

Lengthening the Stride

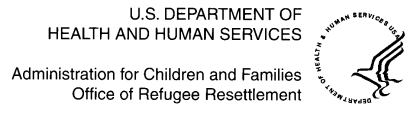
Employing Peace Officers
From Newly Arrived Ethnic Groups

National Crime Prevention Council
Washington, D.C.

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The National Crime Prevention Council is a private, nonprofit, tax-exempt [501(c)(3)] organization whose principal mission is to enable people to prevent crime and build safer, more caring communities. NCPC publishes books, kits or camera-ready program materials, posters, and informational and policy reports on a variety of crime prevention and community-building subjects. NCPC offers training, technical assistance, and national focus for crime prevention; it acts as secretariat for the Crime Prevention Coalition, more than 120 national, federal, and state organizations committed to preventing crime. It also operates demonstration programs and takes a major leadership role in youth crime prevention. NCPC manages the National Citizens' Crime Prevention Campaign, which includes the McGruff "Take A Bite Out Of Crime" public service advertising and is substantially funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

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This publication spotlights the work of hundreds of people. It is impossible to thank them all, except insofar as we make clear two vital messages - good working relationships can be built between law enforcement and refugee groups, and refugee group members can and should become sworn members of law enforcement agencies. But some individuals deserve particular acknowledgment.

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FOREWORD

This book is one result of a formal multi-year partnership between the Office of Refugee Resettlement (part of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services) and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (part of the U. S. Department of Justice) to explore and help improve the relationship between law enforcement and refugees who have resettled in the U.S. It also reflects a dynamic informal partnership among sites funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement; law enforcement agencies; and refugees, immigrants, and other community residents throughout the nation who are working together to help improve law enforcement's delivery of services to all members of the community.

An earlier product of this federal partnership, *Building and Crossing Bridges: Refugees and Law Enforcement Working Together*,¹ provides a clear blueprint for a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship between refugee and law enforcement communities. But cooperation and harmony, though necessary, are not sufficient to meet the goal of improving safety in all neighborhoods. Communities found that if law enforcement

agencies are to serve and protect the entire community effectively, it is important that they reflect the values and composition of the communities they serve.

Lengthening the Stride takes the newcomer/police partnership a step further, laying out ways that law enforcement can recruit, hire, and retain members of ethnic minority populations. Because the Federal agencies' partnership originally focused on the many refugees from Southeast Asian countries who arrived in the U.S. in the 1970s and 1980s, this book draws chiefly on specific examples from the Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, and Hmong communities to address the important opportunities, benefits, issues, challenges, and innovative solutions found in hiring officers from these refugee groups.

The principles in this book are not exclusive to hiring from Southeast Asian groups. Although it has been the experience of some agencies that the process of hiring newcomers from some Asian countries presents a more complicated array of cultural

challenges than hiring those from other non-U.S. areas, the successful methods of hiring outlined here can be modified to apply to many other groups settling in the U.S. As with past waves of immigration, the faces and languages may differ, but the issues and experiences often are similar.

It is critical that law enforcement agencies understand the measurable benefits from hiring ethnic minority sworn officers are only one part of meeting a multi-faceted challenge. Vigorous recruiting, hiring, and retention programs must be accompanied by equally vigorous and committed cultural diversity training programs for officers and staff. *Building and Crossing Bridges* emphasizes the importance of cross-cultural education and underscores the fact that for true harmony to occur, builders of cultural bridges must meet halfway. *Lengthening the Stride* helps law enforcement strengthen and enrich its service delivery to the community by using cross-cultural education as a building block.

This book is a valuable guide for veteran and newly hired non-native officers, as well as for law enforcement executives and trainers, police academy staff, and community residents. It contains practical information for recruiting and

training officers, community service officers from newcomer groups, state and local refugee and assistance groups and immigration officials, and city managers and other policymakers in communities with large ethnic minority populations.

The Introduction outlines the issues of hiring officers from newcomer groups within a brief framework of current statistics. This chapter also provides an overview of current minority employment guidelines and practices. The last section explains how this book will help law enforcement and community members with the hiring process.

Chapter II presents the wide-reaching benefits of hiring from newcomer populations. Chapter III emphasizes the critical role of mutual trust between law enforcement and newly settled groups. Without a solid foundation of trust, efforts to recruit, hire, and retain non-native officers will almost certainly be unsuccessful.

Chapter IV details important steps that have helped communities overcome barriers in hiring non-native officers. Among these barriers are challenges in written and oral communication, police testing, practical skills such as operat-

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ing a motor vehicle, differing cultural norms for such concepts as authority and time, and pressures and anxieties that can compromise professional performance.

Chapter V reviews suggestions for a successful hiring effort and lists practical resources, including people with established track records in hiring from refugee and immigrant groups. Their experiences can serve as a valuable starting point for further discussion and action. The book concludes with an extensive list of publications that can provide further information.

Several terms in this book are used interchangeably: "non-native," "ethnic minority," "newcomer," and "foreign-born" all refer to those residents of the U.S., some of whom have become naturalized American citizens, who moved here as immigrants or refugees. The specific term "ethnic minority," in our context, does not include those who are many generations removed from immigrant status and who have probably acculturated to U.S. norms, laws, and traditions.

A final note on terminology: Most of the Southeast Asian individuals cited in this book are "half generation" newcomers, a

term used by faculty of a training curriculum entitled "Introduction to Law Enforcement for Southeast Asians," developed by the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).² The term "half generation" designates the now-grown children of refugee parents who lived for years in refugee camps before fleeing to the U.S. in the 1970s following the end of the Vietnamese war. These children, born in Southeast Asia or in the camps but maturing in the United States, represent a bridge between their native and their adopted cultures. Using this terminology, their children, born in the U.S., are first-generation Southeast Asian Americans.

As this book goes to press, the principles of affirmative action are under review. While this book does not advocate for either side of that issue, it does urge that institutions such as law enforcement strive to accommodate the cultural diversity that is a vital and enriching part of life in this country. The best argument for hiring from among newcomer groups does not rest on such legal requirements as affirmative action; it is a fundamental principle of good policing.

“... [S]ome progressing police agencies have begun to foster segments of their communities under the broad umbrella of community oriented policing. While these community empowerment programs may be a step in the right direction, the length of the stride may not be sufficient. ”

**Capt. Russell Rice, Placentia (CA) Police Department, in
"Changing Demographics: Impact on the Role of Police"**

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Changing Cultural Picture

The demographics of many communities in the United States are changing rapidly and dramatically. Legislative modifications have opened the U.S. to growing numbers of people from countries around the world. Some are immigrants, settling in a new country to seek better economic opportunities. Others are refugees, escaping fear and persecution in their native lands such as Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Haiti, Romania, the former Soviet Union, and Ethiopia. Both groups of newcomers face formidable obstacles as they resettle in a nation that depends on proficiency in English for social and economic success; is based on a system of laws that is complex and may be difficult to understand; and is rich with cultural customs, traditions, and nuances that may seem bewildering.

Simultaneous with these changes in community demographics, many law enforcement agencies are burdened with high rates of serious crime, often

within Southeast Asian and other ethnic minority enclaves in their communities, and stagnant or shrinking resources. They are frustrated with efforts to gain access to these newcomers who speak and act "differently."

As was true with newcomers in earlier periods of immigration, many recent immigrants and refugees have tended to remain in physical and cultural isolation, leaving them vulnerable to crime and victimization both from members of their own ethnic group and the indigenous community. When they have had occasion to interact with police, the results have often been alienating and laced with misunderstanding. Despite the best efforts of individual law enforcement officers and community residents, relations between the cultures are sometimes more strained after there has been a police/newcomer encounter.

In an attempt to address the needs of newcomer communities more effectively, some agencies have hired translators and community service officers (CSOs) with the goal

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The 1990 Census showed that the United States is home to nearly 20 million foreign-born residents, of whom 7.3 million are described as Asian/Pacific American.

of strengthening trust between police and residents of these communities. The Los Angeles Police Department established a reporting center to facilitate communication with that city's Korean population, and officers at the LAPD's Wilshire division were offered the opportunity to take a basic Korean language course on duty time. St. Paul, Minnesota, police have access to Hmong interpreters to work with thousands of newly settled Laotians. In Seattle and many other communities, crime prevention pamphlets are translated into a wide range of languages.³

These efforts have been successful within the limits of the CSO's authority. Other agencies have recognized the need to take an additional step: they have made efforts to recruit and hire representatives of non-native communities for their sworn force.

