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**THESIS**

**IT STARTS AT HOME: INTERNAL ACTIONS POLICE  
AGENCIES CAN TAKE TO IMPROVE STAFFING**

by

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December 2020

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**IT STARTS AT HOME: INTERNAL ACTIONS POLICE AGENCIES CAN TAKE  
TO IMPROVE STAFFING**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The shortage of police officers in the United States has become a crisis. Many officers leave the force after only a few years, and police departments struggle to find qualified applicants to fill rapidly increasing openings. This thesis asks what police leaders can do to solve their staffing problems. The research looks to the armed forces' recruitment methodology and the private sector's use of analytics to address strategic problems, and analyzes two police departments that have been able to reduce the number of open positions through an integrated approach to recruiting, retention, and force management. The research finds that traditional methods are no longer effective; modern recruiting requires departments to adapt to new and changing environments and generations. Recruitment advertising must be honest and targeted to the right audience, and must use the most appropriate medium for the message. To promote retention, police leaders must go beyond offering competitive compensation; equally as important, they must consider how they engage with and connect to their employees. Further, successful force management requires leaders to determine which positions must truly be filled by sworn officers and which can be filled by appropriately skilled civilians. To address staffing challenges, police leaders must start with retention and force management to determine what and who they need, and then enhance their recruiting efforts to complete the triad and fill their open spots.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

|      |   |
|------|---|
| CCPD | Chesterfield County Police Department         |
| CRF  | Consumer Research Forum                       |
| IACP | International Association of Chiefs of Police |
| PERF | Police Executive Research Forum               |
| SHRM | Society for Human Resource Management         |
| SPD  | Seattle Police Department                     |
| SRO  | School Resource Officer                       |

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Employees, citizens, and policymakers all depend on police department leadership to chart a course through chaos. While many of the challenges police departments face in 2020 are external, coping with them requires leaders who can be flexible and who know how to make decisions within the department. For example, the rise of the millennial generation has changed the hiring environment; millennials are more likely than members of past generations to leave employers who do not meet their professional needs.<sup>1</sup> Policing as a field has changed as well, moving from a strictly law enforcement environment to one that involves social work, especially in the area of mental health.<sup>2</sup> The public perception of policing has also changed as the result of high-profile, negative incidents that have led to civil disturbances.<sup>3</sup> These external factors have affected potential applicants' interest in the field of law enforcement, and departments' future ability to recruit and hire staff may depend on the decisions they make during these times.

Police staffing has reached crisis levels, and the solution is linked to the internal actions police leaders can take toward recruiting, retention, and force management.<sup>4</sup> To recommend specific actions, this research considers the armed forces' recruitment methodology and the private sector's use of analytics to address strategic problems. In the 1990s, the armed forces struggled to fill their ranks.<sup>5</sup> To attract more service members, the forces determined they needed innovative recruiting methods, improved messaging to

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<sup>1</sup> Police Executive Research Forum, *The Workforce Crisis, and What Police Agencies Are Doing about It* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2019), 22, <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/WorkforceCrisis.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> "Why Police Officers Are Taking on Social Worker Responsibilities," Tulane University, January 19, 2019, <https://socialwork.tulane.edu/blog/why-police-officers-are-taking-on-social-worker-responsibilities>.

<sup>3</sup> Ashley Gold, "Is Ferguson Unrest Behind Murder Spike?" BBC News, June 5, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-32995911>.

<sup>4</sup> Police Executive Research Forum, *The Workforce Crisis*.

<sup>5</sup> Paul R. Sackett and Anne S. Mavor, eds., *Attitudes, Aptitudes, and Aspirations of American Youth: Implications for Military Recruitment* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2003), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=3375169>.

connect with prospective enlistees, new methods of advertising that could deliver their message to the right audiences, and a new selection and training program that identified the best recruits.<sup>6</sup> In the private sector, organizations have taken advantage of technology and data analytics to retain their qualified workforce.<sup>7</sup> Analytics have allowed organizations to identify problems, collect data on the potential causes, and develop solutions. Google, for example, used analytics to improve its hiring process, and IBM used analytics to improve overall retention.<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, two police departments—the Seattle Police Department (SPD) and the Chesterfield County Police Department (CCPD) in Virginia—have been able to fill positions through an integrated approach to recruiting, retention, and force management. To improve recruiting, they provided more flexibility for testing dates; utilized technology to improve the background packet and interview panel processes; expanded advertising, messaging, and branding through digital media; and implemented a new approach that kept applicants informed about their progress throughout the hiring process. For retention, the departments increased compensation, used technology (for example video production networks) to improve internal communication between leadership and line employees, and improved employee engagement through interactive councils and innovation committees that allowed employees to share their input on department matters. Both departments also used force management to provide better service while reducing their need for more sworn officers. SPD decided to fill their digital and video forensics unit with civilian positions rather than detective, allowing the department to place more officers on the road. CCPD similarly converted their forensic and crime scene detective positions into civilian positions to provide greater stability and specialization to the work. CCPD also created a public service aide position to handle such tasks as traffic direction, mail runs, and information exchanges, freeing up sworn officers for more serious calls.

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<sup>6</sup> Sackett and Mavor.

<sup>7</sup> Alec Levenson and Gillian Pillans, *Strategic Workforce Analytics* (London: Corporate Research Forum, November 2017).

<sup>8</sup> Levenson and Pillans.

Police departments that face staffing challenges must first consider how they recruit for both current and expected future openings. For example, departments can use Twitter, digital streaming, and billboards, to expand their reach. Departments must also continue to evaluate the recruiting environment, making changes as needed, and should leverage their current employees to help recruit others; this requires department leadership to be engaged with employees and to provide a positive working environment.

Departments can improve retention by communicating and engaging with their employees. This means that police leaders must give employees access to the decision-making process; while the leaders are still the final decision-makers, employees must be able to communicate their concerns. For instance, a department can improve engagement and officer development through an internal apprenticeship program that allow employees to temporarily serve in other units before returning to their assignment. Additionally, because inequities between employees can increase turnover, leaders must look beyond salary when reviewing compensation.

As crime becomes more complex, departments can consider which sworn positions would be better filled by civilians. For example, civilians with training in cybercrime and computer science can better investigate areas of crime that involve the internet, thereby reducing the need for additional officers. Departments can also address internal problems by forming problem-solving partnerships with other areas of government or the private sector. For instance, departments might pair police officers with psychiatric professionals to respond to mental health calls. This partnership alleviates the burden on officers while providing a higher level of service to the community, without jeopardizing safety.

These actions, exemplified by SPD, CCPD, the armed forces, and the private sector, can help police departments around the nation address their staffing challenges. Critically, this requires the ability to adapt to a continually changing environment. As 2020 saw a pandemic and civil unrest around the nation, police leaders must be willing to adapt if they want to staff their open positions and serve their communities effectively.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Having enough qualified, experienced, and capable police officers is imperative to the safety of the community. Yet many police forces are struggling to meet this basic measure. Due to a national shortage of police officers, law enforcement has been labeled a “profession in crisis.”<sup>1</sup> The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) has called attention to a persistent shortage of applicants for police positions, and a report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics shows the number of police officers per capita has fallen consistently since 1997.<sup>2</sup> In addition, a large number of current officers, hired during the government-financed hiring drives of the 1990s, will soon be eligible to retire.

Many articles and reports from such sources as *Police Chief* magazine have presented potential solutions to the staffing shortage, but most of the recommendations offer only generalized ideas with no concrete application.<sup>3</sup> For example, in one article, Ray Arcuri offers six broad strategies for recruiting that seem to assume a steady stream of “motivated, engaged, and community-oriented” people is just waiting for the next opportunity to join the force or promote from within—an assumption that is negated by PERF’s research.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, many articles look to three isolated areas of staffing—recruiting, retention, and force management—without considering how these areas connect or overlap. In reality, these three areas are inextricably linked. While it is necessary to recruit qualified applicants into the force, recruiting them will not, alone, solve the

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<sup>1</sup> Nicole Cain, “A Profession in Crisis: Proactively Recruiting in Schools and Minority Communities,” *In Public Safety*, April 1, 2019, <https://inpublicsafety.com/2019/04/a-profession-in-crisis-proactively-recruiting-in-schools-and-minority-communities/>.

<sup>2</sup> Police Executive Research Forum, *The Workforce Crisis, and What Police Agencies Are Doing about It* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2019), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/WorkforceCrisis.pdf>; Shelley Hyland, *Full-Time Employees in Law Enforcement Agencies, 1997–2016* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, August 2018). While the total number of officers increased, it did not keep pace with the increase in population or the demand for services. And while the overall number of officers increased between 1997 and 2013, since then, both the total and per capita numbers of sworn officers have decreased.

<sup>3</sup> Ray Arcuri, “Recruitment and Retention for 2019 and Beyond,” *Police Chief*, February 27, 2019, <https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/recruitment-and-retention-for-2019-and-beyond/>.

<sup>4</sup> Arcuri.

problem; keeping them—and keeping them perfecting their skills, learning, and progressing through the ranks—is the rest of the story.

PERF’s research is among the first in a decade to identify the interrelated nature of recruiting, retention, and force management.<sup>5</sup> Building on PERF’s analysis, this thesis explores the internal force factors—issues with their own policies and practices that police agencies could address—that contribute to staffing challenges. Specifically, it asks: Which internal actions can a police agency take to solve its staffing problem?

The present project finds that, to achieve full staffing, police leaders must start with retention and force management to determine what and who they need, and then use recruiting to complete the triad and fill their open spots. Proper staffing will allow departments to meet established measures of performance, for example lowering response times to calls and reducing crime.

## **A. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This literature review examines the challenges police agencies face to staff their departments. Specifically, it looks at sources that tell the story about the major themes and potential external causes—that is, factors over which the departments have little direct control—of problems with recruiting and retaining officers. These external challenges loom large in the relevant literature on police staffing, and they provide the context and constraints for any policy changes. Thus, while they are not the focus of this thesis, they require some development in this section.

Through recruitment, departments fill positions that become vacant due to newly created positions, turnover, or retirements. In search of potential applicants, recruiters may attend job fairs, visit colleges, or conduct advertising campaigns in the hopes of bringing in new talent to fill vacancies. The current literature tends to focus on real and imagined differences among young applicants for these jobs—notably, the millennial generation—and the challenges that recent policing controversies (beginning with and perhaps epitomized by the Ferguson incident in 2014) pose to police recruitment.

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<sup>5</sup> Police Executive Research Forum, *The Workforce Crisis*.

## 1. Generational Differences

A wealth of opinions and literature examine generational differences that may affect the way a police department recruits or retains officers. David Fisher, for example, discusses whether millennials may be more likely than their older counterparts to pose an insider threat to homeland security.<sup>6</sup> Despite the fairly pervasive spread of such ideas among professional literature and the media, Fisher finds that “millennials are no more likely to be insider threats than any other generational cohort.”<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Aaron Duron argues that generational differences are negligible within police departments.<sup>8</sup> Duron notes that “while generational differences do exist among police officers, the strength of these differences appears to be weak.”<sup>9</sup> He suggests, however, that police managers who use participative management, mentorship, flexible work-life staffing approaches, and leadership development could leverage these differences to improve internal conversations, performance, and well-being among a department’s Generation X and millennial employees.<sup>10</sup>

Gary Edwards, a police sergeant, examines the differences between four generational groups employed within a single department to discover how a department can manage potential generational difficulties.<sup>11</sup> He recommends that agencies try to create tailored strategies to engage these groups.<sup>12</sup> Referencing trends among scholars, Edwards suggests that “developing organizational culture, leadership, and engagement within the

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<sup>6</sup> David J. Fisher, “The Millennial Generation as an Insider Threat: High Risk or Overhyped” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2015), v, <https://doi.org/10.21236/AD1008928>.

<sup>7</sup> Fisher, 69.

<sup>8</sup> Aaron Duron, “Generational Differences among Police Officers” (master’s thesis, Texas State University, 2018), ix.

<sup>9</sup> Duron, ix.

<sup>10</sup> Duron, 59.

<sup>11</sup> Gary Scott Edwards, “Generational Competence and Retention: A Study of Different Generations in Law Enforcement and How These Differences Impact Retention in the Chesterfield County Police Department” (master’s thesis, University of Richmond, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> Edwards, 164.

organization offer the best chances of success.”<sup>13</sup> U.S. Marine Corps Major Darrel F. Commander also researched generational theory (described in more detail below) and recruiting.<sup>14</sup> Commander looked at the “peer personality” aspect of the theory, defined as the “demographic generalization characterizing [of] an age-defined cohort group uniquely applied to American society.”<sup>15</sup> Based on his research, he recommends using the internet—such things as social media, online recruiting, and online hiring platforms—to target younger applicants; the internet offers a low-cost change to the Marine Corps’ recruiting model.

Generational theory applies generalized, predictive group descriptors based on an age range and time in history.<sup>16</sup> William Strauss and Neil Howe conceived of the theory to describe their belief that a generational cycle occurs approximately every twenty years. According to Strauss and Howe, distinctive traits set each generational cohort apart.<sup>17</sup> However, not everyone subscribes to this idea. In an interview for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Palmer Muntz, director of admissions and enrollment management consultant at Lincoln Christian University, references two faulty assumptions with the theory.<sup>18</sup> The first is that “tens of millions of people, born over about 20 years, are fundamentally different from people of other age groups.”<sup>19</sup> The second is that “those tens of millions of people are similar to each other in meaningful ways.”<sup>20</sup> Both assumptions require everyone within a generational cohort to have the same formative experiences, backgrounds, and

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<sup>13</sup> Edwards, 164.

<sup>14</sup> Darrel F. Commander, “Generational Recruiting: Applying Generational Theory to Tactical Level Recruiting” (master’s thesis, Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 2013), <https://apps.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA601696>.

<sup>15</sup> Commander, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Commander, 4–5.

<sup>17</sup> William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America’s Future, 1584 to 2069* (New York: Quill, 1992).

<sup>18</sup> Eric Hoover, “The Millennial Muddle,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 11, 2009, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Millennial-Muddle-How/48772>.

<sup>19</sup> Hoover.

