, women and minorities are inclined toward work in law enforcement for different reasons. Female recruits were much more likely than men to indicate that a good salary was a factor in their decision, black recruits were far more apt to cite the prestige of the profession as a motivating factor, and Asian recruits were especially drawn to the excitement of the work. Based on these findings, the report suggests that law enforcement agencies can appeal to what different types of recruits view as

advantages or benefits of working in law enforcement in conjunction with addressing what they perceive to be downsides of a law enforcement career.

#### Case Study 4: Barriers to Promotion in the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency

Analyses of barriers in the later career lifecycle stages, such as promotions, are often unpublished because of their sensitive nature. However, some barrier analyses in the federal government, including the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), have been published by the Government Accountability Office (GAO). For example, in the early 1980s, a federal district court sided with black agents at the DEA who had filed suit alleging discrimination in the DEA's promotion and discipline procedures. The court ordered the DEA to address the adverse impacts of its evaluation, promotion, and discipline systems. Twenty years later, the GAO reviewed the DEA's workforce composition and policies to verify compliance with the court's mandate.

As benchmarks for DEA diversity, the GAO used diversity within the federal government as a whole, as well as diversity within the field of criminal investigation at all levels of government. While the DEA fell well short of the federal government in terms of diversity, its force of criminal investigators was on par with the government benchmark, except for the number of female agents.

The GAO found that minorities had proportionally higher representation in the supervisory special agent and senior executive service (SES) positions. For example, Hispanics comprised 22.4 percent of SES special agents, 10 percent of supervisors, and 8.2 percent of nonsupervisory special agents. However, women, who comprised 8.8 percent of nonsupervisory agents, appeared to go through a bottleneck of sorts; representation declined to 6.6 percent at the supervisory level before rebounding to 10.2 percent of SES special agent positions.

No statistically significant discrepancies were found in promotion rates to GS-14 and GS-15 positions under the promotional process that DEA instituted in 1992. However, the GAO's analysis revealed that black and Hispanic special agents were underrepresented on the best-qualified lists that were submitted to the selecting authority by office heads. Thus, although the GS-14 and GS-15 promotion process appeared unbiased in the aggregate, a potential bias was detected in an important step of the process.

#### Conclusion

Diversity in law enforcement is a matter of both equal employment opportunity and public safety.

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**Diversity in law enforcement is a matter of both equal employment opportunity and public safety.**

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**A commitment to keeping the workforce management process fair and transparent is key.**

Police-community rapport tends to flourish where it is present and to suffer in its absence. Obstacles to improving agency diversity can be revealed and removed or mitigated through barrier analysis.

Barrier analysis must be conducted with great care in order to be faithful to the ideal of equal opportunity employment. For example, such groups as Native Americans may constitute such a small part of the local labor force as to preclude the use of benchmark comparisons. Likewise, a statistical deviation from benchmarks in a single year may be an anomaly and would therefore not necessarily require immediate action. An important caveat is also in order: Some jurisdictions have laws prohibiting public agencies from actively shaping the racial or ethnic composition of their workforce. Therefore, police administrators should verify that steps to address barriers do not violate any such statutes. A commitment to keeping the workforce management process fair and transparent is key, as is an awareness of the kinds of barriers to employment that exist in the law enforcement profession. As the case studies suggest, methods are available to diagnose and correct issues affecting the critical matter of diversity in law enforcement agencies. ■

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## About This Paper

Diversity is considered a key ingredient to the successful implementation of community-based policing, and disparities between the racial composition of the police force and neighborhood residents have been tied to poor police-community relations. This has led many law enforcement agencies to focus on ways to increase the diversity within their ranks. Despite these efforts, racial/ethnic minority and female representation in many law enforcement agencies still falls short of labor population benchmarks, resulting in agencies that do not reflect the demographics of their communities. This paper describes how using a barrier analysis approach can help law enforcement agencies better understand and address challenges they face in increasing the diversity of their workforce. It describes the barrier analysis process and summarizes common barriers through case studies featuring police departments that have used barrier analysis as a tool to reshape and refine their hiring and promotion practices.

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This paper should be of particular interest to researchers in policing, law enforcement agency leaders, and human resources managers interested in developing a more diverse workforce.

## The RAND Center on Quality Policing

This research was conducted in the RAND Center on Quality Policing (CQP) within the Safety and Justice Program of RAND Infrastructure, Safety, and Environment (ISE). The center's mission is to help guide the efforts of police agencies to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and fairness of their operations. The center's research and analysis focus on force planning (e.g., recruitment, retention, and training), performance measurement, cost-effective best practices, and use of technology, as well as issues in police-community relations.

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