The process, however, has not always proved to be smooth. Law enforcement agencies have been challenged - and in some cases stymied - by two key barriers: establishing mutual trust with the newcomer community and shepherding newcomers through the demanding recruiting, hiring, and training regimen.

The Setting: Present and Projected Ethnic Demographics

The 1990 Census showed that the United States is home to nearly 20 million foreign-born residents, of whom 7.3 million are described as Asian/Pacific American. This category encompasses 32 distinct cultural groups. Its size has doubled with each census since 1970.⁴ Many non-native populations cluster in specific regions and communities, making them a substantial part of some large cities, such as San Francisco, Seattle, New York, and Portland, as well as of much smaller communities, such as Willows, California, and Lowell, Massachusetts.

Although the future of immigration and refugee resettlement hinges largely on the prevailing political and economic winds, experts are forecasting trends that will have a measurable impact on communities throughout the nation. In one study published in 1992⁵, researchers project that by the year 2040, the nation's estimated population of more than 350 million will include 34.5 million Asian and Pacific Islander Americans, an increase from 1992 of nearly 400 percent. Some

population experts project that the birthrate for Hispanics and Asian Americans will outpace that of other cultures, contributing to a demographic turnaround in which the current majority will become the minority by the year 2010.⁶

Law enforcement agencies do not always reflect community demographics. These 1990 Bureau of Justice Statistics (U.S. Department of Justice) figures paint a striking picture:

Local police: (approx. 363,000 full-time sworn officers)

- 83% white males (non-Latino)
- 10.5% African American males
- 5.2% Latino males
- 1.3% male all other ethnic groups
- 8.1 % women

Sheriffs' departments: (approx. 141,000 full-time sworn officers)

- 84.5% white males (non-Latino)
- 9.8% African American males
- 4.7% Latino males
- 1% male all other ethnic groups
- 15.4% women

State police: (approx. 55,000 full-time sworn officers)

- 87.1% white males (non-Latino)
- 7.5% African American males
- 4.4% Latino males
- 1% male all other ethnic groups
- 4.6% women

Minority Hiring

Law enforcement agencies have set precedents in minority hiring by recruiting and employing women, African Americans, and Latino Americans. Agencies that have built a more heterogeneous sworn force, whether due to legal mandates or not, have already experienced the necessary changes in policy and practice required to include employees representing a mix of cultural backgrounds.

In many cases, rigid hiring requirements have been made more flexible to accommodate female and non-white male recruits. According to Kathleen Hurley, former Coordinator for Recruitment and Hiring for the San Francisco Police Department:

It used to be that battle lines were drawn around the height re-

Law enforcement agencies do not always reflect community demographics.

Training is constantly being altered to help all different kinds of people.... A diverse [law enforcement] population serves the public better....

quirement. You used to have to be a certain height to be an officer That is no longer the case. It used to be that an officer had to have 20/20 vision. Now the rules have changed, we've come to realize that maybe if an officer wears soft contact lenses that won't fall out, that's good enough. It used to be said that you couldn't hire women because their hands aren't large enough to grip the gun properly. [So] you procure guns with a smaller grip and the problem is solved. Then they said you couldn't hire women because they didn't have changing facilities and restrooms for them. So you call in an architect and alter the physical plant. Training is constantly being altered to help all different kinds of people.... A diverse [law enforcement] population serves the public better... It gives you more resources to help you get the job done.⁷

Newcomer/Police Relations: Past and Present

Law enforcement has an early history of working intimately with immigrant groups from

Ireland, Great Britain, and other European countries. Operational changes in the 1930s focused on a more centralized, response-only strategy of policing that removed much opportunity for routine community interaction. In recent years, a return to a problem-solving approach based on the community has brought law enforcement back into neighborhoods to work cooperatively with residents to ensure public safety.

This trend toward community policing has coincided with the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Southeast Asians and other refugees who have more difficulty in assimilating into their new culture than immigrants from the European continent and Great Britain.

Accompanying upward trends in legal immigration is an influx of undocumented immigrants — both those who enter the U.S. without legal documentation and those who were allowed to enter temporarily but have not re-

turned to their native countries as required by law. Because of political and media attention to the problems of illegal immigration, some U.S. residents believe that all immigration is having a negative impact on the nation's economic and social systems.

It is in this climate that law enforcement agencies must try to reach out to members of these newcomer communities who, like other U.S. residents, are victims of such crimes as youth gang violence and domestic violence. With the advent of dramatic changes toward a community-oriented approach to peacekeeping, the time is ripe for a new way to approach the questions of recruiting and hiring officers, male and female, from the newcomer groups.

How This Book Will Help

The purpose of this book is to examine and address the issues surrounding hiring sworn officers from non-native communities by looking over the shoulders of several law enforcement agencies that have recruited and hired (or have attempted to do so) from such groups in their areas.

few precedents or guidelines. Many of them have crafted creative solutions. Their experiences show that they have met their goals with varying degrees of success.

Police and sheriffs' departments can extract several lessons from the examples included in these chapters:

- Before law enforcement agencies can resolve barriers, they must work closely with newcomer groups to build a solid foundation of trust. Without trust, any other efforts at cultural cooperation fail to encourage ethnic minorities to be partners with or become members of law enforcement.
- Proficiency in spoken and written English is a significant barrier to recruiting, hiring, and retaining ethnic minority officers.
- Cultural norms and values, such as non-Western family expectations and social values, might hinder successful recruiting and training.
- Flexibility and a willingness to apply creative problem-solving skills are keys to suc-

Veteran law enforcement executives and officers have approached this challenge with

- All professional and support personnel in the department need to be knowledgeable about and sensitive to cultural issues and norms in a multi-cultural community.

- Meeting quotas is not the goal. Agencies should strive to include non-native officers in all ranks to help meet the primary goal of peacekeeping: delivering high quality services to all constituents.

This book proposes that law enforcement agencies review methods rather than standards of recruitment, testing, hiring, and training. The methods employed by agencies cited in this document have not compromised the integrity of law enforcement and have resulted in the hiring of many non-native officers who have been assets to the agency and the community.

The issue is not one of ethnic or racial bias, which has its roots in hatred, bigotry, and ignorance. When polled for this book, non-native officers (as well as native-born law enforcement officers with expertise in ethnic minority hiring) denied emphatically that bigotry presents a serious obstacle to hiring these individuals. They felt strongly that cultural differences (language, traditions, attitude toward

authority, etc.) are the key deterrents to recruiting and hiring, and that racism, while

still alive, is not the determining issue.

Some officers report that many U.S. veterans who served in Vietnam and returned to careers in law enforcement initially expressed negative feelings about Vietnamese and other Southeast Asians, but for most officers those feelings have dissipated or disappeared over time. Changes in attitudes usually came after the development of close working and personal relationships.

It is important to caution the reader about stereotyping, which leads to incorrect perceptions and intercultural tension. Just as individual characteristics of native-born Americans are different the statement "All Americans are cowboys" is certainly not based in fact - so, too, are individual characteristics of ethnic minorities. Individual members of any culture are rich or poor, educated or uneducated, socially involved or aloof, ambitious or unmotivated, tall or short, timid or assertive.

Further, there are cultural differences within geographical areas. For example, the designation 'Southeast Asian'

also called Indochinese refers to the culturally and politically diverse inhabitants of three separate countries: Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. These inhabitants speak four distinct languages Khmer, Vietnamese, Lao, and Hmong as well as several minority languages and dozens of dialects. They have different political and social histories, and their cultural and religious traditions vary widely. People from different parts of the same country can be strikingly dissimilar.

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CHAPTER 2

Hiring Newcomers: The Benefits Are Real

Effective community safekeeping and problem-solving occur when law enforcement officers understand and respond to specific community concerns. In the case of ethnic minority communities, such understanding and response can be precluded by problems with lack of trust, written and oral communication, and cultural differences. When a law enforcement agency hires from a newcomer group to its sworn force, it can more easily avoid misunderstandings and dispel fear of crime in the community. It can also increase departmental expertise, range of personnel resources, and community cooperation.

Newcomer Hiring and Community Policing

For many decades, policing has been "by the book," referring literally to volumes of detailed instruction manuals prescribing specific responses to every incident. Community policing, also called community-oriented policing, problem-oriented policing, and neighborhood oriented policing, is rapidly improving the effectiveness of policing as well as community-

police relations in many cities and towns, allowing procedures that were previously inflexible to be modified in favor of accumulated experience.⁸ This community and neighborhood problem-solving approach to policing complements efforts to hire as sworn officers those members of non-native populations who can deliver effective services to their ethnic minority communities and to the community as a whole.