<sup>20</sup> Hoover.

beliefs. Muntz concludes, “You can’t just take one stamp and put it on this generation [millennials]. . . . But it sure was nice when I thought I could.”<sup>21</sup> While it would simplify recruiting, advertising, and personnel management, labeling or stereotyping a group of people is a flawed practice.

Jeanne Stinchcomb and Leslie Leip agree that generational differences have little bearing on employee turnover.<sup>22</sup> They looked at how the private sector used research on generational relevance to address turnover and whether the corrections field could benefit from it.<sup>23</sup> Specifically, they found that, for employees across all generations, “job security and competitive salary/benefits are key ingredients to . . . retention.”<sup>24</sup> Of interest is their finding that much of the literature about generational differences in the workplace is anecdotal.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the authors conclude, “There was considerably more intergenerational cohesiveness than would have been expected.”<sup>26</sup> These results suggest that the storied generational gap may have less bearing on recruitment—to any career field—than its proponents claim.

## 2. The Ferguson Effect

More recently, the discussion of recruiting has turned to the loss of applicants due to the changing perception of police work and police officers.<sup>27</sup> St. Louis Police Chief Sam Dotson coined the term “Ferguson effect” to describe the impact of the controversial shooting that occurred in Ferguson, Missouri, and later tragedies that have led to increased

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<sup>21</sup> Hoover.

<sup>22</sup> Jeanne B. Stinchcomb and Leslie Ann Leip, “Turning Off Jail Turnover: Do Generational Differences Matter?” *Criminal Justice Studies* 26, no. 1 (March 2013): 67–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1478601X.2012.705785>.

<sup>23</sup> Stinchcomb and Leip, 67.

<sup>24</sup> Stinchcomb and Leip, 79.

<sup>25</sup> Stinchcomb and Leip, 68.

<sup>26</sup> Stinchcomb and Leip, 74.

<sup>27</sup> William J. Woska, “Police Officer Recruitment—A Decade Later,” *Police Chief*, February 1, 2017, <https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/police-officer-recruitment/>.

critical media and public scrutiny of the law enforcement field.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, Mark Timpf finds there is a connection between officer behavior, increased attention, increased duty assignments, and the level of officer engagement.<sup>29</sup> Timpf points out, “The issue . . . is important to police executives and managers because of the resulting impact on both public safety and crime rates if it occurs with any regularity in their agencies.”<sup>30</sup> The Ferguson effect may prevent officers from acting, out of fear of political or reputational consequences. This is otherwise known as “de-policing.”<sup>31</sup>

Some scholars suggest that legitimacy, which affects public perception, plays a role in police recruitment. Craig Fisher defines legitimacy as “the belief that the police ought to be allowed to exercise their authority to maintain social order, manage conflicts, and solve problems in their communities.”<sup>32</sup> Jason Sunshine and Tom Tylor write, “By focusing on the psychology underlying views about their legitimacy among members of the public, the police can enhance their image in the eyes of the public.”<sup>33</sup> Legitimacy was also considered by the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, which examined the internal effects of the concept.<sup>34</sup> “Just as employees are more likely to take direction from management when they believe management’s authority is legitimate,” the task force writes, “citizens are more likely to cooperate with the police when they believe the officers’

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<sup>28</sup> Ronald T. Hosko, “Through Police Eyes—The Ferguson Effect Scare,” *Berkeley Journal of Criminal Law* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 16, <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.15779/Z38F18SF4V>; John G. Reece, “Assessing the Relationship between Job Satisfaction and Voluntary Turnover of Police Officers in Colorado” (PhD diss., North Central University, 2012), 16, ProQuest.

<sup>29</sup> Mark L. Timpf, “Police Reforms: Identifying the Potential Adverse Impacts and Challenges to Law Enforcement Agencies” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2017), 108, <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=>.

<sup>30</sup> Timpf, 90–91.

<sup>31</sup> Stephen Edward Simonds, “Ferguson Effect—Are Police Anxieties to Blame?” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2017), 9, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=800967>.

<sup>32</sup> Craig Fisher, *Legitimacy and Procedural Justice: A New Element of Police Leadership* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2014), 9, <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=750418>.

<sup>33</sup> Jason Sunshine and Tom R. Tyler, “The Role of Procedural Justice and Legitimacy in Shaping Public Support for Policing,” *Law & Society Review* 37, no. 3 (September 2003): 535.

<sup>34</sup> President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, *Final Report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing* (Washington, DC: Department of Justice, 2015).

authority is legitimate.”<sup>35</sup> A department’s legitimacy affects its reputation; when an applicant can search the internet to learn about an agency, reputation can have an impact on recruitment.

The literature offers different opinions about the effects of public perception on policing. Stephen Simonds studied the Ferguson effect and its connection to de-policing, or police disengagement, by collecting open datasets from the Burlington City, Montgomery County, and Philadelphia City Police Departments, covering two years before and after the events in Ferguson.<sup>36</sup> After conducting case studies with the limited data, he concluded that “no noticeable de-policing occurred following the killing of Michael Brown.”<sup>37</sup> PERF disagrees, however, about the effect of public perception on police recruitment, noting, “Negative perceptions may cause people who might otherwise have considered a career in policing to seek other options.”<sup>38</sup> The available literature does not reach a consensus on whether public perception plays a role in recruiting challenges; however, the prevailing opinion leans toward the importance of legitimacy in improving public perception.

### **3. External Challenges to Retention**

Retaining officers, or keeping those already employed, is the second piece of the discussion on staffing police departments. The relevant literature discusses two main factors in retaining officers: the changing nature of the field and the level of compensation and benefits.

#### ***a. Changing Work Environment***

The changing nature of police work is another common issue linked to problems with police staffing. The job has changed in terms of both the type of work performed by

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<sup>35</sup> President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 14.

<sup>36</sup> Simonds, “Ferguson Effect,” 21–25.

<sup>37</sup> Simonds, 40.

<sup>38</sup> Police Executive Research Forum, *The Workforce Crisis*, 27.

police officers and the number of officers available to handle the increased workload. A report by Jeremy Wilson identifies how community policing, homeland security, and emergent crime trends—for example human trafficking, identify theft, and cybercrime—have changed the role of police officers.<sup>39</sup> Wilson talks about the evolution of the field, writing, “Local police roles have evolved through the community-policing era to include benign order-maintenance duties, such as answering noise complaints and solving neighborhood disputes, as well as new, occasionally militaristic roles, such as counterterrorism, information-sharing, and immigration enforcement.”<sup>40</sup> He further describes how “the movement toward knowledge work might be reshaping career expectations in law enforcement.”<sup>41</sup> An article by the Tulane University School of Social Work reflects this “movement” as well when it refers to officers as “police social workers.”<sup>42</sup> In the same vein, Michael Biasotti, who surveyed the leaders of law enforcement agencies on the consumption of resources by mental health incidents, found the number of mental health calls that officers handle has grown significantly over the years, adding to their workloads.<sup>43</sup> Social work does not fit the traditional view of policing, and these changing job aspects can disillusion those entering the field.

Similarly, a report by NPR identified how the increased responsibilities and a shortage of police officers create a synergistic effect, further burdening the officers who remain on the job.<sup>44</sup> The report references the New Haven, Connecticut, Police Department

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<sup>39</sup> Jeremy M. Wilson, “Articulating the Dynamic Police Staffing Challenge,” *Policing* 35, no. 2 (2012): 329–32, <https://doi.org/10.1108/13639511211230084>.

<sup>40</sup> Wilson, 332.

<sup>41</sup> Wilson, 335.

<sup>42</sup> “Why Police Officers Are Taking on Social Worker Responsibilities,” Tulane University School of Social Work, January 19, 2019, <https://socialwork.tulane.edu/blog/why-police-officers-are-taking-on-social-worker-responsibilities>.

<sup>43</sup> Michael C. Biasotti, “Management of the Severely Mentally Ill and its Effects on Homeland Security” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2011), 39, <https://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/39405>.

<sup>44</sup> Martin Kaste and Lori Mack, “America’s Growing Cop Shortage,” NPR, December 12, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/12/12/675359781/americas-growing-cop-shortage>.

when it describes “a department that’s both short-staffed and green.”<sup>45</sup> The PERF report, too, explains that almost 70 percent of officers who leave the job within the first five years of employment do so because of increased workloads, expansion of duties, and the trend of a younger, more mobile workforce changing career fields.<sup>46</sup> Experts say “doing more for less” means simply having less ability to do things.<sup>47</sup> Chief Valerie Cunningham of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department’s training section shared with NPR that her “immediate concern is rebuilding the ranks of the [department], which is also short-handed.”<sup>48</sup> In his article on increasing officer retention, Mark Terra concludes, “Researchers have found that job satisfaction serves as a key component in retention.”<sup>49</sup> Job satisfaction and expectations take a hit with the changing nature of the job, reduction in officers, and the resulting increased workload for those who remain.<sup>50</sup>

**b. Compensation**

The idea that salary plays a role in recruitment and retention is debated in the literature. According to Dwayne Orrick of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the salary aspect of compensation is often the first “go-to” for complaints about filling vacancies.<sup>51</sup> An article for PoliceOne echoes this, asking if it is worth being a police officer given lower salaries and poor public perception; ultimately, the article finds it is not worth

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<sup>45</sup> Kaste and Mack.

<sup>46</sup> Police Executive Research Forum, *The Workforce Crisis*, 22.

<sup>47</sup> Michael McAuliffe, “Leadership Spotlight: Doing More with Less?” FBI, July 9, 2013, <https://leb.fbi.gov/spotlights/leadership-spotlight-doing-more-with-less>.

<sup>48</sup> Kaste and Mack, “America’s Growing Cop Shortage.”

<sup>49</sup> Mark J. Terra, “Increasing Officer Retention through Educational Incentives,” *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* 78, no. 2 (February 2009): 14.

<sup>50</sup> Kaste and Mack, “America’s Growing Cop Shortage.”

<sup>51</sup> W. Dwayne Orrick, *Recruitment, Retention, and Turnover of Law Enforcement Personnel* (Alexandria, VA: International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2015), 7–8, <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/BP-RecruitmentRetentionandTurnover.pdf>.

it.<sup>52</sup> Darrel Stephens, executive director of the Major Cities Chiefs Association, expounds on this problem, arguing that “[m]any PDs [police departments] can’t always offer the perks and salary private sector jobs can.”<sup>53</sup> Similarly, Orrick further admits that salaries can play a role in retaining officers.<sup>54</sup> He explains, “In many cases the level of salary, benefits, and working conditions offered by local government trail those found in the private sector or nearby agencies.”<sup>55</sup> Orrick balances his statement, however, suggesting that police leaders need not rely solely on salary as an easy answer; rather, they should consider the interplay between salary and retention as a “potentially complex problem” that requires performing a “hard analysis of the problem.”<sup>56</sup> Federico Garza of the Webb County Sheriff Office in Laredo, Texas, concludes in his paper that it is pay inequity between departments, not the pay itself, that affects turnover.<sup>57</sup> Writing about his study, Garza says, “Participants . . . revealed that the attraction of leaving a smaller agency for that of a larger agency is because larger agencies offer better pay and nicer fringe benefits.”<sup>58</sup> Pay is important, but it does not seem to be the only factor in retention. Job satisfaction seems to play a larger role, and pay and benefits are only part of the overall satisfaction.

Employees, citizens, and policymakers all depend on police department leadership to chart a course through chaos. While many of the challenges police departments face in 2020 are external, coping with them requires leaders who can be flexible and who know how to make decisions within the department. Indeed, departments’ future ability to recruit

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<sup>52</sup> “Police Shortage Hits Cities and Small Towns across the Country,” PoliceOne, March 21, 2018, <https://www.policeone.com/police-recruiting/articles/police-shortage-hits-cities-and-small-towns-across-the-country-stYYsLGblxgltoQH/>.

<sup>53</sup> PoliceOne.

<sup>54</sup> Orrick, Recruitment, Retention, and Turnover, 7–8.

<sup>55</sup> Orrick, 7.

<sup>56</sup> Orrick, 7–8.

<sup>57</sup> Federico Garza, “The Effect Police Salaries Have on Officer Retention” (academic paper, Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas, 2010), 12, <https://shsu-ir.tdl.org/handle/20.500.11875/1681>.

<sup>58</sup> Garza, 12.

and hire staff may depend on the decisions they make during these times. Recruiting does little good if departments cannot keep personnel on the job. The mobile nature of today's workforce seems to show decreasing tolerance for dissatisfaction, and a department looking for quick answers or fixes to their staffing problems is unlikely to find them.

## **B. RESEARCH DESIGN**

This thesis examines two main hypotheses. The first is that police agencies can take internal actions to help solve their staffing challenges. The second is that holistically combining the aspects of recruiting, retention, and force management creates a robust approach to staffing a department over the long term. For this thesis, *recruiting* means finding, attracting, and onboarding individuals. *Retention* means retaining hired employees. *Force management* means determining how many sworn officers are needed and which job functions require a sworn officer and managing officer deployment.

The research considers examples from law enforcement to support these hypotheses; the two law enforcement agencies selected for analysis—the Seattle Police Department (SPD) and the Chesterfield County Police Department (CCPD)—were selected based on their successful approaches to recruitment, retention, or force management. Agencies considered for the research had to be medium to large in size, serve populations of at least 100,000, and be culturally diverse. Except in the case of successful programs, urban cities with more than 5,000 officers or small departments—fewer than 100 officers—were not considered. When selecting agencies, the research defined *success* in terms of recruiting as an agency that attracts enough applicants to fill needed positions or achieves a positive hiring-to-loss ratio. Recruiting activities, intradepartmental data collection, staff dedicated to recruiting, branding, and advertising strategies are all aspects of an agency's recruiting practices. When considering retention, a successful department is one that keeps voluntary resignations to less than 5 percent.<sup>59</sup> Loss of officers to retirement, however, is a part of the natural employee life cycle and is not a negative loss. The research herein evaluates the incentives, programs, actions, and developmental

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<sup>59</sup> A voluntary resignation occurs before the officer has reached the point of full retirement.

activities the agencies employ to deter voluntary resignation. Finally, successful force management means the departments have methods for determining how many sworn officers they need, when a civilian could better fill a role, and how to deploy resources.