Community policing is based on a cooperative partnership with community residents to prevent crime, resolve problems that contribute to crime, and when needed, respond to criminal incidents. Ethnic and other minority hiring helps law enforcement agencies to break down barriers that might hinder an effective cooperative partnership.

Economic Benefits of Newcomer Hiring

Some law enforcement agencies have realized significant cost savings by hiring nonnative officers to help align services with the identified needs of the community. For

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example, sworn non-native officers can help to alleviate a victim's reluctance, possibly caused by cultural tension or confusion, to testify; can expedite case processing by helping lower communication barriers; or can informally instruct newcomers in police or legal procedures while on patrol. Each of these decreases the cost to process a case by reducing the hours spent clearing up confusion.

After moving to the U.S., many members of ethnic minority groups have difficulty understanding the specific functions and procedures of local law enforcement agencies and therefore use police services inappropriately. For example, the use of an emergency 9-1-1 system for nonemergencies is costly and reduces the time that a patrol officer can attend to primary peacekeeping or crime response duties. Reduction of 9-1-1 calls maximizes the use of residents' tax dollars.⁹ Officers familiar with the language and individual leaders can teach community residents about proper procedures for reporting emergencies and alternative ways to obtain non-emergency police services.

Thao Bui, a counselor with the Maryland Vietnamese Mutual Organization located in a

Washington, D.C. suburb, reports that interpreting interviews with crime victims and witnesses for police can frequently take three to four hours. FBI agent Gary Sheppard, a member of the Asian Organized Crime Task Force for the DC Metropolitan Area (which, as of summer 1995 had no members of Asian descent), adds that "II sometimes we have to grab people on the street who we know can speak [the specific Asian language]," but that can create problems if the translation is not accurate. In Washington and the surrounding Maryland and Virginia suburban areas, the Asian community numbers about 217,000, but less than 1 percent of sworn officers are Asian Americans.¹⁰

Ethnic Minority Hiring Can Increase Safety

The safety of officers patrolling ethnic minority neighborhoods can increase when they are accompanied by sworn officers of the same ethnic group. Not only are the native-born officers more accepted and considered to be more trustworthy if they are with ethnic minority officers, but misunderstandings leading to quick - and sometimes dangerously inappropriate - decisions can be prevented.

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For example, it is not unusual for newly settled Vietnamese who have been pulled over for a traffic violation to leave their cars and bow in order to show respect. This custom could set the stage for unfortunate consequences. Police who work in Korean communities need to be aware that handing a ticket or summons to a Korean with one hand instead of two can be interpreted as an insult or a sign of disrespect, setting the stage for possible conflict.¹¹

In some cases, newcomer customs might be considered unlawful in the United States and, therefore, be a source of misunderstanding and possibly tragic error. For example, in some Southeast Asian countries, village elders manage social behavior of youthful offenders through swift physical punishment. In the U.S., this behavior might be considered child abuse or a violation of individual rights. But Southeast Asians see their tradition as underscoring the direct connection of action and consequences, and they are bewildered by young U.S. offenders who are released by the criminal justice system without obvious punishment.¹²

Likewise, some Southeast Asians fail to perceive some acts as criminal, such as

extortion, bribe-taking, vandalism, or child or spouse abuse, because these offenses were commonplace in their native countries.

Intangible Benefits

Some of the benefits of hiring sworn officers from ethnic minority communities are intangible but no less real or important. Lt. Andrew Hall of the Westminster, California, Police Department cites cross-cultural trust and education as valuable benefits of working with Southeast Asian American officers.

Individual law enforcement officers can benefit from the enriched multi-cultural understanding — as well as a clearer self-understanding that comes from diversity training covering the following areas of examination:

- How cultural awareness improves police professionalism;
- How personal prejudice interferes with effective policing;
- How culturally-diverse members of the community perceive the police; and
- How to improve interpersonal skills to reduce cultural tension and conflict.¹³

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Law enforcement agencies aren't the sole beneficiaries of hiring non-native officers. Some ethnic minority communities have experienced a decrease in crime and a marked reduction in the fear of crime. Having representation on the sworn force has also increased non-native community access to the criminal justice system and improved trust in law enforcement and other branches of the system. Most important, it has increased the feeling of community safety among newly arrived groups and thus for the community as a whole.

CHAPTER 3

Building Trust: The First Step

If the police develop trust and credibility with the Southeast Asian community, they will help keep out gang agitators. The police need to help refugees and immigrants understand that when they come into their community to arrest someone, they are not being aggressive toward [the non-native residents]; they are being aggressive toward crime.

Participant at an Office of Refugee Resettlement/National Crime Prevention Council conference on refugee/law enforcement relations, 1993.

Most department officials and minority group members agree that lack of trust is a formidable barrier that can take a long time to overcome. Many newcomers, especially those from Southeast Asia, have a deep distrust of the police and courts that address situations that were handled privately in their native countries.¹⁴

In one survey,¹⁵ Vietnamese newcomers reported two primary reasons for their distrust of police: they feel that police are insensitive to refugees' and immigrants' cultural heritage, and they are confused and anxious about the criminal justice system, specifically the bail process. They are concerned that suspects, after being arrested, might be released and allowed to return to threaten victims and witnesses. They are also afraid to testify in court

about a suspect. In their homeland, an encounter between suspect and witness was not required by law.

Three Levels of Trust

Law enforcement and other community members can develop trust with ethnic minority residents on three levels:

- Formally, through organizations, coalitions, councils, and task forces.
- On the working level, with patrol officers walking the beat through newcomer neighborhoods and getting to know residents.
- Informally (and often most effectively), when community residents and law enforcement become acquainted through social or

Vietnamese newcomers reported two primary reasons for their distrust of police.

civic events or join together to work for common goals, such as youth safety.

In order to build a formal foundation of trust in Portland, Oregon, the Police Bureau and Hmong American Unity of Oregon, Inc., an organization of refugee leaders, signed a Letter of Agreement in support of a comprehensive partnership to educate Hmong families about Oregon law and educate specially designated police officers in ethno-cultural expectations of the Hmong American community.

The refugees promised to assist the Police Bureau by reporting crime, testifying in court, and helping to locate suspects. The Bureau promised to train officers to work closely with the community to ensure greater safety in their neighborhoods. As a result of increased trust between refugees and law enforcement, refugees are more comfortable in reporting crime, and they enjoy both an increased sense of protection and a decreased sense of fear.

This formal arrangement led to the birth in 1994 of the Asian-

Law Enforcement Advisory Council of Oregon (A-LEACO), a partnership to build trust, improve community safety based on community policing principles, and foster a more coordinated and effective working relationship between the ethnic communities and the criminal justice system and social service agencies.¹⁶

In St. Paul, Minnesota, A Community Outreach Program - ACOP - brings the city's police department, public housing agency, and large Cambodian population together through a close working relationship. ACOP has uniformed police officers, including Hmong American officers, who patrol public housing communities, befriending residents and helping them with a range of problems. In addition to regular police duties, the officers routinely attend resident council meetings, coach athletic teams, and provide leadership for youth activities. Two full-time Cambodian American crime prevention specialists on the staff of the police department have established block clubs that meet regularly.

Trust: Starting in the Neighborhood

Experts have found that trust often develops from the bottom up, not the top down.¹⁷ Relationships are more easily developed at the individual level, not only face-to-face but shoulder-to-shoulder. Trust is a valued by-product when individuals, often with dissimilar backgrounds, collaborate on social and civic activities such as organized responses to local problems.

Vietnamese American Officer Nguyen Van Trong of the Biloxi, Mississippi, Police Department goes into schools and works with individual youth to teach them anti-drug techniques using the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) curriculum. He also meets with Vietnamese adults in their community to teach parenting skills. He is well known in Biloxi, having been a sworn officer since 1985 when he served first as a patrolman and then as a detective. He reports that crime has decreased in the Vietnamese neighborhoods of Biloxi because he personally encourages residents to trust law enforcement and report crime.

Helping multi-cultural communities resolve day-to-day problems reinforces trust. Sworn officers and civilian employees

can offer special services to victims; mediate community conflicts; improve neighborhood conditions by problem-solving with local merchants and residents; control traffic problems; assist with residential security concerns; establish or support Neighborhood Watch groups; educate the community about gang suppression and prevention; and provide emergency referrals to social services.

Mutual Assistance Associations, refugee self-help groups that understand the needs of their refugee countrymen, provide a variety of services and opportunities for building trust, such as serving as liaison between newcomer communities and law enforcement, assisting with language proficiency classes and interpreting services, and educating refugees about the American criminal justice system.

In sum, one of the most effective trust-building efforts is for police or sheriff's departments to recruit and hire sworn ethnic minority officers who become role models of good citizenship and community service. Although this is an effective tool to address cultural issues, some law enforcement agencies have found that ethnic minority hiring can raise additional issues that require creative and focused attention.

Relationships are more easily developed at the individual level, not only face-to-face but shoulder-to-shoulder.

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CHAPTER 4

Recruiting, Hiring & Retaining: Steps Toward Success

*We recruit women and minority candidates because it is right.
And we recruit women and minorities because it makes us a
better, more effective Sheriff's Department. And that, after all
is said and done, should be the goal of any good organization.*

**Sheriff Michael Hennessey, San Francisco, CA
Law Enforcement News, 2 February 1989¹⁸**

On average, police agencies screen 10 candidates for every one that is hired.¹⁹ The process is complicated, costly, comprehensive, and can be grueling. However, the quality of selected employees - particularly sworn officers - is directly responsible for the quality and effectiveness of the organization.

State statutes or local charters or ordinances usually control the basic framework for law enforcement personnel selection. For some communities, selection comes under the jurisdiction of an independent civil service commission, an executive personnel system, or some combination of the two. Civil service commissions may have only advisory powers, or they may be responsible for direct administration of the personnel function. In most medium-and

large-sized cities and counties, authority in personnel matters is shared by the chief executive and an independent central personnel agency. In other law enforcement agencies, personnel functions are supervised by a police officer or a civilian administrative assistant.

To reduce time and cost, some agencies have collaborated to establish eligibility pools by sharing some of the expenses for the initial phases of recruiting. A second approach is to use a registry managed by a private vendor that establishes a list of certified candidates.²⁰

Communities face different obstacles when recruiting and hiring non-native officers in part due to the nature of their employment process. The obstacles — and solutions — outlined here may ap-

ply directly to an individual community's experience; or they may have to be tailored to fit specific circumstances.

Recruiting and hiring must be a significant priority for the chief or sheriff and top levels of command. As in any decision to improve the effectiveness of a law enforcement agency, it is critical that the chief executive set the tone and all upper ranks subscribe to and support ethnic diversity hiring efforts.

Legal Base for Non-Discrimination in Hiring

When Congress established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 1964, it charged the Commission to oversee the implementation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, making it illegal for employers to discriminate against certain protected classes on the basis of race, sex, color, religion, or national origin. It further set out that all criteria for hiring and promotion must be based on "bona fide occupational qualifications" (BFOQ). Similarly, all termination's, compensations, and other employment practices must emanate from objective, defensible standards and documented performance.

The passage of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act in 1972 created the basis for successful legal challenges to traditional practices that allegedly favored white males. This law resulted in law enforcement agencies being required to review hiring practices to ensure that they were free from intentional or unintentional bias. In a 1989 study, nearly two-thirds of all medium-sized police departments reported operating under an affirmative action plan at some time between 1983 and 1988.²¹ it must be emphasized that the rationale for ethnic minority hiring should not rest on current legal requirements of affirmative action; the key justification is that it results in more effective policing.

Ethnic Minority Recruitment Efforts

The primary goal of recruitment is to attract qualified individuals to serve as exemplary police officers. Most departments have clear, written policies that guide recruitment efforts, and they use employee selection procedures related to on-the-job performance. At the same time, in the interest of improving the department's effectiveness and responsiveness to the community, de-

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partments are making special efforts to attract, hire, and promote qualified women and other individuals who represent the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the service area.²²

One possible source of sworn officers comes from within the department. Some newcomer community residents take jobs as non-sworn Community Service Officers (CSO), a role that is usually defined by the needs of the community. CSO duties can include:

- serving as liaison between community and police;
- translating important legal documents and being called to interpret for victims and witnesses after an incident has been reported;
- teaching information about the criminal justice system in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes;
- working with youth groups;
- teaching drug prevention to parents and youth;
- teaching crime prevention to business and residents in the newcomer community;
- encouraging victims to report

crime, such as domestic violence or child abuse; and

- helping during non-police crises, such as medical emergencies.

In recruiting individuals from non-native communities, law enforcement should consider some or all of the following aggressive measures.²³

- Promote jobs career fairs. Announcements should include an Equal Opportunity Employer (EOE) statement. Make sure there is follow up with people who seem interested and leave their name and telephone number.
- Establish specially trained ethnic or minority recruitment task forces, such as the unit established by the San Francisco Police Department.
- Maintain liaison with referral sources, such as youth based organizations, high schools, colleges, and immigrant or refugee service organizations.
- Provide recruitment counseling at satellite police stations, storefronts, and walk-ins located in ethnic minority neighborhoods.
- Advertise job announcements in newspapers and

Experiences in their homeland left them with the sense that law enforcement is corrupt and dishonorable.

magazines and on radio and television stations catering to ethnic minorities.

- Keep the time period from recruitment to selection to a minimum, so that candidates will not lose interest in a law enforcement career.

Officer Gaylord Gee of the California Highway Patrol observes that some newcomers, particularly Southeast Asians, are reluctant to apply to law enforcement agencies for employment because of several concerns. First, experiences in their homeland probably left them with the sense that law enforcement is corrupt and dishonorable. Additionally, the struggle to succeed at the police academy and in field training can be a more demanding effort than that required of an American-born recruit. Finally, if they fail, they may feel they have brought shame to their family, their ethnic community, and supporters in the police department.

Officer Gee also feels that recent media portrayal of police have played a negative role in attracting ethnic minorities. Television shows in the 1960s and 1970s, such as Adam-12, CHiPs, and Dragnet, showed police work in a non-violent way. "You hardly ever saw any

of those officers with a gun," remembers Gee. Television in the 1990s, with its movement toward "realism," graphically depicts violence, gun fights, drug deals, and corruption to increase ratings. "Sure, those things happen to police officers, but they are not typical of everyday life on the job," says Gee. "If you've come from a country where law enforcement is a source of persecution, you're not going to want to join the law enforcement depicted on American television!"

In Miami, home to many African Americans and Latino Americans, advertising on audience-specific radio stations has proved to be effective, notes Lt. Rick Holton of Miami's Metro Dade Police Training Bureau. The recruitment team makes a special effort to be present at cultural festivals that take place throughout the year. In addition, many of the department's African American and Latino American officers are sent to speak in areas where the newcomer population is concentrated, generating interest among those segments of the community. Recruiters also attend "Career Day" fairs in junior and senior high schools. "We try to instill in kids that being a police officer is a good employment

opportunity, and that it's a respected position within the²⁴ community," adds Lt. Holton.

In San Francisco, targeted recruitment of minorities and women was mandated as part of a 1979 court settlement and consent decree. According to Kathleen Hurley, formerly San Francisco's Recruitment and Examination Coordinator, the department actively seeks qualified minority and women applicants, displaying photographs of Latino, Southeast Asian, and other non-native male and female officers in neighborhoods and multi-cultural businesses and social centers where newcomers are most likely to see them. Hurley also sent out multiracial and multi-ethnic recruiting teams to ethnic minority neighborhoods to underscore the department's commitment to effective working relationships among a variety of people.

In the Boston suburb of Dorchester, Tram Tran, a female Vietnamese American Community Service Officer who has been in the U.S. since 1985, goes out into the Vietnamese community to post announcements and distribute fliers and newsletters about law enforcement recruitment and crime prevention matters. The department also runs recruitment

notices in Vietnamese newspapers and on Vietnamese radio stations. Tran reports that in 1994, over 100 Vietnamese Americans took the civil service police exam; 17 passed and were ranked, and four are scheduled to enter the police academy. In nearby Lowell, Massachusetts, the police department declared an emergency before the civil service commission, arguing their need for linguistically and culturally specific applicants to serve their large Cambodian population. They were able to modify the system to hire four sworn Cambodian American officers.

Some departments have developed special programs to recruit in high schools. This effort helps develop in young people an interest in policing and fosters that interest before the students develop other occupational ambitions.

The Maryland-National Capital Park Police has developed three complementary programs directed toward the county's non-native high school population, particularly those from Asian and Hispanic countries. In the Ride-Along program, students and officers are paired for two days of personal interaction that also includes a

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profile of police work; an exchange of cultural information, food, and music at lunchtime; and a tour of Park Police headquarters.