Non-law-enforcement organizations also offer insights into recruiting, retention, and force management. This thesis analyzes the armed forces' recruiting approach to determine how the services have reached applicants. Additionally, the research examines IBM's Workforce Analytics, which uses data to address problems in recruiting and retention.<sup>60</sup> These examples lead the thesis to evaluate how internal data can be used by police agencies to overcome the that's-the-way-we-have-always-done-it fallacy.

The thesis does not, however, conduct a workforce analysis within a police department, nor does it use surveys, interviews, focus groups, or personally collected data, as such data is already publicly available. This thesis does not look at solutions for external actions that may affect police staffing; it considers the potential impacts of external factors, but the focus is on what police leaders have the power to do. The output from the chapters that follow is a set of recommended actions that will help police leaders address all three aspects of police staffing—recruiting, retention, and force management.

### **C. OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS**

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter II considers the three elements that this thesis posits most affect police department staffing numbers: recruiting, retention, and force management. Chapter III looks at the armed forces' recruiting methods and the private sector's handling of hiring and retention practices. Chapter IV evaluates recruiting, retention, and force management actions taken by two police departments that have improved their staffing. Finally, Chapter V provides specific recommendations that will help police leaders improve their departments' staffing.

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<sup>60</sup> Alec Levenson and Gillian Pillans, *Strategic Workforce Analytics* (London: Corporate Research Forum, November 2017), 34–45.

## II. RECRUITING, RETENTION, AND FORCE MANAGEMENT

Without police, social order and security crumble. The riots, looting, and destruction that occur when police officers are not present at—or not in control of—certain situations are evidence of such breakdowns. We saw this collapse in social order in the riots and lawful protests that broke out in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina; in Ferguson after Michael Brown’s death; and around much of the nation after George Floyd’s death in Minneapolis.<sup>61</sup> Such events reinforce the need for a functioning and legitimate police force that employs professionally qualified personnel. Such factors as a scarcity of applicants, an inability to retain officers, and improper force management prevent police officers from maintaining the barrier between order and chaos. Therefore, for a police department to function successfully—and protect and secure the community it serves—it is essential for the department to hire and train public safety employees, retain them throughout their careers, and effectively manage them.

This chapter defines the life cycle of an officer, from hiring onward, from a police department’s point of view. This cycle is disrupted when there are not enough new staff members to replace those who leave, making it increasingly difficult for the force to fulfill its purpose or meet its goals, and ultimately degrading the quality of service to the community, which, in turn, further frustrates the men and women who are still on the job. Some turnover in the ranks of any police force is normal; circumstances change. But chronic gaps make for chronic problems that have ramifications throughout the employment cycle. The conventional approach to police staffing, based on outdated expectations about the profession of policing, may exacerbate this problem. This chapter

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<sup>61</sup> David A. Graham, “The Baltimore Riot Didn’t Have to Happen,” *Atlantic*, April 30, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/04/the-baltimore-riots-that-didnt-happen/391931/>; Dave Martin, “Looters Take Advantage of New Orleans Mess,” NBC News, August 30, 2005, [http://www.nbcnews.com/id/9131493/ns/us\\_news-katrina\\_the\\_long\\_road\\_back/t/looters-take-advantage-new-orleans-mess/](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/9131493/ns/us_news-katrina_the_long_road_back/t/looters-take-advantage-new-orleans-mess/); Paul Lewis and Jon Swaine, “Ferguson Ablaze After Michael Brown Verdict: ‘This Is a War Zone Now,’” *Guardian*, November 25, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2014/nov/25-sp-ferguson-ablaze-michael-brown-verdict-war-zone>; Jeffrey Meitrodt, “Manufacturer That Burned during Mpls. Riots Plans to Move Out of the City,” *Star Tribune*, June 9, 2020, <https://www.startribune.com/manufacturer-that-burned-during-mpls-riots-plans-to-relocate-from-city/571104922/>.

explores how police departments have historically handled recruitment of potential applicants, how departments currently recruit and retain officers, how retention affects the need to recruit, and how force management can affect staffing needs.

## A. CONVENTIONAL RECRUITING

Recruiting involves locating qualified candidates who can apply for open positions and encompasses the onboarding process; this process typically includes testing, running background checks, performing medical and psychological evaluations, and interviewing candidates. Recruiting for police officers has historically reflected the tagline from the movie *Field of Dreams*: “If you build it, they will come.”<sup>62</sup> When police agencies opened the hiring process, large numbers of prospects came to test and apply. This model worked for decades. In the early 1990s, for example, the Seattle Police Department had 3,000 applicants for ten positions.<sup>63</sup> In 2019, however, the same department had to spend more than \$1 million on a recruiting initiative to find and hire qualified applicants.<sup>64</sup>

In his International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) *Best Practices Guide*, Orrick ruminates that recruiting applicants into a police department is not a simple act of finding people and giving them a job; departments must find the right person with the right “fit.”<sup>65</sup> Police departments are not homogeneous organizations. For one, they vary in jurisdiction—state, county, city, town, or tribal. Each serves different types of communities and represents different styles of policing. A potential applicant’s fit-ness, in context, is critical, especially if departments hope to retain their officers. An officer’s fit, particularly over the long term, may have less to do with internally focused esprit de corps than with the officer’s actions and reactions in the community. Research by the Vera Institute of Justice, which surveyed community members and police leaders, has identified more than

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<sup>62</sup> Phil A. Robinson, *Field of Dreams* (Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures, 1989).

<sup>63</sup> Oliver Y. Libaw, “Police Face Severe Shortage of Recruits,” ABC News, July 10, 2000, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=96570&page=1>.

<sup>64</sup> Seattle Police Department, “Seattle Police Department Recruitment and Retention Workgroup Final Report” (report, City of Seattle, August 30, 2019), 2.

<sup>65</sup> Orrick, Recruitment, Retention, and Turnover, 1.

twenty-four “priorities, characteristics, and skills” necessary to be a police officer.<sup>66</sup> The top four characteristics of a model police officer are the ability to build community trust, de-escalate, reduce violence, and reduce crime.<sup>67</sup> Today’s police leaders also seek officers who have a high level of emotional intelligence and empathy, as these characteristics can help officers deal with the expanding services provided by today’s police department, including de-escalation, mental health, and community service.<sup>68</sup>

Departments do not always sell themselves, however, to potential candidates who have these emotional intelligence attributes. The vehicle pursuits or marine patrols that are frequently advertised, while dramatic and photogenic, are rare events that provide a misleading example of an officer’s role, and that might attract applicants who are more interested in action, in the Hollywood sense, than in the kind of service officers do in an average working day. In 2014, for example, a small city department in New Mexico was excoriated for a recruiting video that showcased a militarized police force that did not represent the real department.<sup>69</sup> Such misrepresentations can lead to disillusionment among applicants. who expect endless action without legal or professional constraints.

The first challenge of fit arises with a potential recruit’s first brush with the employment cycle: meeting the requirements for application. Actually, the threshold problem may be a matter of expectations. For example, the CCPD Personnel Unit—where the author of this thesis works—reports that only 24.1 percent of those who file applications show up to take the written and physical tests; the department is unsure what prevents the

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<sup>66</sup> Vera Institute of Justice, *The Model Police Officer: Recruitment, Training, and Community Engagement* (Brooklyn, NY: Vera Institute of Justice, 2018), 4, <https://www.vera.org/publications/the-model-police-officer>.

<sup>67</sup> Vera Institute of Justice, 4.

<sup>68</sup> Timothy W. Turner, “Understanding the Benefits of Emotional Intelligence for Officer Growth and Agency Budgets,” *The Police Chief* 76, no. 8 (August 2009): 94–96; Vera Institute of Justice, *The Model Police Officer*, 8.

<sup>69</sup> Radley Balko, “The Disturbing Messages in Police Recruiting Videos,” *Washington Post*, April 16, 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-watch/wp/2014/04/16/the-disturbing-messages-in-police-recruiting-videos/>; Hobbs Police Department SWAT Team, “Hobbs Police Department SWAT Video,” YouTube, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7XcoJ1Gs9o>.

other 74.9 percent from completing the process.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, only 2.5 percent of all applicants will ultimately obtain employment as police recruits within the department.<sup>71</sup> Applicants fail to make it through the hiring process for a variety of reasons—past criminal actions, untruthfulness, pre-existing medical conditions, or psychological unsuitability, among others.

In the past, the volume of candidates in many police departments in the United States was so great that departments could afford to eliminate candidates for minor reasons: an incorrectly completed application packet, showing up a minute or two late for an appointment, having a beard or tattoos, or missing the threshold for test scores—either physical or written.<sup>72</sup> These practices, known as *gatekeepers*, were put in place to keep the number of applicants at a manageable level, as well as to ensure that the cream of the crop acceded to the force. Today, these more or less arbitrary gatekeepers only serve to bar legitimate potential new hires from starting the process.

The actual requirements are formidable enough. Police departments have standards—integrity, no significant criminal history or excessive drug use, and psychological stability—that serve to eliminate unqualified candidates. These standards mean that for every person hired, several applicants are disqualified; today, however, only three to five people may apply for a position, which makes this process unsustainable for the employment cycle.<sup>73</sup> In another example from the CCPD, between 2014 and 2019 the department needed an average thirty-eight applicants to fill one position, but they saw only forty to fifty applicants at most monthly testing dates.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Captain Michael Young, CCPD Personnel Unit Division Commander, personal communication, March 25, 2020.

<sup>71</sup> Young.

<sup>72</sup> Billy L. Branch, “Police Agencies and Relaxed Grooming Codes: Why We Should Make the Change” (academic paper, University of Arkansas Criminal Justice Institute, November 8, 2018), 3.

<sup>73</sup> Orrick, “Recruitment, Retention, and Turnover of Law Enforcement Personnel,” 4.

<sup>74</sup> Young, personal communication.

The hiring process for a police officer is complex. As shown in Figure 1, multiple stages are involved and it can take a significant amount of time for an officer to complete the process. Potential officers, who hear about open positions in a variety of ways, submit an application to begin the process. Once they are processed, applicants typically take a written general knowledge test and a physical fitness test.<sup>75</sup> After passing these tests, applicants enter an exhaustive background investigation, which requires them to meet with an investigator and complete background packets. The packets often cover the applicant's entire life history, to include where they have lived, worked, and gone to school; their hobbies; character references; and any law violations. The CCPD's packet spans thirty pages and applicants must fill it out completely.<sup>76</sup> Policing, unlike most other fields, cannot waive specific standards. For instance, applicants' drug and alcohol use, criminal history, credit rating, and other factors are all weighed to determine their suitability. Thereafter, applicants undergo an interview process, whether via panel or individual interviewer, followed by complete medical and psychological evaluations. This usually takes three to six months. The final step after the evaluations is a job offer.

## Traditional Hiring Process for Many Police Departments



Figure 1. Traditional Police Department Hiring Process

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<sup>75</sup> Not all departments require a written general knowledge test.

<sup>76</sup> Young, personal communication.

While individual departments may flow through the process differently, they generally follow this routine.<sup>77</sup> A candidate can be eliminated during each step of the process, which increases the number of applicants needed to fill a position.

## **B. RETENTION**

With so many applicants clamoring for police jobs, retention was never a major concern for departments—until recently. In the past, police leaders could tell officers who complained about management decisions that there were hundreds of potential officers who would be happy to take their place. Department leadership adhered to the paramilitary nature of the field, which emphasizes command and obedience. For its part, police management did not often concern itself with modern-day leadership principles, participative management, or employee engagement until the last decade or so.

Unlike in the past, police departments today are finding that many officers leave the job after just a few years. In a September 2019 survey, PERF found:

Among agencies that conduct exit interviews, the most common reason officers gave for resigning was to accept a job at another local law enforcement agency, but a close second reason for leaving was to pursue a career outside of law enforcement. The majority of these voluntary resignations are occurring within the first five years that officers are on the force.<sup>78</sup>

When officers leave for another department, retention issues do not hurt the field of policing overall; but it is a cause for concern when officers leave the field, and it is important to determine why they choose to do so. Retention of this type is particularly concerning because of the amount of money it takes to hire a new officer, the damage to succession planning, and the impact on a department's institutional knowledge and the community the department serves.

In the field of policing, most departments bear the costs of recruiting, training and equipping new employees, and these costs can be steep. By breaking down the costs—to

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<sup>77</sup> “The Hiring Process,” Discover Policing, June 8, 2020, <https://www.discoverpolicing.org/about-policing/the-hiring-process/>.

<sup>78</sup> Police Executive Research Forum, *The Workforce Crisis*, 8.

include separation, recruitment, selection, new employee (equipping), and training—Orrick estimates that it costs \$58,900 to replace an officer.<sup>79</sup> Over the past several decades, however, technology, new equipment, and increased salaries have driven the cost up. As of 2020, CCPD estimates the cost of hiring, training, and equipping a single officer to be more than \$160,000.<sup>80</sup> While many interested candidates pay their way through private police academies in some states, for example Florida and Pennsylvania, more often than not U.S. departments carry the expense of training new recruits. Payback clauses are not widespread and therefore not especially effective, as applicants may simply choose to apply to a department that has no clause.<sup>81</sup>

### C. FORCE MANAGEMENT

Force management is the process of determining how many officers a department needs, and it is essential in deciding how to approach recruiting and retention. Jeremy Wilson and Alexander Weiss, who have researched police staffing and schedules for the government and leading police publications, identify that force management considerations are often overlooked.<sup>82</sup> How a department determines the right number of officers directly affects recruiting needs and the significance of turnover.<sup>83</sup> The Marshall Project examined how a department might determine its needs and recommends that departments change the way they look at force management.<sup>84</sup> Citing a recommendation of Weiss, who is a police staffing consultant, the Marshall Project reports that departments should consider how they

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<sup>79</sup> Orrick, Recruitment, Retention, and Turnover, 151.

<sup>80</sup> Young, personal communication.

<sup>81</sup> Where legal, a payback clause requires applicants to pay the department back for training costs on a prorated basis if they leave before a prescribed time.

<sup>82</sup> J. M. Wilson and A. Weiss, “Police Staffing Allocation and Managing Workload Demand: A Critical Assessment of Existing Practices,” *Policing* 8, no. 2 (June 1, 2014): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1093/police/pau002>.

<sup>83</sup> Wilson and Weiss, 11.