In the Student Law Enforcement Career Opportunity Program, classroom instruction is combined with practical exercises, allowing the student to work within specialized areas of the agency. Program managers hope that the courses will eventually be certified by the Maryland Police Training Commission, resulting in course credit from a police academy, extra consideration during the employment selection process, or entrance to an agency at a higher pay grade.

The Community Park Police Aide Program provides training for students who want to assist Park Police by providing non-enforcement and non-confrontational police related services to the public under the supervision of a park police officer. A mentor system allows students to interact with both police instructors and field supervisors. Upon completion of the training, students are assigned to field duties under the supervision of a patrol officer. Students are paid for their services through private sector funding.

According to Sgt. Jake Bise, these programs have introduced young people to police operations, encouraged them to make friends with sworn police personnel, and helped them with courses that can lead to law enforcement career choices.

Variations and Constants in Selection

Once individuals have expressed interest in becoming sworn police officers, they must proceed through several standard steps:²⁵

1. Submit an application form or send a letter providing basic information about background, characteristics, and personal and educational history. Most agencies require that recruits hold U.S. citizenship. Other selection standards can include any or all of the following: driver's license status, age, residency within agency jurisdiction, high school diploma, voter status, and visual acuity. Use of any of these standards is based on pertinent state statutes, state or county case law, and state and federal employee selection guidelines.

2. Take written tests that are demonstrably related to job performance.
3. If the applicants are successful on the written tests, some departments administer other testing procedures and instruments. Previously conducted prior to a job offer, most medical and physical exams and psychological tests are now administered after a job has been conditionally offered, due to changes made by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The written test is a primary gatekeeper for personnel selection. It reduces the initial applicant pool, which can be sizable, to a manageable number before applicants advance to more expensive and time-consuming selection procedures. Studies have found that some minority candidates tend to score lower and are rejected at a higher rate because of the results of standard written tests.²⁶ These results may be explained by one or a combination of factors, including unfamiliarity with terms and semantic nuances, use of examples that require a specific cultural framework or reference, or pressure from time limitations.

The written test is a primary gatekeeper for personnel selection.

Standard Steps in Selection

- Submit an application.
- Take a written test.
- Get a physical and psychological exam.

Variations in Agency Selection Process

Recruitment methods:	Television, radio, newspapers, journals, mass mailings, posters, open days at the agency, recruiting stands at malls and other public places
Special targets:	Women, handicapped, military veterans, university graduates, ethnic minorities, candidates with prior police service
Required:	Written, psychological, and polygraph tests; police interview; background check; written references; medical tests including drugs, general fitness, blood pressure, vision, coordination, chest x-ray, cardiovascular fitness, upper body strength, color vision, body fat, hearing, agility, endurance
Polygraph probes:	Honesty, aggression, criminality, unlawful sexual behavior
Oral interview:	Motivation, loyalty, common sense, application form information, drinking habits, violence, perceived strengths and weaknesses, verbal communication skills, ambition, discretion, honesty, interests, appearance
Written exam:	General knowledge, intelligence, grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, reasoning, logic, mathematics

Academy Training

General:	Length of training -- 16-26 weeks; full-time wages; tuition paid by agency; more than 65% passing rate
Courses:	Law, police procedure and response; interpersonal skills, weapons training, driver training, self-defense, first aid, physical training, drill
Instruction methods:	Lecture, demonstration, role-play, discussion, computer work, film/video, hands-on experience (weapons, driving, arrest techniques, hostage situations, crimes in progress).

[Study conducted in 60 departments, each with more than 500 sworn officers; items listed here were reported by a majority of participating agencies. (Strawbridge and Strawbridge, 1990)]

Post Academy Training

General:	In-service field training; new officer on probation first observes Field Training Officer (FTO) for several months, then FTO observes and evaluates new officer in his or her performance of police duties.
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The usefulness of any selection instrument lies in how well it measures the person for the job and produces qualified candidates to meet the agency's goals. A test should correlate the applicant's skills more with critical aspects of job performance than with his or her familiarity with non-applicable details of mainstream culture.²⁷

Courts, regulatory agencies, and professional standards setting groups have devoted considerable attention to the issue of fairness of written tests and hiring and promotion standards. Published articles report that some courts have found law enforcement psychological tests to be racially and culturally biased (Grizzell v. Jackson [Mississippi] Police Department in 1979 and League of United Latin American Citizens v. City of Santa Ana in 1976.)²⁸

Many psychologists have debated the charge of bias in these standardized tests, and some have agreed that the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) is racially biased against African Americans, and the Inwald Personality Inventory (IPI) should be used only as an

adjunct to other selection testing such as in-depth interviews.²⁹ The use of a "canned" psychological test and/or psychological interview to deny someone employment as a police officer may place the department at risk of litigation.³⁰

Some departments maintain separate lists of test scores, including one for minorities, ranking people with their own peers. This method can be used to balance departmental composition, but it can also create serious morale and backlash problems among non-minority personnel.³¹

It is advisable for non-native police test candidates to undergo extensive preparation. The following strategies have proved helpful to many:

- Read law enforcement books from the library.
- Practice taking timed tests to help adjust to the pressure of time restrictions.
- Study books, such as this one, that make candidates aware of possible obstacles.
- Learn about United States history and culture.

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San Francisco Police Department has established special assistance programs for ethnic minority recruits to prepare for written and oral examinations.

In the 1994 Entry Level Police Officer Examination Orientation and Preparation Guide, published by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, applicants are encouraged to:

1. Sharpen observation and memory skills by looking at "wanted posters" in post offices and test their retention of detail.
2. Practice reading and remembering facts by selecting magazine articles with a lot of information, reading them as quickly and thoroughly as possible, and then testing information retention after a short period of time. A study partner can ask questions about the article.
3. Check bookstores or libraries to find information that relates specifically to crime scenarios involving judgment and problem-solving.
4. Bring a watch to the exam to gauge the amount of time left in the testing period. Work quickly, but don't rush.

5. Practice taking tests with a multiple-choice format.

The Massachusetts guide includes a series of study questions based on understanding and retaining details of physical evidence, observation of suspects, and reasoning and judgment in crime scenarios. It also lists police-related vocabulary words that the candidate should master before taking the test.

Julia Gonzales, current recruitment coordinator for the San Francisco Police Department, reports that her agency has established special assistance programs for ethnic minority recruits to prepare for written and oral examinations. They also offer a mentoring and peer group program to help recruits advance successfully through the selection process.

Chief Robert Shadley of the Willows, California, Police Department employed a psychologist to give a nonnative recruit an oral psychological interview instead of the standardized and possibly culturally-biased written test. The interview met California police testing standards, but couched questions in a framework more understandable to a member of a non-native culture.

Specific Problems Affecting Selection, Hiring, and Training

Although the tendency of the public to stereotype refugees and immigrants from non-western cultures can lead to inaccuracies, misrepresentation, and ultimately discrimination, some law enforcement practitioners report specific challenges to hiring and training some ethnic minority individuals. Any or all of the following issues have presented stumbling blocks to those departments that have tried to recruit, hire, and train newcomers, particularly Southeast Asians:

Does the testing process require a vocabulary that is culture-specific? Are tenses, other grammatical rules, or pronunciation a problem?

Do some newcomers fail to command authority or resolve conflicts because their culture values avoiding confrontation? Are some female recruits seen as particularly unassertive?

Do practical aspects of non-native cultures, such as concepts about time, interfere with some recruits' abilities to perform the duties

of a sworn officer effectively?

Communication and Language

Language separates as well as binds. Patterns of language usage often express³² power relations. The way someone speaks can be a source of intergroup conflict, tension, and distance. Command of a language is more than a technical skill; it is also a key to economic well-being. Success in the workplace often requires the employee to understand explicit instructions and communicate effectively to others. This need is particularly acute in policing.

To law enforcement, accurate and timely communication is paramount. On-the-job "police language" is structured and linear, and officers are trained to fine-tuned listening and precision of terms. They need to make decisions quickly based on accurate information from victims and witnesses. Their communication often takes the form of directions and commands. To help bridge cultural communication gaps, some law enforcement agencies have conducted cultural sensitivity training to address possible points of

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Some newly settled Southeast Asians, for example, are uncomfortable with verbal confrontation and appear passive when in the company of native-born Americans. Many Cambodians, Laotians, and Vietnamese who speak English when they arrive in the U.S. have to learn to distinguish between tenses and between singular and plural forms. Frequently, they do not make eye contact when talking or listening. When speaking among themselves or to others, they demonstrate great deference for authority. They punctuate their speech with body gestures and bowing. Hmong and Lao men and women traditionally do not shake hands, appearing unfriendly to those who do not understand the cultures. Such cultural differences can be a source of misunderstanding.

The development of written skills is equally important for a law enforcement candidate. The ability to take accurate notes and write clear and accurate reports is key to the job.

Tram Tran, a Vietnamese refugee and now a U.S. citizen, has been in the U.S. for 10 years. After serving as a community service officer, she

took the written police civil service exam but did not pass. She reported that she found the exam procedure difficult because there was insufficient time for her to finish. She wanted to read each section twice to ensure that she understood all the questions, and that process restricted her time. She also reported finding the multiple choice format difficult because she thought there were several answers for each question that were reasonable. She thought the questions were "tricky." The candidates were given a booklet before the test to help them prepare, but Tram found the questions in the booklet to be "very different from the actual test."

In her case, Tram thought additional time would have helped her do well on the test. However, police officers point out that thinking quickly and decisively is critical to effective police work. Although she was unsuccessful in passing the exam, Tram coached others who succeeded. Her coaching resulted in four newcomer candidates proceeding to the police academy. She has returned to her community liaison work, where she has excelled, but has not abandoned her ambition to become a sworn officer.

Concept of Authority

Problems with self-assertion and the concept of authority can affect an officer's effectiveness in resolving conflict, both within the department and among public disputants. Non-native officers in academy training classes and practical field experiences need a strong focus on reinforcing conflict management and problem-solving skills.

Law enforcement organizations are traditionally hierarchical and paramilitary. Police officers are trained to give commands to maintain order, and they expect people to follow their directions precisely and quickly. In cultural contrast, many Cambodians and Vietnamese mistrust outside authority, tending to place sole authority within the family. Similarly, in the Hmong/Lao culture, authority also rests with the males and elders in the family. Respected family members - not outsiders solve problems. If a Southeast Asian youth commits an offense, the family usually feels a strong sense of shame because the youth has brought dishonor to the family name. Family shame can be a deterrent

to turning to outside authorities, such as law enforcement, to solve problems.

Concept of Time

Law enforcement culture values punctuality and a precise sense of time as vital to successful job performance, particularly during emergencies and crises. The public often judges law enforcement delivery of service by response time, and for police, timeliness is defined in terms of seconds.

Many Southeast Asian cultures embrace a concept of time that conflicts dramatically with that of the law enforcement culture. Cambodian participants at a 1993 conference to explore cultural differences admitted that they were rarely on time. At the same conference, members of the Hmong and Lao cultures stated they find the importance of timeliness insignificant, and they generally lack what U.S.-born residents would define as "time management skills." One Vietnamese participant referred to time as "elastic," and stated that members of his culture put little value on long-term planning.

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Other Barriers

Some community barriers to ethnic minority hiring can be addressed locally with positive changes in agency training, personnel policies, attitudes of command staff, communication skills, and recruitment techniques. More formidable barriers can exist, however, in two areas that may not be as amenable to local pressure for change.

As mentioned in an earlier section, the civil service system of selection can interfere with an agency's goal of hiring non-native sworn officers, due to its reliance on rank-ordered testing. A few departments, such as the Lowell, Massachusetts, Police Department, have been able to bypass the rigidity of civil service system to hire much-needed ethnic minority officers to meet a need in their community.

An additional problem is that of police labor groups whose mandate is to fairly protect the rights and working conditions of all members. Whereas the activities of these groups are intended to positively improve the police workforce, they can work against minority hiring and promotion if minorities are perceived as receiving unfair

advantages. Labor groups are generally strong and notoriously difficult to influence, and changes in labor group-related practices may come slowly.

Solutions That Are Working

Some agencies have found solutions to some of the obstacles to recruiting, hiring, and retaining newcomers that avoid compromising the integrity of the process:

- Allow extra time for sections of the written test that don't measure quick response and action.
- Enroll candidates in reading comprehension courses.
- Assist candidates with: vocabulary and pronunciation; interviewing; crucial written skills; and listening skills.
- Identify and address cultural differences that may interfere with law enforcement operating principles and performance.
- Encourage recruits to work closely with a mentor during training at the academy.
- Emphasize cultural training for veteran officers.

The California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) has developed a curriculum, entitled "Introduction to Law Enforcement for Southeast Asians," that targets post-academy officers, community service officers, non-sworn reserves, and police cadets.³³ The curriculum addresses many issues through awareness and consciousness-raising, bringing attention to seemingly straightforward problems that can have far-ranging repercussions because of cultural misunderstandings. The curriculum also offers tested solutions to some problems that facilitate the ethnic minority hiring and training process. Participants learn about the wide variety of obstacles they may face, both from within the department and from newcomer and U.S.-born community members.

The course begins with basic knowledge about the functions and methods of law enforcement and the criminal justice system, the organizational structure of police and sheriffs' departments, a comparison of U.S. law enforcement to that of other countries, an explanation of the chain of command, and an

outline of career development. Participants also learn about requests for police service and the elements of satisfactory community relations, such as response time, citizen complaints, public presentations, and civic involvement (e.g., Neighborhood Watch and Drug Abuse Resistance Education or D.A.R.E.). Instructors quiz participants on their knowledge of law enforcement functions both before and after these topics are discussed.

Professional Behavior, Cultural Differences, and Job-Related Stress

Basic information on law enforcement is followed by discussions about assertive and authoritative behavior, the stresses of law enforcement work, and stress management. Job-related stresses are identified as irregular or long work hours; unusual days off (weekdays instead of weekends); the demands and consequences of job dedication; the possible emotionally trying nature of the work (homicides, child and spousal abuse, life-threatening situations); and the high divorce rate among law enforcement officers (second only to the entertainment industry).

The police academy requires that cadets absorb a large volume of material, have well-honed communication skills, and be able to concentrate within the distraction of a new environment.

Participants also learn about the pressures of being an entry-level recruit: oral and written exams, the military environment of the academy, the heavy academic workload, and the challenge of tough physical conditioning.

The police academy requires that cadets absorb a large volume of material, have well-honed communication skills, and be able to concentrate within the distraction of a new environment. Additionally, cadets are often separated from their families and support systems. One solution to these pressures is for the cadet to partner with a mentor who can assist with problems that may arise.

When they enter field training, officers feel pressure to demonstrate the lessons learned in the academy, striving to meet the expectations of their Field Training Officer (FTO). It is during this period that the true tests of policing abilities occur, often causing stress to the new officer.

According to Lt. A.J. Key of the Arlington, Texas, Police Department, some newcomer recruits who excel in the academy meet their toughest challenges in field training. "It is easier for some recruits to learn specific facts and responses by rote out of a textbook or

from an instructor. It is often much harder for them to have to use creative problem-solving skills when they are faced with a real situation."

When Field Training Officers work with academy graduates from newcomer groups, Key adds, cross-cultural understanding is absolutely imperative. "The FTO needs to have accurate background information about cultural and social values in order to understand some of the choices and decisions made by ethnic minority officers," Lt. Key says. "Newcomers will surely fail if we expect them to behave in their community in exactly the same way that we do in ours. Thought processes can differ, and those differences can be acceptable as long as they stay within certain law enforcement standards."

Lt. Key also warns that even though the academy has taught the officer how to respond to specific incidents, cultural tradition can interfere with good policing practices and response in a crisis situation. If the ethnic officer's native country doesn't value the role of women, for example, the officer may not respond appropriately to a domestic

violence case. It is critical for the ethnic minority officer to have full understanding of U.S. social values, as well as the law, in order to serve the community effectively. "The FTO has the responsibility not only to understand the newcomer's cultural framework but also to share U.S. norms and standards as the new officer goes through field training."

Driving Skills

California Highway Patrol Officer Gaylord Gee, an instructor in the POST course, notes that driving skills may present a problem for non-native officers. U.S. drivers have the opportunity to develop skills as fully licensed drivers from age 16 onward. They know the roads, the mechanics of a vehicle, and traffic law. Some newcomers, by contrast, have never driven before their entry to the U.S. When they learn the techniques of driving, they may lack the self-assurance to drive decisively and authoritatively, which may be needed in responding to an incident.

Community and Family Pressures

The POST course participants are also alerted to additional

pressures and stress such as the potential high demand for their intercultural skills; vice and undercover work; possible infiltration of their own cultural community (such as for gang or drug surveillance); and the potential for initial resentment from other officers or deputies. Additionally, recruits can experience stressful relationships with their family members because of differing career expectations, the danger of their work, and family members' fear of retaliation from suspects and arrestees.