<sup>84</sup> Simone Weichselbaum and Wendi Thomas, “Is the Answer to Crime More Cops?” The Marshall Project, February 13, 2019, <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2019/02/13/is-the-answer-to-crime-more-cops>.

schedule and use their staff rather than defaulting to searching for more officers.<sup>85</sup> Weiss determines that there is no cookie cutter approach to establishing a required number of officers; he recommends a process that uses the agency’s spread and types of calls, call length, officer relief needs, performance goals, and other prediction factors.<sup>86</sup> When departments fail to determine their staffing needs, they end up under- or over-staffed. Either way, failing to consider force management could increase turnover, exacerbating existing staffing challenges.

According to an IACP article in *Police Chief* magazine, national police leadership has yet to develop a standard for determining how many officers a department needs.<sup>87</sup> The IACP warns against using the unsupported “per capita” model—determining the number of officers needed based on a ratio of one officer per 1,000 residents—though many departments in the United States use this model.<sup>88</sup> IACP considers such alternative models as “minimum staffing, authorized level, workload-based, and coverage based approaches” as preferred methods.<sup>89</sup> The article concludes that each method has advantages and disadvantages and recommends looking at workload, performance objectives, and work schedules when determining how many officers a department needs.<sup>90</sup>

The addition of social-services-type duties has added stress to an already overworked field. Policing has traditionally used a shift model to schedule its officers, who commonly work in twelve-, ten-, or eight-hour shifts.<sup>91</sup> By evaluating and measuring officers’ workload against expected performance, departments can develop a schedule that

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<sup>85</sup> Weichselbaum and Thomas.

<sup>86</sup> Wilson and Weiss, “Police Staffing Allocation,” 9.

<sup>87</sup> Jeremy M. Wilson and Alexander Weiss, “Staffing the ‘Small’ Department: Taking Stock of Existing Benchmarks and Promising Approaches,” *Police Chief*, April 1, 2013, <https://www.policchiefmagazine.org/staffing-the-small-department/>.

<sup>88</sup> Wilson and Weiss.

<sup>89</sup> Wilson and Weiss.

<sup>90</sup> Wilson and Weiss.

<sup>91</sup> “Law Enforcement Schedules: Top 8, 10, and 12-Hour Shift Examples,” PlanIt Police, April 28, 2020, <https://www.planitpolice.com/blog/law-enforcement-schedules-8-10-and-12-hour-shift-examples>.

determines the number of officers needed to efficiently and effectively respond to community needs. The results of such an evaluation may lead departments to develop better shift schedules. Officers used to arrive on duty, respond to calls, enforce criminal violations, and then go home at the end of their shift. However, expanding homelessness, mental health calls, and cybercrime trends are taxing the time and focus of law enforcement officials, who are already spread thin and are filling long-standing gaps in the force. Overburdened, officers are now leaving the force after only a few years or are failing to deal with problems professionally, leading to negative interactions with the public.

Such changes to the policing mission present an opportunity for leaders to evaluate the role of police officers within their community, determining which tasks are genuinely critical and which may be improved with specialization—i.e., training an individual in one particular area of work, thereby allowing that person to perform at an exceptional level.<sup>92</sup> Specialization leads to civilianization, which is not a new concept but is only recently catching on in more than a smattering of departments. A PERF report looks at how departments may need to change their force management models, adapting the idea of “civilianizing” traditional sworn positions to meet the changing workforce environment.<sup>93</sup> Civilianizing a position or task by obtaining a person whose sole job function is in their specific field reduces the loss of those skills through transfers and promotions. It can also reduce the costs in salary, benefits, and retirement required of sworn officers. On the other hand, civilianizing positions is unpopular with many unions due to the reduction in dues-paying members; still, it could help reduce the number of applicants needed to fill officer positions.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Harnessing recruiting, retention, and force management collectively can help a department address its staffing crises. Personnel units that are concerned only with recruiting new people, while ignoring tracking and retention, are not fully addressing the

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<sup>92</sup> “What Is Job Specialization?” My Accounting Course, April 28, 2020, <https://www.myaccountingcourse.com/accounting-dictionary/job-specialization>.

<sup>93</sup> Police Executive Research Forum, *The Workforce Crisis*, 11.

staffing issue. In other words, if a boat keeps taking on water, it does not matter how fast the passengers bail; plugging the leak is just as critical as getting rid of the water. Failing to manage the number of officers needed can create an artificially unreachable goal while the department sinks amid overwork and brain drain. The conventional approaches and methods of police staffing are no longer effective and the idea that recruiting, retention, and force management are mutually exclusive has been disproven. A department must be able to hire new officers to replace those that leave while limiting the turnover of employees in the middle of their employment cycle to maintain their numbers.

### **III. PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR MODELS**

Unlike police departments of the past, fields outside of public safety have rarely had the advantage of a deep pool of applicants. This chapter considers how other fields have handled challenges in recruiting and retention. The armed forces had to deal with maintaining a certain level of enlistment after changing over to an all-volunteer force. This change required them to adopt new recruiting practices that would fill spots not only in the present but also in the future. The private sector, too, is constantly challenged to retain talented employees. An examination of the armed forces' recruiting practices and philosophies and the private sector's use of data analytics—using internally available information to identify strategic problems and develop workable solutions—can help police departments as they struggle to meet their staffing needs. Specifically, the armed forces have adapted their recruiting strategies to successfully recruit from a new generation while creating a process that can adapt to a changing environment. The private sector, through analysis and technology, has successfully improved its retention and hiring processes. The purpose of this examination is to identify the lessons and techniques from these fields that are useful to law enforcement.

#### **A. THE ARMED FORCES**

Since the advent of the all-volunteer force in 1973, the U.S. armed forces have faced challenges in meeting their needed recruitment to maintain staffing. They have resolved these challenges by creating an effective recruitment strategy that looks not only at current need but also at future needs and seeks to continually adapt. These solutions offer useful insights to help police forces manage their recruiting activities in a changing environment.

The armed forces use violence—sometimes lethal violence—and other unpopular tactics, and conduct operations that may result in the death or injury of a servicemember.

Over the past several decades, the type of work the forces do has changed significantly; the once war-oriented force now predominately handles policing actions and nation building.<sup>94</sup>

Much like the police agencies of today, in the late 1990s the armed forces were not reaching their recruiting goals.<sup>95</sup> Army data shows that, in the '90s, it took 120 contacts to recruit just one new soldier.<sup>96</sup> Even during the economic recession from 2000 to 2001, the armed forces had a lack of interest in enlistment—and open billets, waiting for personnel. In response to this problem the armed forces established the Committee on the Youth Population and Military Recruitment.<sup>97</sup> When referencing how to recruit qualified young people, Paul Sackett and Anne Mavor write that a goal of the group was “to serve their country and, if necessary, put themselves in harm’s way.”<sup>98</sup> In working to develop solutions, the committee conducted research about the youth, potential competitors, influencing factors, and the recruiting environment.<sup>99</sup> It sought to provide information with scientific backing about the various applicant traits—beliefs, makeup, abilities, and concerns—that affected recruiting and increased the likelihood of a potential servicemember enlisting.<sup>100</sup> When looking at the current recruiting and retention systems, the committee focused on the need to improve the exit survey; when a servicemember separated from a service, the survey did not provide accurate or useful data on retention.<sup>101</sup> The report does not detail what was asked in the survey, only that it did not provide sufficient information to determine the causes of turnover, which is needed to forecast recruiting needs.

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<sup>94</sup> Paul R. Sackett and Anne S. Mavor, eds., *Attitudes, Aptitudes, and Aspirations of American Youth: Implications for Military Recruitment* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2003), 10, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=3375169>.

<sup>95</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 1.

<sup>96</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 225.

<sup>97</sup> Sackett and Mavor, vii.

<sup>98</sup> Sackett and Mavor, vii.

<sup>99</sup> Sackett and Mavor, vii.

<sup>100</sup> Sackett and Mavor, vii.

<sup>101</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 2–3.

Additionally, to recruit from a particular demographic, recruiters need to understand how potential applicants' family influences their career choices. The main recruiting pool for the armed forces, for example, is young people.<sup>102</sup> Sackett and Mavor identify university enrollment as the biggest impediment to enlistment.<sup>103</sup> They found that potential enlistees often pursue college degrees because of their parents' educational background, increased college opportunities for women and minorities, and benefits that a college degree could confer.<sup>104</sup> When it comes to job type and work environment, attitudes toward life goals have not changed significantly since around 2003, but young people are increasingly pursuing postsecondary education.<sup>105</sup> The research broke potential applicants into two groups: those who are likely to join the armed forces and those who are not interested in joining.<sup>106</sup> Targeting either group of graduating high school students requires a different approach. The goal for the armed forces was to rethink how they recruit and to convince more youths to enlist. Sackett and Mavor found that recruiting is a multifaceted process; there is no singular path to follow; as such, he recommends "doing more" and "doing differently" as two strategies for better recruiting outcomes.<sup>107</sup> Doing more relates to the success of traditional recruiting activities linked to the number of recruiting personnel, the advertising budget, continuing education opportunities, and salary and additive compensation.<sup>108</sup> Doing differently identifies new avenues of recruiting, adapts strategies to an evolving environment, and changes the way things historically are done.<sup>109</sup>

Sackett and Mavor's strategic recommendations were for the armed forces to improve recruiting in the areas of innovation, advertising and messaging, and recruiter

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<sup>102</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 3.

<sup>103</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 4.

<sup>104</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 4–5.

<sup>105</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 5.

<sup>106</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 228.

<sup>107</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 8, 7.

<sup>108</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 7.

<sup>109</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 7.

selection. An example of innovation is the armed forces' work to diversify by recruiting from cities and other areas not traditionally targeted.<sup>110</sup> They are also shifting resources to online messaging, as opposed to the traditional venues of TV and radio, to develop a more personal connection.<sup>111</sup> Sackett and Mavor devote significant attention, too, to the role advertising plays in recruiting. They recommend the armed forces balance their focus between two areas: "primary demand"—the group of people who are likely to enlist—and "selective demand"—those who are needed to fill spots now.<sup>112</sup> Heeding primary demand involves planning for the future and considering selective demand meets current needs; both are equally important. One of Sackett and Mavor's suggestions is to provide more funding to attract those who are likely to join the armed forces in the future.<sup>113</sup> The message used in the advertising, however, is just as important as the method of advertising. The Army experienced a messaging challenge with its "Army of one" slogan. While initially effective, veterans felt it downplayed the concept of teamwork.<sup>114</sup> The slogan was abandoned after several years, when the recruiting environment changed due to deaths from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts.<sup>115</sup>

The armed forces determined that their main advertising goal should be "to support recruiting by influencing youth attitudes about military service."<sup>116</sup> They were able to influence attitudes through such programs as ROTC and JROTC, whose goals include creatively increasing the pool of people likely to join. While advertising can lay the

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<sup>110</sup> Leila Fadel and Amanda Morris, "After Falling Short, U.S. Army Gets Creative with New Recruiting Strategy," NPR, January 6, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/01/06/682608011/after-falling-short-u-s-army-gets-creative-with-new-recruiting-strategy>.

<sup>111</sup> Fadel and Morris.

<sup>112</sup> Sackett and Mavor, *Attitudes, Aptitudes, and Aspirations*, 7.

<sup>113</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 6.

<sup>114</sup> Erika Matulich et al., "Army of One? Marketing Battle for Recruits," *Journal of Business Cases and Applications* 14 (2015): 4–6.

<sup>115</sup> Matulich et al., 4–6; Associated Press, "'Army Strong' Replaces 'Army of One,'" NBC News, October 9, 2006, [http://www.nbcnews.com/id/15197720/ns/us\\_news-military/t/army-strong-replaces-army-one/](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/15197720/ns/us_news-military/t/army-strong-replaces-army-one/).

<sup>116</sup> Sackett and Mavor, *Attitudes, Aptitudes, and Aspirations*, 226.

groundwork for sparking interest, organizations also need a robust recruiting operation. Figure 2 depicts advertising’s role in the armed forces’ recruiting strategy.

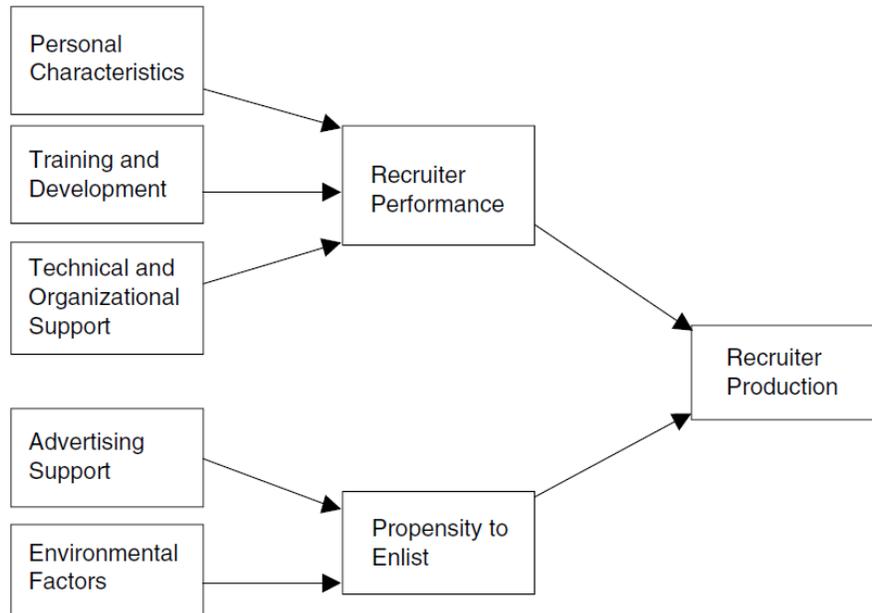


Figure 2. Military Recruiting Strategy<sup>117</sup>

This model shows how a military recruiter works as one of two prongs in recruiting. Advertising support works in conjunction with environmental factors to form the second prong, increasing a prospective enlistee’s propensity to join a service.<sup>118</sup> When developing the messaging to target the likely-to-join group, the armed forces should focus on an internal message that represents the patriotism and sense of duty that comes from service.<sup>119</sup> Messaging centered on the “intrinsic” benefits of enlistment should be balanced with targeted advertising addressing the “extrinsic” benefits—for example salary and benefits—to fill immediate positions within the branches.<sup>120</sup> Following the recommended

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<sup>117</sup> Source: Sackett and Mavor, 224.