In Arlington County, Virginia, Keith K. Ahn's Korean-born parents were so upset about his joining the police department that they did not speak to him for a month. According to Ahn, they told him that there were better things he could do with his life that would make him more appreciated. "They're hoping I'll quit soon," says Ahn.³⁴ Larry Ratcliff of the Portland, Oregon, Police Bureau observes that, "Police departments must sell the job as much to the family as to the potential candidate."

Both the newcomer community and the community-at-large can put pressure on a new law enforcement recruit. The ethnic community might

Larry Ratcliff of the Portland, Oregon, Police Bureau observes that, "Police departments must sell the job as much to the family as to the potential candidate."

fear that the recruit will become an informant, passing personal information to the authorities. And once sworn, the ethnic minority officer might find that he or she is in demand 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week. The officer may be expected to be a part of every case that involves language interpretation or cultural confusion. U.S.-born residents may fail to recognize someone with an "ethnic appearance" as someone with authority. Additionally, verbal and nonverbal communication barriers may heighten tension between an officer from a newcomer group and a longtime U.S. resident.

The POST course suggests that ethnic minority officers can foster a comfortable relationship with U.S.-born community members or community members from ethnic backgrounds other than their own by attending neighborhood meetings, working with schools and youth groups, and talking with merchants and business owners about public safety and security issues.

Although, a logical assignment for a non-native officer would seem to be within his or her own cultural community, some veteran law enforcement experts feel that this may not be in the

best interest of the officer. "All officers must enjoy an equal opportunity to compete for all assignments, districts, training opportunities, and promotion," says Jim Kavinia of the FBI Training Academy in Quantico, Virginia. Research has shown that restricting ethnic minority officers to work within their own cultural communities may confine them to a career path that does not offer as much professional diversity or as many opportunities for promotion.³⁵

Communication Skills

The California POST curriculum for Southeast Asians instructs participants on voice command and control (volume, speed, enunciation, accent, and command presence) and offers techniques to reinforce English skills. The participants are encouraged to purchase or have access to a police radio scanner and listen often to radio-transmitted communications. They are instructed to read only English newspapers and magazines, watch English television, and refrain from speaking their native Southeast Asian language. If they live in non-English speaking homes with their parents or other family members, the curriculum

suggests that they may wish to consider temporarily moving out.

Southeast Asians arrive in this country with languages and dialects that derive from ancient Sanskrit, with nouns that have no plural form and verbs that have no past tense. In Vietnamese, for example, rarely do consonants occur at the end of words, causing the sound to taper off softly. Vietnamese immigrants learning to speak English are inclined to ignore hard sounds at the ends of words, making their speech difficult to understand by veteran English-speakers.

The POST students are also instructed to be aware of gestures, expressions, and other body language that might suggest something that is unintended. Eye contact is particularly important for expressing authority and commanding respect.

The curriculum uses role playing and interactive discussion to demonstrate cultural differences and conflict resolution skills, interview skills, and sensitive issues such as sexual harassment. A final skill session — writing reports — emphasizes the use of tenses, singular and plural nouns, and direct quotations and statements

from victims, witnesses, and suspects. The participants are required to prepare a report using guidelines discussed in the class.

One Officer's Persistence and Success

Officer Thomas Lee is a POST curriculum success story. In 1995, Officer Lee, formerly a community service officer with the Willows, California, Police Department, became the first sworn Hmong American officer on his force. A native of Laos, Lee settled in St. Paul, Minnesota, after five years in a Laotian refugee camp. When he arrived in the United States, he could not speak English but was placed in mainstream classes in his St. Paul school. He finished high school and went to a junior college in Minneapolis, transferring to California where he received his Bachelor of Science degree in criminal justice.

He attended one police academy, but he did not graduate because he failed the written test for firearms, one of 18 courses of study. His police chief and mentor, Robert Shadley, enrolled him in a second academy, away from his home, where some of the tests were not timed.

Southeast Asians arrive in this country with languages and dialects that derive from ancient Sanskrit, with nouns that have no past tense.

Officer Lee excelled in all his courses, graduated to the cheers of his fellow officers at the Willows Police Department and has entered field training. He is aware of the challenges that lie ahead, but is unwavering in his determination to succeed. Funds from the office of Refugee Resettlement have helped the Willows Police Department develop an environment in which law enforcement is viewed by the Hmong community as a positive resource and career choice.

Creative Hiring Experiences

Don "D.K." Abbott, now retired from the Community Relations Division of the San Diego Police Department, recounts how he developed a "police department within a police department" in an effort to help Southeast Asian officer-candidates reach their goal of being sworn members of the agency.

When Officer Abbott worked with the agency's crime prevention division in 1979, he hired four community service officers (CSOs) as translators for the Hmong, Laotian, Vietnamese, and Cambodian refugee populations that had settled in San Diego. The newly hired Vietnamese officer had

served in the military in his homeland, felt comfortable with the law enforcement environment, and decided to apply to the academy. He passed the exams, did well in the academy, but did not make it through field training because of his inability to write reports or make himself understood over the police radio.

He returned to his job as a CSO, and Officer Abbott helped him reinforce his report-writing skills. He listened to radio transmissions and practiced oral communication skills, paying attention to clear enunciation and other speech techniques. He returned to the academy and to field training and is now a sworn officer with the San Diego Police Department.

Officer Abbott noticed that other Southeast Asians failed at the field training level. He continued to hire ethnic minority CSOs and assigned them all the duties of a sworn patrolman. "The only difference was that they didn't carry a gun," says Abbott. The CSOs handled calls and took reports from newcomer residents who were reluctant to call 9-1-1. Sworn officers would refer ethnic minority calls to them. Eventually, Officer Abbott set up a

storefront with 14 CSOs speaking nine languages to serve the newcomer ethnic minority residents of the city. When one of the CSOs went on to the academy, he filled that position with another. They were successful, says Abbott, because of their focused, on-the-job training and reinforcement as CSOs.

On-the-Job Anxiety

During field training and probation, new officers put to the test their abilities in communication, self-assertion, investigation, conflict resolution, incident response, and report writing, among many others. The stresses of job performance and constant scrutiny can cause significant anxiety which, in turn, can affect performance.

"Cultural Diversity: An Integral Part of Community Oriented Policing" is a two-week cultural diversity course conducted as part of the North East Multi-Regional Training program, under the auspices of the Illinois State Police training standards division. It teaches law enforcement diversity trainers about anxieties experienced by newly graduated nonnative officers. The course focuses on ways that anxiety can interfere with clear thinking and decisive action, how it can be a response

to ambiguous situations, how it can destroy trust, and ways it can limit communication. Additionally, anxiety can lead to absenteeism, dissatisfaction, stress, isolation, and defensiveness.

The course enables selected law enforcement officers (Command, First Line Supervisors, FTOs, and Patrol) to become certified Cultural Diversity Instructors who will teach a one- to two-day curriculum to other law enforcement personnel. Additional course subjects include: the concept and implications of diversity, values, prejudice, acculturation, recruitment and retention, community relations, ethnicity and race relations, gender issues, homophobia, concerns and reactions of the community, verbal and non-verbal communication, cognitive functions, problem-solving and action-planning, teaching methodologies and evaluation.

Participants also become aware of issues related to sexual harassment. Instructors pay special attention to the relationship between female officers and male Field Training Officers and to men and women who work closely together as partners. The course advises that the

It teaches law enforcement diversity trainers about anxieties experienced by newly graduated non-native officers.

problem of gender and subordination should be clearly spelled out to all law enforcement personnel, using as a basis current sexual harassment and EEOC guidelines. Traditional female roles in Southeast Asian cultures, for example, may heighten the potential for harassment.

One Community's Experience

The second largest Southeast Asian population in the U.S., nearly 25 percent of the 100,000 residents of Lowell, Massachusetts, are from Cambodia. Between 1980 and 1990, the city experienced a 2,000 percent increase in Asian residents, compared to increases of 130 percent for Latinos and 110 percent for African Americans. The Caucasian population decreased 6 percent during the same period.

In response to this growing Southeast Asian population and to accompanying problems with rising crime rates and gang activity, the Lowell Police Department hired four Cambodian sworn officers to a force that was primarily Irish Catholic. Inspector Jeffrey Davidson reports that there was initial hostility among the

veteran officers, but that feelings have changed with time.