<sup>118</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 224.

<sup>119</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 249.

<sup>120</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 249.

two-pronged approach benefits the armed forces as they balance immediate and future needs.<sup>121</sup>

Recruiter selection and training plays a role in delivering on the promises and assertions put forth in advertisements. Recruiters should not be picked at random; Sackett and Mavor recommend choosing recruiters for their abilities. They identify several factors that enhance recruiters' productivity: passion, ability to communicate and solve problems, and the preparation and support they received from the armed forces.<sup>122</sup> Recruiters are like private sector salespeople: they must convince others that the armed forces are the best career option available.<sup>123</sup> And like salespeople recruiters also have performance numbers. Tracking how many locations are visited, how many contacts result in testing or enlistment, and the types of recruiting activities attended are all measurable aspects of recruiter performance. The armed forces' "personnel selection research" shows the improvement in recruiter productivity after the adoption of a more stringent selection process.<sup>124</sup> Recruiters are often given wide leeway in their approach to recruiting, and they often travel without direct supervision. Recruiter selection should concern the leadership of any organization, as recruiters publicly represent their organizations and have more direct personal interactions with the community than most public information personnel.

Sackett and Mavor note throughout their report how combining the concept of "doing different" with the strategic use of well thought out advertising contributes to effective recruiting. The armed forces must continually evaluate the field, its competitors, and the demographics of potential applicants to stay relevant.<sup>125</sup> Sackett and Mavor's recommendations for successful recruiting include increasing the amount of money spent on recruiting and advertising, advertising military signing bonuses, providing educational

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<sup>121</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 249.

<sup>122</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 223.

<sup>123</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 242.

<sup>124</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 249.

<sup>125</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 7.

opportunities, and improving pay.<sup>126</sup> While each factor is important, their combination creates success. A successful recruiting operation involves good recruiters that support effective intrinsic and extrinsic messaging, and promotes tangible benefits and opportunities, which can help organizations meet their staffing needs now and in the future.

## **B. THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

The private sector, like law enforcement, must find qualified people to recruit and retain, and must manage these processes in an environment that is constantly changing. Because private sector employees have many options, companies must be innovative and responsive; the methods these companies use to prevent turnover offer examples for police departments.

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) conducted a study in 2016, looking at the challenges faced by its member organizations. They found key challenges to include:

low number of applicants (51%), lack of necessary work experience among applicants (50%), competition from other employers (49%), lack of technical skills among applicants (38%) and the local market not producing enough qualified candidates (38%). Thirty-four percent said that their organization did not offer salaries competitive with the going market rate.<sup>127</sup>

An improving economy, expanding technology, and a changing workforce contribute to these challenges. SHRM's survey also found a lack of "formal long-term forecasting, or planning for future vacancies, growth or retirements."<sup>128</sup> While the private sector has planned retirements, for which eligibility is easy to predict, companies are not prepared for the evolution of demographics—that is, generational shifts and changes in the work

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<sup>126</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 7.

<sup>127</sup> Society for Human Resource Management, *The New Talent Landscape: Recruiting Difficulty and Skills Shortages* (Alexandria, VA: Society for Human Resource Management, June 2016), 9.

<sup>128</sup> Society for Human Resource Management, 20.

environment.<sup>129</sup> Many private companies do not plan more than a year or two in advance, which can prevent them from finding potential applicants.<sup>130</sup>

The SHRM survey respondents also offered solutions, the top five of which are using social media, partnering with educational institutions, expanding advertising, contracting with a recruiting agency, and working to improve retention.<sup>131</sup> Other strategic-level suggestions include improving compensation, seeking out “passive job seekers,” and looking in “nontraditional” areas for potential applicants.<sup>132</sup> Passive job seekers, also called passive candidates, are professionals who are currently employed but are not actively looking to change jobs.<sup>133</sup> Hilde Voorveld et al., writing for the *Journal of Advertising*, echo, particularly, that it is important for companies to match their social media and messaging styles to the various platforms.<sup>134</sup> At the tactical level, the SHRM study discusses apprenticeships and education. More than half the survey respondents said they do not offer apprenticeships, and this was flagged as an area for opportunity. Dorothy Martin, a workforce development consultant, believes that “[t]he best way to invest in your business is to invest in your employees by providing excellent training programs and opportunities for higher education.”<sup>135</sup>

Successful businesses use workforce analytics to invest in their employees. Workforce analytics is a methodology that allows companies to define a human-resource-related problem connected to recruitment or retention by examining the factors, or data,

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<sup>129</sup> Society for Human Resource Management, 20.

<sup>130</sup> Society for Human Resource Management, 20.

<sup>131</sup> Society for Human Resource Management, 32.

<sup>132</sup> Society for Human Resource Management, 32.

<sup>133</sup> “How to Target Passive Job Seekers,” Society for Human Resource Management, accessed August 22, 2020, <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/how-to-guides/pages/how-to-target-passive-job-seekers.aspx>; “What Is a Passive Candidate?,” BambooHR, accessed August 22, 2020, <https://www.bamboohr.com/hr-glossary/passive-candidate/>.

<sup>134</sup> Hilde A. M. Voorveld et al., “Engagement with Social Media and Social Media Advertising: The Differentiating Role of Platform Type,” *Journal of Advertising* 47, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 51–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2017.1405754>.

<sup>135</sup> Society for Human Resource Management, *The New Talent Landscape*, 44.

related to the problem and developing potential solutions. Alec Levenson and Gillian Pillans explain how workforce analytics works using examples from Google, which used analytics to address recruiting problems, and IBM, which used analytics to address for retention problems.<sup>136</sup> The authors point to the importance of collecting information related to the problem areas, means of use, and strategic application, and examining how this information can be used to solve strategic problems.<sup>137</sup> Dave Millner with IBM's Workforce Science Division adds that "organizations are embracing data in every aspect of what they do. As a function, we can't afford to be left behind."<sup>138</sup> Consumer Research Forum (CRF) also supports the increased use of data-driven solutions. Boards of directors, according to CRF, see people as essential resources, and organizations' senior leadership teams are seeking more data than ever on employee behaviors and attitudes.<sup>139</sup> In probing the issues that arise within business organizations, a CRF survey found that most problems revolve around employees rather than the company's actual business performance.<sup>140</sup> Issues related to employees and human capital are critical and need to be addressed to prevent organizational dysfunctions.

Workforce analysis is not about producing data for the sake of data; it is about looking at the organization's strategic goals—including those related to recruiting and retention—and determining what data relates to those goals and how it can be used. A challenge with any data analysis task is the garbage-in, garbage-out predicament, meaning that if the information analyzed is useless, then it will generate useless solutions. Organizations must understand their goals, priorities, and capabilities before they employ workforce analytics, which will allow them to connect "human resources objectives to

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<sup>136</sup> Levenson and Pillans, *Strategic Workforce Analytics*; Tom Haak, "10 Trends in Workforce Analytics for 2019," AIHR Analytics, May 7, 2018, <https://www.analyticsinhr.com/blog/10-trends-in-workforce-analytics/>.

<sup>137</sup> Levenson and Pillans, *Strategic Workforce Analytics*.

<sup>138</sup> Levenson and Pillans, 9.

<sup>139</sup> Levenson and Pillans, 12.

<sup>140</sup> Levenson and Pillans, 19.

strategic business activities.”<sup>141</sup> Before starting an analysis about retention, for example, CRF recommends asking two questions: “Is turnover a strategically important issue?” and “Is there anything the organization can do to address the issue?”<sup>142</sup> If the answer to either of these questions is no, the company should focus its resources on a problem of greater strategic value.<sup>143</sup>

To determine if turnover is a genuine problem, rather than a healthy paring of the workforce, companies must start by determining which data to collect. IBM, for instance, developed a workforce analytics team that collected data about the company’s “recruitment, performance, tenure, promotions history, distance from the office and commute, role, salary, location and job role among other things.”<sup>144</sup> Additionally, using the Watson computer system and data from their internal social network platform, they developed an algorithm to help them predict which employees have a high potential for leaving the company.<sup>145</sup> The goal was to develop a way to retain employees who were likely to leave within six to nine months.<sup>146</sup> The solution, they determined, was for supervisors to focus more efforts on the likely-to-leave cohort; traditionally, supervisors tended to ignore this group, focusing their attention, instead, on employees who were in for the long haul.<sup>147</sup> An essential part of the solution was shifting the management philosophy and training supervisors on what they could do to prevent employee turnover from becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.<sup>148</sup> By increasing employee engagement, IBM

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<sup>141</sup> Prachi Juneja, “HR Metrics and Workforce Analysis,” Management Study Guide, accessed August 22, 2020, <https://www.managementstudyguide.com/hr-metrics-and-workforce-analysis.htm>.

<sup>142</sup> Levenson and Pillans, *Strategic Workforce Analytics*, 34.

<sup>143</sup> Levenson and Pillans, 34.

<sup>144</sup> Levenson and Pillans, 35.

<sup>145</sup> Levenson and Pillans, 35.

<sup>146</sup> Levenson and Pillans, 35.

<sup>147</sup> Levenson and Pillans, 36.

<sup>148</sup> Levenson and Pillans, 36.

was able to decrease turnover by 25 percent, saving the company around \$300 million over four years.<sup>149</sup>

Google, too, has used workforce analytics to address its recruiting issues. Google's original recruiting process required fifteen to twenty interviews for each job offer, which was time-consuming; management risked losing candidates to other companies that promised shorter processes.<sup>150</sup> Laszlo Bock, former head of people operations at Google, "estimated that for every 1,000 people Google recruited, it would take 123 people working full-time to complete the assessments."<sup>151</sup> Using workforce analytics, however, Google found that the most effective number of interviews was four, and that every interview after that number minimally increased the probability of success.<sup>152</sup> Google also started soliciting feedback from both successful and unsuccessful applicants about the hiring process, providing interviewers with historical data to help them predict applicants' future performance, and using applicants' curriculum vitae to solicit information from their classmates employed by Google.<sup>153</sup> Holding only four interviews, along with these other changes, shortened Google's hiring timeline from six months to less than two, and made it significantly easier for management to hire applicants who were likely to be successful.<sup>154</sup>

The loss of knowledge, skills, and experience that comes with turnover is detrimental to a company, and these examples from IBM and Google suggest that improving the hiring process and retention practices can result in significant savings as well. IBM shows the value of taking the time to identify the problem and using the available data to develop strategic solutions. Google found that, by changing its process, they could reduce costs and gain a continual stream of information that would help them predict demographic shifts in the applicant environment. The fundamental change in philosophy

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<sup>149</sup> Levenson and Pillans, 36.

<sup>150</sup> Levenson and Pillans, 40.

<sup>151</sup> Levenson and Pillans, 40.

<sup>152</sup> Levenson and Pillans, 41.

<sup>153</sup> Levenson and Pillans, 41.

<sup>154</sup> Levenson and Pillans, 41.

that workforce analytics brings is that engaging employees and looking at employee-related concerns as part of an organization's strategic objectives can help address recruiting and retention issues. Hiring quality people and retaining them should be as important as the product that a company produces.

### **C. CONCLUSION**

The armed forces' recent challenges with recruiting mirror current challenges in the policing field. With the conversion to an all-volunteer force and the generational changes in the workforce, the armed forces had to adapt to a new recruiting environment. They used an innovative approach that targeted two groups—those ready to enlist and those who would enlist in the future—rather than committing to a generic recruiting model. In addition to targeting specific audiences with the proper advertising, the armed forces developed a recruiter selection and training process designed to find the right people to handle recruiting. While the armed forces can enlist individuals right out of high school and police agencies must wait until they are twenty-one years old, the recruiting ideas and concepts can still be useful to police departments in adapting their recruiting approaches.

The private sector has shown how to use data collection and analysis to identify recruiting and retention problems and then develop solutions. Google and IBM were able to examine the processes and philosophies that affected their businesses and create solutions. Like Google, the police hiring process is a prolonged one that can cause applicants to take other positions; reducing the time it takes to hire an applicant would help prevent losing these applicants. Policing, like IBM, can also benefit from increasing its employee engagement to reduce turnover. To problem solve, private companies must examine their internal processes to determine if there is a better way to adapt to changes and avoid falling behind competitors. Police departments can apply the same concepts to the law enforcement field.

## **IV. ANALYSIS: POLICE DEPARTMENT MODELS**

This chapter looks at how two police departments are adapting to the changing law enforcement environment to address three aspects of staffing: recruiting, retention, and force management. The Chesterfield County Police Department (CCPD) in Virginia and the Seattle Police Department (SPD) in Washington have both faced challenges in the past few years with recruiting and retaining personnel and have sought innovative solutions that counteract police hiring traditions, and have used such force management concepts as civilianization to offset their need for new officer positions.<sup>155</sup> This chapter examines the challenges each department has faced and the actions taken to address these challenges.

Strategically, both Chesterfield and Seattle identified shortcomings in their recruiting and retention practices by looking at the problem with fresh eyes; leadership changes in the organizations allowed them to challenge the it's-what-we-have-always-done mindset. Over the past decade, studies have found that applicants no longer accept the traditional police hiring methods, which expect them to adapt to the process. Police departments must adapt to this new reality to improve recruiting efforts. To improve retention, CCPD and SPD increased employee engagement, improved professionalism, made organizational changes, made financial and salary adjustments, and sought new employee wellness and development tactics. A three-pronged approach—addressing recruiting, retention, and force management—allowed the departments to increase overall staffing.

### **A. CHESTERFIELD COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT**

CCPD is located in Central Virginia, between Richmond and Petersburg. Its jurisdiction spans 437 square miles and a population of around 340,000 people.<sup>156</sup> The

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<sup>155</sup> This research was conducted before the events in Seattle that led to the formation of the autonomous zone, the retirement of Seattle Police Chief Carmen Best, and the move to defund the department. Although these actions will have an impact on the department's ability to recruit and retain officers, they do not invalidate the successful actions taken by the SPD prior to these events.