The City of Lowell was able to recruit and hire the four Cambodian officers, who had passed the police test and been ranked by the Commonwealth's civil service system, by declaring an emergency to the civil service administration. They declared that they needed linguistically and culturally specific applicants. The civil service administrators permitted them to bypass higher ranked candidates and hire the Cambodian officers. All four officers were high school graduates, and one held a 2 year Associate's degree. They had been in the U.S. since the early 1980s, and they were all in refugee camps prior to their resettlement in the U.S.

Inspector Davidson agrees with reports of some California officers that post-academy training presented the most difficult problems for these Cambodian American officers. The most serious obstacle was their inability to meet department standards in writing reports. The department provided mentors, and the officers were able to sharpen their skills with practice.

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Another obstacle came from the Cambodian community itself. Similar to experiences reported in some other communities, the first two Cambodian American officers were not well received by their own community when they began to patrol. The refugees, who harbored bad feelings about law enforcement because of their experiences in their native country, felt that the officers had "turned on them," according to Davidson. The officers had to exert extra effort to regain the trust of their community, which now accepts them as law enforcement professionals. Funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement helped build bridges that improved this relationship.

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CHAPTER 5

Conclusions & Suggestions

It is vitally important that the city hire [members of newcomer groups] as part of the police department to break down societal barriers that occur when newcomers settle in the community.

**Richard Johnson, City Manager
Lowell, Massachusetts**

Experience has demonstrated that the successful recruitment, employment, and retention of ethnic minority officers by police departments requires a collective and concerted effort from a variety of community individuals and institutions.

Members of law enforcement who can beneficially or adversely affect hiring include the police chief or sheriff and other law enforcement executives; police academy and field training staff; and individual patrol officers who work with newly hired ethnic minority officers. Other municipal leaders who may influence agency hiring policies, such as mayors or city managers, can also encourage or sidetrack agency efforts to broaden ethnic representation. The rigidity of some hiring systems can impede an agency's efforts to reach the goal of improved service delivery

through a more diverse workforce. Finally, labor groups that are organized to protect the rights of all members can affect an agency's ability to hire and promote ethnic minorities.

Members of the newcomer community can also assist or hinder the opportunity for their representation in law enforcement. Newcomers who are considering a professional law enforcement career can feel negative pressure from parents and other family members, spouses, religious leaders, or elders with recognized traditional authority.

In addition, potential law enforcement recruits from newly settled groups can be seriously affected by self-doubt and pressure as they assess their own proficiency in language, comfort with U.S. law and customs, and

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competing opportunities in other professions. The potential for failure can be a strong disincentive to the pursuit of a rigorous testing and training program — a disincentive that may be overcome only with the assistance of a mentor, counseling, or other guidance.

This document reflects the experiences and testimony of a wide variety of experts. Though some issues surrounding ethnic minority hiring may have been inadvertently overlooked, it is clear that law enforcement agencies that are ready to recruit, hire, and retain officers from newcomer groups must take several steps:

- Begin the process of building trust with members of the newcomer community. This process may take substantial time and effort, and it may suffer setbacks. Persistence and a sense of commitment to agency goals are keys to success.
- Develop and implement a creative and aggressive recruitment program.
- Identify and resolve challenging issues in the selection process.

- Be sensitive to the feelings of all newcomer and U.S.-born agency employees.

- Review the academy, training, and new officer probation processes to ensure that they meet the needs of agency goals to serve and protect all law-abiding community residents.

- Be aware that success in the protected environment of the academy does not necessarily mean success in the "real world" of field training and probation. Special assistance might be required to offset problems with cultural misunderstandings and anxiety. Communication and writing skills may need constant practice and reinforcement.

Ethnic minority families may pose barriers to developing law enforcement/community trust, but specific steps can be taken to address them:

- Agencies can educate the newcomer community about U.S. law enforcement operations and other aspects of the criminal justice system.

- Officers and community members can lay a foundation of trust through daily contact and other formal and informal interaction.

- Leaders from newcomer groups can work closely with families and law enforcement to bridge cultural gaps and develop mutually beneficial relationships.

- Ethnic minority officers can encourage newcomer families to attend citizen police academies where the officers can answer specific questions and allay concerns.

The ethnic minority recruit himself or herself must also take several steps toward a more successful experience in joining a local law enforcement agency:

- Concentrate training and practice in oral and written English proficiency.

- Observe and assume the demeanor and professionalism of veteran law enforcement officers, both newcomers and U.S.-born, who are successful at performing their jobs in the community.

- Learn about American cultural traditions and teach fellow officers about the native traditions of his/her culture.

- Persist in career goals despite pressures, disappointments, and frustrations, recognizing that success takes time.

By recruiting, hiring, and retaining ethnic minority sworn officers, the law enforcement agency better equips itself to deliver high quality peacekeeping services to all members of the community.

Hiring ethnic minority officers helps law enforcement lengthen its stride to meet the needs of the entire community.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

Agencies and Organizations

Office of Refugee Resettlement Administration for Children and Families U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW
6th Floor
Washington, DC 20447
202-401-9246

Primary Federal agency responsible for refugee assistance in the U.S. It has funded demonstration programs to improve relationships between refugees and the law enforcement community.

**Bureau of Justice Assistance
Office of Justice Programs
U.S. Department of Justice**
633 Indiana Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20531
202-514-6278

BJA oversees and administers grants programs and other ongoing initiatives to strengthen criminal justice at the state and local levels. It provides technical assistance, reports on programs, and helps law enforcement agencies and others work to make communities safer. For general information and materials, call the BJA Clearinghouse at 800-688-4252.

National Crime Prevention Council
1700 K St., NW 2nd Floor
Washington, DC 20006-3817
202-466-6272, ext. 140

A private non-profit organization whose principal mission is to enable people to communities. NCPC publishes books,

brochures, program kits, and other reproducible materials; operates demonstration programs; provides training on a wide range of topics; and offers technical assistance and referral services.

International Association of Chiefs of Police
515 N. Washington St.
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2357
800-843-4227

International membership organization of law enforcement executives that develops policy, offers advocacy and training, and publishes information on the full range of policing issues. Can provide law enforcement documents and legal literature for translation.

Community Relations Service
U.S. Department of Justice
5550 Friendship Blvd.
Suite 330
Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815
301-492-5929

A division of the U.S. Justice Department that provides dispute mediation to communities experiencing racial or cultural strife. A sponsor of the Southeast Asian POST program in California.

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ENDNOTES

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² Taft, Policing the New Immigrant Ghettos, P. 12, in *Crime and the New Immigrants*, ed. by Harold M. Launer and Joseph E. Palenski.

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⁷ Sparrow, 1988.

⁸ Understanding Community Policing, A Framework for Action, p. 22.

⁹ The Washington Post, July 24, 1995, pp. D1 and D6.

¹⁰ Taft, 1989.

¹¹ Ima, 1993.

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¹⁴ Song, 1992., p. 705.

¹⁵ Agreement signed by the Portland Police Bureau and the Hmong American Unity of Oregon.

¹⁶ National Crime Prevention Council, *Building and Crossing Bridges, Refugees and Law Enforcement Working Together*, p. 14.

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¹⁸ Geller, ed., p. 272.

¹⁹ Geller, ed., p. 275.

²⁰ Walker.

²¹ Geller, ed., p. 275.

²² Geller, ed., p. 275.

²³ Martin and Levine, 1991, p. 37.

²⁴ Geller, ed., p. 276.

²⁵ Gaines, et al., p. 138.

²⁶ Gaines, et al., p. 142.

²⁷ Winters, p. 22.

²⁸ Winters, p. 25.

²⁹ Winters, p. 29.

³⁰ Gaines, et al., p. 145.

³¹ Ford Foundation, p. 20.

³² The curriculum Pilot Presentation Team in 1993 included: Don "D.K." Abbott (ret. San Diego Police Department); Suzanne Foucault (Executive Director, San Diego Regional Training Center); Thien Cao (Garden Grove Police Department); Gaylord Gee (California Highway Patrol and former president, Northern California Peace Officers Association); Bruce Hartman (Fresno Police Department); Robert Sayaphupha (Oakland Police Department); Chief Robert Shadley (Willows Police Department); and Dave Spisak (California Peace Officer Standards and Training).

³³ *The Washington Post*, July 24, 1995, p. D1 and D6.

³⁴ Benson, 1992, p.167.

³⁵ Lowell, Massachusetts, Police Department Grant Application, 1993, p. 6.