<sup>156</sup> Chesterfield County, "Chesterfield County Demographic Report" (report, Chesterfield County Government, January 2018).

police department is solely responsible for the entire county; there are no smaller town or city agencies inside the county's borders.<sup>157</sup> The county is a mix of commercial, suburban, and rural areas; the northern part of the county is densely populated while the southern part is more rural, with horse farms and large tracts of woods.<sup>158</sup> The county created the police department in 1914 to replace the sheriff's office as the primary law enforcement agency.<sup>159</sup> Over the last three decades, the county's population has expanded, growing from under 100,000 residents to where it is now, the fourth largest county in the Commonwealth of Virginia.<sup>160</sup> During this time period, the police department's staffing expanded to meet the growing needs and diversification of its community.<sup>161</sup> The department's budget currently allows for 535 positions—a number it surpassed in 2020.<sup>162</sup>

The police staffing crisis has affected departments throughout the United States, including CCPD. Over the past fifteen years, CCPD has struggled to recruit applicants, manage turnover, and fill open positions. Table 1 shows the hiring data from 2012 to 2019, which covers the time when the economy was at its lowest (in 2012) through the economic rebound and peak.<sup>163</sup> During this time, the department went several years with small or no salary increases, introduced a new schedule that dramatically affected most of the workforce, and engaged in an employee engagement survey that showed a perceived breakdown in internal communications.<sup>164</sup> Though there were other small changes, for

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<sup>157</sup> Chesterfield County Police Department, "Chesterfield County Police Departmental Performance Plan" (planning document, Chesterfield County Police Department, May 2020).

<sup>158</sup> Chesterfield County, "Chesterfield County Demographic Report."

<sup>159</sup> Russell Lescault, *Chesterfield County Police Department History* (Chesterfield, Virginia: Chesterfield County Police Department, August 2015), <https://www.chesterfield.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3058/Police-Department-History-Book-PDF>.

<sup>160</sup> "Population of Counties in Virginia (2020)," World Population Review, May 16, 2020, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-counties/va/>.

<sup>161</sup> Chesterfield County, "Chesterfield County Demographic Report."

<sup>162</sup> Chesterfield County Police Department.

<sup>163</sup> The data is presented by calendar year except for the turnover numbers, which are by fiscal year.

<sup>164</sup> Chesterfield County, "Chesterfield County Police Department Employee Engagement Survey" (survey, Chesterfield County Police Department, December 2017).

example a limited attempt to increase online recruiting, the department generally followed the traditional police model for recruiting and hiring during this time, using only one or two recruiters—and a handful of officers who filled in as available—to fill open positions.<sup>165</sup> At its lowest point in 2018, CCPD hired only thirty-nine people while fifty separated from the department. In 2020, however, the department fully staffed its sworn positions for the first time in more than twenty-five years.<sup>166</sup>

Table 1. Chesterfield County Police Staffing Numbers, 2012–2019<sup>167</sup>

| Chesterfield County Police - # of sworn positions 535 |            |        |           |       |         |                |
|---|------------|--------|-----------|-------|---------|----------------|
| Year  | Applicants | Tested | % Show Up | Hired | % Hired | Turnover by FY |
| 2012  | 2177       | 577    | 26.5%     | 63    | 2.9%    | 55             |
| 2013  | 3053       | 709    | 23.2%     | 44    | 1.4%    | 53             |
| 2014  | 2285       | 765    | 33.5%     | 50    | 2.2%    | 45             |
| 2015  | 1906       | 590    | 31.0%     | 38    | 2.0%    | 27             |
| 2016  | 2233       | 440    | 19.7%     | 67    | 3.0%    | 59             |
| 2017  | 2065       | 436    | 21.1%     | 56    | 2.7%    | 48             |
| 2018  | 1794       | 341    | 19.0%     | 39    | 2.2%    | 50             |
| 2019  | 1854       | 379    | 20.4%     | 67    | 3.6%    | 55             |

Turnover data is shown by fiscal year; other data is shown by calendar year.

## 1. Recruiting Initiatives

As part of its strategy to address staffing needs, in 2018 CCPD reworked its recruiting practices. First, upon the retirement of the incumbent, the county hired a new chief of police. This change in leadership ushered in new ideas and approaches. Then, the recruiting section expanded from two officers to six officers and a sergeant, significantly increasing the department’s ability to recruit applicants both at home and abroad. Moreover, the department developed a partnership with Virginia Commonwealth

<sup>165</sup> Young, personal communication.

<sup>166</sup> Chesterfield County Police Department, “Performance Plan.”

<sup>167</sup> Adapted from Young, personal communication.

University’s marketing division, which analyzed the department’s recruiting goals and objectives and developed slogans, messaging, and branding strategies for social media, billboards, and traditional media outlets.<sup>168</sup> Some of the tailored recommendations, which promoted such online platforms as Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, targeted a younger generation.<sup>169</sup>

CCPD also addressed challenges with the hiring process. Formerly, applicants had a lengthy waiting period between their initial application and their scheduled written exam, which caused them to seek employment elsewhere. To streamline the hiring process and address the testing challenge, the CCPD Personnel Unit began offering testing every two weeks.<sup>170</sup> Furthering the goal of streamlining, the department converted a thirty-four-page handwritten background packet into a digital format as part of an effort to automate the department’s background process, improve communication, and increase responsiveness with applicants.<sup>171</sup> Additionally, the department offered increased salaries to pre-certified officers, instituted a \$500 award bonus to current officers who recruited new hires, and created a competition among employees to recruit the most applicants within a specific timeframe—the prize for which was one week of vacation time.<sup>172</sup> After a short trial, however, data showed the signing bonus and competition campaign were ineffective, and both were discontinued.

## **2. Retention Initiatives**

When addressing retention, CCPD used data from the biennial county Employee Engagement Survey to identify problems and develop solutions.<sup>173</sup> The survey identified

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<sup>168</sup> Ali Alzaabi et al., *Chesterfield County Police Department Campaign Book* (Richmond, VA: Virginia Commonwealth University, Fall 2018).

<sup>169</sup> Alzaabi et al.

<sup>170</sup> Young, personal communication.

<sup>171</sup> Young, personal communication.

<sup>172</sup> The award bonus is available if the applicant completes the academy and stays in the job for at least six months. Young, personal communication.

<sup>173</sup> Chesterfield County, “Police Department Employee Engagement Survey.”

internal issues related to pay and compensation, internal communications, and employee engagement. To address employee engagement, the department created a committee—chaired by the chief and staffed by a member from every section in the department—whose primary goal was to identify innovative ideas. The department also created a new section dedicated to internal communications; as part of the Public Information Office, this section handles all internal communications through an online SharePoint site and internal video releases. This section has significantly reduced the number of department-wide emails.

CCPD, in partnership with the county’s administration, also sought to delay retirements by providing a one-time retention salary adjustment for veteran officers, resulting in a significant reduction in retirements for fiscal year 2020—there were only two, versus twenty the previous year—and buying time to fill over thirty open positions.<sup>174</sup> The department is now over-hiring in anticipation of a surge of retirements within two years.<sup>175</sup> CCPD department also considered compensation changes, as it is a non-union department with open pay ranges, which means raises can be small or nonexistent during difficult financial times. Open pay ranges also prevent applicants from seeing their potential salary progressions, and fosters an environment that allows for development of pay compression.<sup>176</sup> In conjunction with the county government, CCPD is currently evaluating potential changes in its compensation model for fiscal year 2022 to address these issues, including moving to a step-based pay scale like the one used by the armed forces.<sup>177</sup>

### **3. Force Management Initiatives**

To decrease the number of new police officers required to meet its organizational mission and goals, CCPD created a new position called the police service aide (PSA) to handle the more mundane aspects of policing that do not require a sworn officer. Before

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<sup>174</sup> Young, personal communication.

<sup>175</sup> Chesterfield County Police Department, “Performance Plan.”

<sup>176</sup> Jim McConnell, “County Sets Aside \$2.5m to Address Salary Imbalance for Teachers, Public Safety Workers,” *Chesterfield Observer*, March 11, 2020, <https://www.chesterfieldobserver.com/articles/county-sets-aside-2-5m-to-address-salary-imbalance-for-teachers-public-safety-workers/>; Chesterfield County Human Resources Department

<sup>177</sup> McConnell.

the PSA position as created, officers were tied up on traffic direction, interdepartmental mail runs, found property reports, and non-reportable accident information exchanges; now, the PSAs perform these duties at a reduced cost—five PSAs for the same price as three sworn officers.<sup>178</sup> The PSA position also provides a recruiting opportunity for the department, as the job can be filled by anyone over the age of eighteen; once PSAs turn twenty-one, they can move into the police academy and fill a sworn spot. Their work also allows sworn officers to better meet the increased demands placed on law enforcement agents in recent years.

CCPD also employs civilian forensic specialists who have advanced training and specialization and who work in partnership with sworn officers; unlike PSAs, forensic specialists cannot be transferred or promoted out of their unit. When it comes to crime scene and evidence collection, civilians can bring a significant level of expertise and stability to the position. As with PSAs, forensic specialists free up sworn personnel to fill other critical needs within the department.

## **B. CITY OF SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT**

SPD is a metropolitan department located in Western Washington. As of 2020, Seattle's population is about 730,00 people, and the jurisdiction covers nearly 84 square miles.<sup>179</sup> The city is an urban environment that has experienced both economic and community growth over the past decade, and it is quickly becoming a new center for technology companies while dealing with an increase in the cost of living and homelessness. The SPD is budgeted for 1,497 sworn positions and serves a diverse population, but has been under a federal consent decree. Meanwhile, exit interviews have indicated a perceived anti-police bias from politicians and the community.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Young, personal communication.

<sup>179</sup> "Seattle Facts," Visit Seattle, May 11, 2020, <https://visitseattle.org/press/press-kit/seattle-facts/>.

<sup>180</sup> Amy Radil, "What Seattle Police Said in Their Exit Interviews. (It's Blistering)," KUOW, May 13, 2019, <https://www.kuow.org/stories/why-they-left-seattle-police-in-their-own-blistering-words>.

Like other departments around the nation, SPD has struggled with staffing issues. Seattle’s staffing challenges reached a peak in 2018, with the loss of 109 officers and the addition of only 68 new hires (see Table 2).<sup>181</sup> This loss spurred the city to form a committee of experts—drawn from human resources, community members, and members of the police department—to examine the police department’s recruiting and hiring activities.<sup>182</sup> The committee developed twelve initiatives to enhance recruiting and retention: Civilian to Sworn Pathways, Recruitment Ambassadors, the Ride-a-Long Program, Leave No Candidate Behind, Speedy Background Checks, Flexible Testing, and Seattle Sampler, Clear My Card, Bureau Advisory Councils, Step into Our Shoes, Develop Our People Leaders, and Wellness-First Schedules.<sup>183</sup> Many of these initiatives addressed the same issues the CCPD did in seeking to reverse turnover. It should be noted that, in 2020, significant external political actions had a major impact on SPD’s progress towards its staffing issues. These actions do not invalidate the success SPD had prior to the summer of 2020.

Table 2. Seattle Police Department Staffing Numbers, 2012–2019<sup>184</sup>

| City of Seattle Police Department - # of sworn positions 1497 |           |        |           |       |         |          |
|---|-----------|--------|-----------|-------|---------|----------|
| Year  | Applicant | Tested | % Show up | Hired | % Hired | Turnover |
| 2012  | 2349      | 1446   | 61.6%     | 32    | 1.4%    | 36       |
| 2013  | 4049      | 2031   | 50.2%     | 85    | 2.1%    | 39       |
| 2014  | 4096      | 1454   | 35.5%     | 81    | 2.0%    | 59       |
| 2015  | 3526      | 1163   | 33.0%     | 96    | 2.7%    | 72       |
| 2016  | 3486      | 1204   | 34.5%     | 107   | 3.1%    | 67       |
| 2017  | 3472      | 1036   | 29.8%     | 102   | 2.9%    | 79       |
| 2018  | 2856      | 837    | 29.3%     | 68    | 2.4%    | 109      |
| 2019  | 3172      | 908    | 28.6%     | 108   | 3.4%    | 92       |

<sup>181</sup> Adrian Diaz, SPD deputy chief, personal communication, April 5, 2020.

<sup>182</sup> Seattle Police Department, “Recruitment and Retention Workgroup Final Report.”

<sup>183</sup> Seattle Police Department, 12–38.

<sup>184</sup> Adapted from Diaz, personal communication.

## 1. Recruiting Initiatives

Seattle addressed its recruiting shortcomings through a study that examined gaps in its practices. Looking closer at the report’s recruiting recommendations, the Civilian to Sworn Pathway initiative explored how SPD could convince other city employees to apply for sworn officer positions; these employees might make less money or have more limited options for advancement but could be viable candidates for officer positions given their work ethic.<sup>185</sup> The Recruitment Ambassador idea explored a missed opportunity within SPD ranks and sought to make recruiting a department-wide effort.<sup>186</sup> This initiative was based on the knowledge that a current employee is often the best advertisement for a great work environment, and getting officers to buy into their role as department ambassadors is a great way to sell the department and the career.

The hiring process for police applicants has traditionally taken longer than it does for other jobs. The committee recommended employing a leave-no-candidate-behind mentality in which, like a sale person with a client, a member of the department maintains contact with the applicant throughout the process to discuss their status.<sup>187</sup> Moreover, just as CCPD improved testing options to better serve its applicants, SPD made testing more convenient and abundant.<sup>188</sup> On average, only 35 percent of SPD applicants took the written test between 2012 and 2019; if SPD could close that gap, it would significantly increase the number of potential recruits.<sup>189</sup> SPD has seen an increase in the percentage of those hired who took the written test, and these increases take on particular significance in light of the past several years, when SPD struggled.

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<sup>185</sup> Seattle Police Department, “Recruitment and Retention Workgroup Final Report,” 12.

<sup>186</sup> Seattle Police Department, 14.

<sup>187</sup> Seattle Police Department, 20.

<sup>188</sup> Seattle Police Department, 24.

<sup>189</sup> Seattle Police Department, 24.

## 2. Retention Initiatives

In addition to its recruiting challenges, SPD, like many other departments, struggled with retaining officers. The Step into Our Shoes program, recommended by the committee, sought to improve retention by creating opportunities for greater employee engagement with SPD Command Staff personnel and the department's senior leadership.<sup>190</sup> Without employee engagement, current employees are less likely to sell the department to potential applicants. The Clear My Card program sought to improve employee–employer relationships by removing false or non-sustained complaints from an employment record that might affect an officer who seeks advancement.<sup>191</sup> Employee development and leadership are integral to retention, and the report recommended investing in supervisory training and development through the Develop Our Leaders program.<sup>192</sup> Obviously, it takes continued support and development after promoting someone to create a great supervisor.

Internal communication is another essential aspect of employee retention. To address this, the committee recommended the development of a Bureau Advisory Council program to address policymaking in isolation, and such councils allow for communicating potential policy changes while providing an avenue for employee feedback about the perceived impacts on them.<sup>193</sup> This program was similar to the CCPD committee, which allowed frontline employees to connect with the department's senior leadership and decision-makers.

When it comes to compensation, SPD recently signed a contract with its union.<sup>194</sup> Though it is not the only factor in retention, compensation is important to employees; if a

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<sup>190</sup> Seattle Police Department, 34.

<sup>191</sup> Seattle Police Department, 30.

<sup>192</sup> Seattle Police Department, 36.

<sup>193</sup> Seattle Police Department, 32.

<sup>194</sup> “Agreement by and between the City of Seattle and Seattle Police Officers’ Guild,” Seattle.gov, accessed October 6, 2020, [https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/OPA/Legislation/SPOG\\_CBA\\_expires\\_12-31-20\\_111418.pdf](https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/OPA/Legislation/SPOG_CBA_expires_12-31-20_111418.pdf).

department does not keep up with its competitors, employees may find better alternatives in the private sector or other departments. Before the union contract, police officers in Seattle had gone a number of years without a contract or pay raises, leading to additional challenges in a city where the cost of living has risen quickly. Significantly boosting officers' helped to address the differential. By implementing the various recommended programs, SPD improved its retention after a record loss of officers in 2018.

### **3. Force Management Initiatives**

When it comes to force management, SPD has used civilianization to staff its Office of Professional Accountability—previously staffed by police sergeants—with civilians, freeing supervisors who could then return to the field.<sup>195</sup> The returning sergeants improved oversight at the front line without the need to hire additional people. Additionally, like CCPD, SPD uses civilians in a number of roles. The video forensics unit, composed of specially trained civilians who handle advancing technologies in the field of video and digital forensics, has provided the department with the long-term expertise needed to keep up with growing trends in cybercrime.<sup>196</sup> Similarly, Seattle has a force of civilian parking enforcement officers (PEOs); like CCPD's PSAs, the PEOs can free up time for sworn officers by taking on more mundane tasks. Moreover, trained civilians may provide better positional stability, as sworn officers are often subject to transfer or promotion.

## **C. CONCLUSION**

Both the Chesterfield and Seattle police departments identified the need to expand the scope of their advertising and improve the way they worked with applicants. Both departments developed a more customer-centric approach to recruiting and hiring, making sure to stay in touch with their applicants throughout the process. By offering more flexible testing options, CCPD helped bring potential recruits into their processes sooner. The departments also modernized their background processes by, for example, digitizing background packets to better accommodate a younger generation of applicants.

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<sup>195</sup> Diaz, personal communication.

<sup>196</sup> Diaz, personal communication.

When police departments target job advertisements, they should similarly consider relevant media. After the Virginia Commonwealth University study identified missed opportunities in advertising, CCPD promoted the department more aggressively on Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn. SPD is considering an electronic solution to process applicants, which will reduce hiring time and help them connect with applicants throughout the process. Each such change plays a part in increasing the pool of qualified applicants. Both departments can continue to narrow the gap between candidates who apply for officer positions and those who ultimately test. Identifying the cause of this disparity would greatly enhance the number of applicants who enter the process.

The recruiting and retention numbers for 2019 and estimates for 2020 indicate that CCPD's and SPD's efforts have both been effective.<sup>197</sup> For fiscal year 2020, CCPD saw a significant reduction in turnover, and SPD dramatically increased the number of people hired while reducing turnover. Both departments improved retention by improving compensation, engagement, and internal communication. Departments should remember that strategies that worked in the past may not continue to work in the future; success depends on the ability to adapt to changes both in society and within the department.

CCPD made a number of positive changes when adapting to its environment, but it also evaluated each change for success. Through evaluation, CCPD determined that its signing bonuses were not making a notable difference in recruiting, and so they decided to discontinue the bonuses. Providing a retention incentive was a short-term cost to slow retirements while working to fill open positions. The ability to over-hire positions will create a buffer—preventing the loss of staffing when retirements do pick back up. Creatively, the department used its connection with a local college to develop a recruitment campaign. In an era of budgetary concerns and expanding costs, partnering with local organizations can be an excellent way to obtain expert services at minimal costs.

Although CCPD did significantly improve retention, it must still consider how to increase the number of people who show up for a test after applying for an officer position;

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<sup>197</sup> Greg Doss, "Police Staffing Update" (memorandum, Seattle City Public Safety & Human Services Committee, February 25, 2020).

right now, over 75 percent of applicants fail to show up for the test.<sup>198</sup> The department might improve this statistic by developing a robust means of capturing data about these individuals and applying workforce analytics, as described in Chapter III. Nevertheless, as of June 30, 2020, the Personnel Unit reported that fewer than twenty-five people left during the 2020 fiscal year (between July 1 and June 30); this is a 50 percent reduction in turnover from the previous fiscal year. Along with the changes to recruiting, the decrease in turnover helped CCPD reach full staffing for the first time in over twenty-five years.<sup>199</sup>

In Seattle, officers recently received a new contract that increased salaries, a new chief was hired from within the department, and the department was on track to exit the consent decree.<sup>200</sup> The new contract addressed the problem with officers falling behind their peers financially. When it comes to engagement, the new chief of police has been a visible presence to her officers. She goes to roll calls to hear about officers concerns and seeks to include them in the internal decision-making process. SPD has also sought to implement the report recommendations to improve its hiring and retention, thereby increasing the stability within the department.

For recruiting, SPD used billboards with a more personal message to connect with people within the community and aggressively promoted the departmental opportunities available to other city workers. By approaching applicants as valued customers rather than people in a process, SPD increased hiring by more than 60 percent from 2018 to 2019.<sup>201</sup> The department accomplished this while facing the additional challenge of operating under a consent decree. By adhering to the requirements of the consent decree, SPD improved its ability to recruit.

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<sup>198</sup> Young, personal communication.

<sup>199</sup> Diaz, personal communication.

<sup>200</sup> Seattle.gov, “Seattle Police Officers’ Guild,”; Associated Press, “City Requests No More Oversight of Seattle Police Department,” KOMO News, May 8, 2020, <https://komonews.com/news/local/city-requests-no-more-oversight-of-seattle-police-department>.

<sup>201</sup> Adapted from Diaz, personal communication.

Both CCPD and SPD improved their recruiting efforts by examining their processes and changing with the times. Departments must consider their end goals and then determine if their processes are helping them reach those goals. To improve retention, departments must engage with their employees and equitably compensate them. Employees, in turn, can have a great effect on a prospective applicant's willingness to accept a job. Finally, determining which positions require a sworn officer will help departments work more efficiently. By evaluating and adapting their practices in recruiting, retention, and force management, CCPD and SPD were able to solve their staffing challenges.

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## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is essential for us to help younger generations develop an interest in policing. While preplanning is difficult to accomplish amid a crisis, police departments must develop the potential applicant pool years in advance. The growing number of anti-police demonstrations and the violent nature of the responses mean that the police force cannot just wait for these sentiments to pass; they must actively counter the narrative. The events of 2020 tested departments' abilities to adapt to a changing environment. As the nation and its communities battle over what police officers should be and what they should do, police leaders and their decision-making are at the forefront of this challenge.

### A. INNOVATION IN TROUBLED TIMES

The armed forces saw the need to adapt their recruiting efforts, responding to a changing environment by “doing differently.”<sup>202</sup> This did not mean abandoning traditional, successful means of hiring; it meant looking at the operational environment and developing practices that allowed the forces to adapt to change.<sup>203</sup> Police recruiting, too, has undergone significant changes. In addition to previously discussed generational differences, shifts in the environment have led to a public that is more willing to vocalize displeasure over police actions and have even led to a growing cry of “defund the police.”<sup>204</sup> Branding and messaging are more important than ever to advertise a department's goals, values, and ethics. Reality and perception may not always align, and police leaders' actions can go a long way.

At the start of 2020, the hiring crisis was a significant focus for many police agencies. Finding the people needed to fill vacancies and retaining current employees were concerns. As February moved into March, departments had a new concern—that a

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<sup>202</sup> Sackett and Mavor, Attitudes, Aptitudes, and Aspirations.

<sup>203</sup> Sackett and Mavor, 274.

<sup>204</sup> Courtney Vinopal, “What Is the ‘Defund the Police’ Movement? 5 Questions Answered,” PBS, June 11, 2020, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/watch-live-what-is-the-defund-the-police-movement-answering-your-questions>.

spreading virus might result in the collapse of police services.<sup>205</sup> If enough officers got sick, departments could not respond to calls. At one point, New York City reported that more than 20 percent of its officers were out sick.<sup>206</sup> Some departments suspended their training and hiring while others sought to do differently.<sup>207</sup> The novel coronavirus posed challenges but also presented opportunities to innovate and change such outdated processes as requiring every candidate to appear in person for panel interviews, or the need to send an in-person recruiter to every job fair.

As demonstrated by CCPD, for a department to make changes to how it hires, interviews, tests, and evaluates candidates, it must evaluate its practices with a willingness to change.<sup>208</sup> Traditionally, CCPD would have a candidate travel to the county to participate in a panel interview.<sup>209</sup> In light of the COVID-19 outbreak, however, CCPD began interviewing applicants via video conferencing.<sup>210</sup> In addition to preventing the spread of the virus, this method eliminated travel and lodging costs for out-of-town applicants. To avoid losing applicants to another agency whose academy has an earlier start date, CCPD traditionally early hired the person and assigned them to general administrative duties until an academy start date was available; during the COVID-19 outbreak, however, the department allowed early hires to telework until the start of the academy.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Josiah Bates, “Police Departments, Sheriffs’ Offices across the U.S. Grapple with Covid-19’s Impact on Public Safety—and Their Own,” *Time*, April 2, 2020, <https://time.com/5812833/coronavirus-police-departments/>.

<sup>206</sup> Craig McCarthy and Julia Marsh, “Huge Percentage of NYPD Cops Out Sick as Coronavirus Spreads,” *New York Post*, April 6, 2020, <https://nypost.com/2020/04/06/nearly-20-percent-of-nypd-cops-are-out-sick-during-coronavirus-outbreak/>.

<sup>207</sup> Sara Jean Green, “Police Academy’s Closure Because of Coronavirus Outbreak Delays Efforts to Train New Officers,” *Seattle Times*, March 17, 2020, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/police-academy-closure-because-of-coronavirus-outbreak-delays-efforts-to-train-new-officers/>; Matt Cobb, “Why Agencies Must Continue Recruitment during the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *PoliceOne*, April 7, 2020, <https://www.policeone.com/police-recruiting/articles/why-agencies-must-continue-recruitment-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-5gNs6hsgevLil1EX/>.

<sup>208</sup> Young, personal communication.

<sup>209</sup> Young, personal communication.

<sup>210</sup> Young, personal communication.

<sup>211</sup> Young, personal communication.

Technology offers innovative avenues to revamp the hiring process. In response to canceled job fairs, for example, virtual job fairs became a means for continued recruiting activities. Incidentally, this opened the fairs to people who otherwise would have been unable to attend, and to smaller departments who typically do not have a large enough contingent of recruiters to send staff to job fairs.<sup>212</sup> While recruiters may need training to function optimally in a virtual world, the potential future applications are numerous. To take advantage of technology's potential benefits, departments must be willing to adapt their processes. Human relationships established by recruiters will always be necessary, but the way they form may change in the coming years.

Another challenge in 2020 has been the rise of overt anti-police sentiment in several major cities. The significant impact of incidents in Ferguson, Missouri, and Baltimore, Maryland, along with the response after the death of George Floyd, led some political factions to push a "defund the police" narrative.<sup>213</sup> This narrative has led to riots, protests, and outright disorder. While police leaders may not be able to take direct action on these external issues, how they handle them will play a role in their departments' ability to retain and recruit officers. Some political leaders in these jurisdictions have shown little interest in supporting police departments, and there is potential for mass retirements or resignations.<sup>214</sup> A police department may be unable to address this turnover if it does not plan accordingly.

Like the armed forces, law enforcement must look beyond the here and now to consider how harmful incidents can affect their ability to staff departments into the future. With the policing field in a crisis of image, departments must cultivate a relatable image and build their brand. Departments must also consider how to actively engage the public, their community, and the youth who will grow to become interested applicants.

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<sup>212</sup> Cobb, "Agencies Must Continue Recruitment."

<sup>213</sup> Maya King, "How 'Defund the Police' Went from Moonshot to Mainstream," *POLITICO*, June 17, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/06/17/defund-police-mainstream-324816>.

<sup>214</sup> Katie Sheperd, "Atlanta Police Call in Sick to Protest Murder Charge Against Officer Who Shot Rayshard Brooks," *Washington Post*, June 18, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/06/18/atlanta-rayshard-brooks-walkout/>.

## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS**

What works for one department may not work for another, and what does not work initially may still be a step toward innovative change. Departments that try something new should always evaluate their results. This section offers recommendations for recruiting, retention, and force management based on what has worked for CCPD and SPD, and other fields. Each recommendation considers the 2020 policing environment to help departments find a way forward.

### **1. Recruiting**

Police departments have positions that need to be filled now and positions that will need to be filled in the future. When it comes to recruiting for these positions, departments must work on advertising to currently interested applicants while also developing prospective applicants for the years ahead. Advertising is about getting the message to the people who must hear it, and branding is how a department represents itself to potential applicants through advertising. Local advertising may look different than national advertising, for instance. Departments must be honest when they set their brands, as branding sets expectations for newly hired officers. For example, a department that has a poor relationship with its community should not advertise that it is well received with the public. Branding should be realistic and create supportable expectations.

#### ***a. Recruiting for the Now***

Social media is a popular means of advertising for current positions, but departments should consider what platforms and venues offer the best medium for the target audience. While this list is not exhaustive, SPD and CCPD have used the following platforms to reach a larger group of applicants.

- LinkedIn is a major platform for job seekers, and CCPD began taking advantage of LinkedIn after the recruitment study.
- Chesterfield and Seattle sit on I-95 and I-5, respectively, two of the busiest north/south interstates in the nation, and the police departments have

benefited from the use of billboard advertisements in and around their areas. CCPD has also posted billboards in other areas of the state.

- Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat are some of the most popular social media platforms used by target audiences. If a department does not have a social media presence, it is missing out on opportunities. Allowing employees to have work accounts, while potentially risky, can expand a department's reach and awareness. Policies relevant to social media are essential if employees access such accounts. All three platforms allow targeted advertising based on user data, and the collected data provides the opportunity for specific geographic, demographic, and biographic targeting; this helps with general recruiting and also diversity recruiting. Using these platforms to announce recruiting functions or open houses is an excellent way to advertise.
- Written blogs, video blogs (vlogs), Q&A chat sessions, and podcasts can help departments connect with their community for recruiting purposes.
- Advertising through television streaming services is also as a great way to target job applicants. Many streaming companies that sell ads know their shows' demographics, and ads on streaming sites are less expensive than traditional television ads.

Engaging a department's current employees is another excellent means of recruiting. Friends or associates of newer employees are potential applicants. The methods a department uses to engage its employees are vital for this to work; departments must get their current officers to understand that they play a more significant role than just showing up and doing a job. Current employees are department ambassadors and are in a position to provide the best recommendation, or the worst warning, depending on the organizational climate fostered by leaders. Department morale and a positive work environment are critical, especially during times of social unrest. Employee engagement is a no-cost way to counter the negative narratives put forth by the media.

Offering incentives to those who attended college can also be beneficial. College debt is a massive challenge, and departments looking to recruit more college graduates should consider a program where those with college degrees receive scheduled reimbursements at various points throughout their first five to ten years of employment.<sup>215</sup> Unlike a paid upfront signing bonus, scheduling reimbursements incentivizes an applicant to remain with a department to realize the benefit fully. If officers leave the job early in their career, the department does not lose as much as it would with a signing bonus.

Once potential applicants become aware of a department, the department needs to have readily available information about the job, how the hiring process works, and an easy route for candidates to apply. For essential jobs, departments should take the time to be available for calls, chats, or emails. Just like in sales, any missed call is a potential missed opportunity. Both SPD and CCPD used customer-centric approaches to show care for their applicants.

***b. Recruiting for the Future***

When planning for the future, departments should consider how they can best engage potential applicants before they decide on a future career. Most police departments only hire applicants aged twenty-one or older for sworn positions, but many young adults have already decided on a career path before they turn twenty-one. Someone who has spent time and money on an engineering degree, for instance, is not likely to make the transition to policing. Applicants can also get into legal trouble between the age of eighteen and twenty-one, which keeps them from passing a background check when they become old enough to apply. Departments must also increase the interest in policing as a career before potential applicants go to college; when attending college fairs, departments are simply fighting over a limited pool of candidates who went through a criminal justice program. Two ways to accomplish this are to encourage the career field as a viable choice among

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<sup>215</sup> “Student Debt Viewed as Major Problem; Financial Considerations Important Factor for Most Millennials When Considering Whether to Pursue College,” The Institute of Politics at Harvard University, July 1, 2020, <https://iop.harvard.edu/student-debt-viewed-major-problem-financial-considerations-important-factor-most-millennials-when>.

secondary education students, and to provide a means of bridging the gap for those between eighteen and twenty years of age.

Police departments, like the armed forces, are uniquely positioned to recruit from middle and high schools. School resource officers (SROs) can sell the field of policing as a viable career path for students. Departments have faced criticism about their role in schools, however; some call the SRO program the “school-to-prison pipeline.”<sup>216</sup> But there is an opportunity to change this narrative by reimagining the SRO as a mentor in the school. Colonel J. S. Katz of CCPD coined the term “school-to-squad pipeline” as an alternative narrative for an SRO’s role as a mentor and recruiter. The armed forces have successfully used such programs as the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) for just such a purpose. Police departments could establish their own programs, for example, a Police Explorer Post or a Police Cadet Program. Regardless of the name or how the department implements it, a program in secondary schools is an excellent way to develop potential future applicants.

In seeking to bridge the gap between ages eighteen and twenty, departments have established cadet programs or have developed roles for younger applicants like CCPD’s PSAs. A police department can offer a variety of opportunities for someone who does not wish to attend college. By giving this audience a job option and a means to later transfer to a police position, departments can bring potential applicants on early, establish a job history, and prevent them from choosing a different career field.

Creativity and innovation are critical—and worth the effort—in a department’s approach to recruiting. The traditional work done by a recruiter is essential, but like the armed forces, a department should consider how it selects, trains, and deploys recruiters. Following up with inquiries and attending job fairs is always an excellent way to get messaging and branding out in the field. However, recruiting covers many different aspects of hiring, and approaches will continue to evolve with each generation. Departments must change along with the environment to remain relevant.

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<sup>216</sup> Libby Nelson and Dara Lind, “The School to Prison Pipeline, Explained,” Justice Policy Institute, February 24, 2015, <http://www.justicepolicy.org/news/8775>.

## 2. Retention

When it comes to retention, tactical approaches that fulfill the strategic goals of compensation, engagement, and communication will help departments keep their employees in place. Compensation is about more than just having the highest salaries or the best benefits. CCPD, for instance, cannot compete with agencies that pay more in the Northern Virginia area. However, the department improved salaries to eliminate compression, or pay inequities. Society is asking police officers to do more and expand their abilities to areas that were not always in their purview. Simple supply and demand argues for better salaries or benefits to compensate officers for their additional efforts. When a department considers compensation, it should:

- *Look at the equitable nature of its pay philosophy rather than how much it pays.* Salary still needs to be balanced with the current market. If a department fails to adequately or equitably compensate its employees, the employees may transfer to other agencies.
- *Evaluate if salaries are responsible for retention issues or if there are other underlying causes.* Pay improvements are expensive and may not always be the answer.

A department that fails to identify the root problems of retention and blindly increases salaries may end up wasting their money.

Employee engagement is a relatively new idea within the paramilitary field of policing. Concepts like participative management and open discussions on policies and between frontline workers and leaders are examples that have emerged over the past decade. The private sector also develops employee engagement through apprenticeships. Where a department's internship program focuses on potential applicants, an apprenticeship program focuses on developing and engaging current employees. Providing newer officers with the opportunity to gain skills and experiences can enhance retention while benefiting the department. For example, a department can give patrol officers the opportunity for temporary assignments to specialty units. An officer assigned to a detective unit for a three to six months would gain immense experience and skills that they could

bring back to the road when the apprenticeship ends. Additionally, both the officer and department would gain a better understanding of the officer's future fit for that assignment. Such opportunities for patrol officers in various specialty assignments will keep officers engaged and reduce voluntary turnover.

To address scheduling and shift work within the field of law enforcement, departments should consider adopting a hybrid approach. Employees who go from being single to being married with children may need to work different schedules over their career to balance work with life. Women in law enforcement historically bear the burden of shift work when it comes to having a family, and options to accommodate changing schedule needs would promote their retention. A department with multiple precincts could have different shifts and hours for each precinct and could allow employees to move between precincts depending on their scheduling needs. Additionally, to improve work-life balance, a department might consider having internal part-time options for employees. If an employee cannot work full time due to a change in family status—e.g., the birth of a child or a family illness—the employee can shift to part-time status, with the option to transition back to full time at a later date. This allows the department to retain a knowledgeable and skilled employee. Part-time options would also help departments recruit candidates who may look for flexibility in a different employer.

A final tactical approach is in the area of communication. Department leaders who isolate themselves in their office can make officers feel undervalued. Instead, heads of departments should harness the creative powers of their people. By providing such venues as Bureau Councils, for example, SPD is engaging its employees in decision-making processes. While employees do not make the final decisions, including them in the process allows them to develop a better appreciation for the final policy. The best way to improve internal employee communication is to have a venue where employees, as a group or singularly, can safely connect with department leaders and share their concerns. This approach has the added benefit of helping leaders understand the pulse of what is happening in their departments.

### 3. Force Management

The idea that officers can do anything or take on any assignment leads to inefficiencies and wasted efforts. With the expansion of duties and emerging crime trends, there are several areas where civilianization can help. As discussed in Chapter IV, CCPD uses civilians for forensic and crime scene evidence collection, and SPD replaced digital forensic officers with civilians.

Additionally, as the internet has facilitated the increasing use of computers, smartphones, and electronic banking, cybercrime has also proliferated.<sup>217</sup> Police training, however, does not usually prepare an officer to investigate cybercrimes thoroughly. The technological proficiency required to handle sophisticated hacking or identity theft cases can quickly overwhelm a local fraud or economic crime detective. Just like a civilian bank investigator, a specially trained civilian detective can handle a complex economic fraud or cybercrime investigation better than a sworn detective. Replacing sworn fraud detectives with specially trained civilians allows departments to reduce the number of sworn personnel they need while addressing the emerging crime trends. Once the investigation is complete, a sworn detective can take over to handle the suspect's arrest or apprehension. Smaller departments could create regional partnerships to share the higher salary costs of such specialists. The added benefit is the specialist will often have already attained the necessary training to do the job.

Civilianization is expandable to other areas as well. Accident investigations, property crimes, and crime analysis are all areas that could benefit from civilianization. Sworn officers should still be involved in arrests, apprehension, or other crimes of violence, but civilians can perform many of the property and economic criminal investigations currently completed by sworn personnel.

The future of policing is uncertain. In 2020, cities and communities have started looking at the jobs and tasks assigned to officers. Mental health calls, for example, are not readily suited for police officers. While officers receive mental health training, it cannot

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<sup>217</sup> William Cole, "FBI Beefs Up amid Explosion of Cybercrime," *TCA Regional News*, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1635632307/?pq-origsite=primo>.

compare to the experience and education of a trained mental health provider. To find success, police departments should:

- *Seek partnerships that can help bring potential solutions to problems plaguing communities throughout the nation.* It is possible to provide expert services to the mentally ill through such partnerships.
- *Pair mental health experts with police officers.* While the officer provides security, the expert deals with the incident. This arrangement better serves the community and reduces the workload on those in policing. Toronto Police Services provides an example of this with its Mobile Crisis Intervention Team.<sup>218</sup> This program pairs a mental health nurse with a police officer. The department converted several police positions to create this program, which provides a higher level of service and has received positive reviews from the community.<sup>219</sup>

There is success in innovative force management, it just takes a willingness to look at change as an opportunity.

## C. CONCLUSION

Departments must consider recruiting, retention, and force management to solve their staffing problems. The Chesterfield County and Seattle police departments have implemented successful internal changes to address their challenges; their methods are holistic, focusing on all three elements—not just recruiting. Even when police departments today are hiring enough candidates to fill new positions or compensate for retirements, they are continually losing officers in the first few years of employment. This creates a growing knowledge gap; departments end up with a large group of veterans approaching retirement and a large group of rookie officers, with no one in the middle. When the veterans finally

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<sup>218</sup> “Toronto Police Service Mobile Crisis Intervention Team,” Toronto Police Service, June 30, 2020, <http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/community/mcit.php>.

<sup>219</sup> Kristie Jones, “Improving Care for People Experiencing Mental Health Crises,” *Hospital News* (blog), October 13, 2015, <https://hospitalnews.com/improving-care-for-people-experiencing-mental-health-crises/>.

retire, a department will have little to no experience left. This hourglass-shaped distribution of expertise may occur if a department focuses on recruiting and not retention. Force management is a parallel strategy that allows departments to determine how many officers they need. Instead of just trying to get more officers approved by the governing body, departments must determine where sworn officers are needed and where civilians with specialized training could be more effective.

Police leaders should consider evaluating their retention first. This could be done through a survey or questionnaire for any employee who leaves the department. Surveys should collect useful and actionable data that can help identify problems. Departments can use workforce analytics to determine if a problem exists and to develop internal actions to fix it. A follow-up evaluation of any solution critical to determine if it worked.

Recruiting should be addressed at the same time as retention. It is critical for departments to consider how they represents themselves, including their goals and values. Advertisements that show the authentic daily activities of a police officer are much more likely to attract candidates who want to do the job. If a recruiting video is full of police on pursuits, working on the water, or flying a plane when the actual day-to-day job has no such activities, reality will not meet the applicant's expectations and they are more likely to leave the department. Instead, departments should advertise such elements as being involved in the community, helping people, and filling a stable job with long-term employment prospects, excellent benefits, and opportunities for growth.

Force management allows departments to adapt to the changing nature of police work. As calls for service dealing with mental health, social service needs, or other noncriminal interventions increase, changing the composition of a police department through civilianization may be the solution. Police training should set high expectations, but it is not fair or realistic to expect officers to handle everything thrown at them. As cybercrime expands, for instance, the average officer does not have the technical expertise needed to investigate all crimes, including those that cross state or national boundaries. Civilianization may hold the answer. Force management is not about doing more with less; it is about hiring the right person for the right job. Job fit is vital, and modern-day policing has expanded. While a goal of policing is enforcing the law, it has taken on many other

duties related to community engagement, social support, and mentorship. Force management, in partnership with civilianization, will help departments adapt to the changing environment of policing.

The events of 2020 will force many police departments around the nation to change. The way departments handle this transformation may decide their future. As the defund-the-police narrative spreads, some are starting to recognize that police officers are asked to handle many emerging community social challenges that they are not always suited to handle.<sup>220</sup> Communities are therefore reconsidering how policing looks. New policies may dramatically alter how police departments function. It will be critical for departments to “do differently,” be agile, and transform if they are to survive the call for reform. The Chesterfield County Police Department and the Seattle Police Department provide examples of how to adapt. Departmental transformation requires the ability to look at what a department is doing and determine whether it matches the current operational environment. CCPD and SPD have found success in adapting to the needs of their environments as opposed to just sticking to tradition. Other departments must do the same if they want to recruit and retain qualified employees in the future.

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<sup>220</sup> Andrew Ferguson, “What Does Defund the Police Really Mean?” *Atlantic*, June 14, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/what-does-defund-police-really-mean/612904/>.

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