Law enforcement organizational culture: A comprehensive study of sworn vs. non-sworn personnel in relation to attrition caused by non-sworn personnel career ceilings

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LAW ENFORCEMENT ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF SWORN VS. NON-SWORN PERSONNEL IN RELATION TO ATTRITION CAUSED BY NON-SWORN PERSONNEL CAREER CEILINGS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Public Administration

by
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December 1999
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ABSTRACT

Law enforcement agencies possess a unique organizational culture. The adversarial relationship that exists between sworn and non-sworn personnel can be attributed to police culture, which has a direct causal link to high non-sworn attrition. This research investigates the ratio of attrition between sworn and non-sworn personnel in two southland sheriff’s departments, the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department and the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department. It examines the existence of viable career ladders within law enforcement organizations for sworn and non-sworn personnel and searches for a direct causal link between high non-sworn attrition and open or closed career ladders.

The data collection methodology used in the study consisted of a review of relevant literature (including law enforcement publications), some statistical data supplied on the Internet, personal communications with law enforcement management from the two surveyed counties (including feedback on an opinion-based survey), and a mailed statistical-based survey completed by the two surveyed counties.

The statistical-based survey data gathered from the two counties supported the three hypotheses of this
investigation and maintains that attrition among non-sworn personnel far exceeds that of sworn personnel. Further, the literature research and opinion-based survey information further collaborated the investigation's findings that there is a direct causal link between the existence of viable career ladders and high non-sworn attrition within law enforcement organizations.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Several individuals deserve special mention in appreciation for their assistance and cooperation in assisting with this graduate research paper: Chief Deputy Sheriff William Reynolds who allowed me to interview him regarding attrition related to the Riverside County Sheriff's Department; Lieutenant John Pingel who ensured the completion of the mailed statistical-based attrition survey for the Riverside County Sheriff's Department; Lieutenant Paul Capitelli who allowed me to interview him regarding attrition related to the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department; and Sergeant William Lenew who ensured the completion of the mailed statistical-based attrition survey for the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department. This investigation would not have been successful without their cooperation and assistance. Also, special thanks to David Bellis, Ph.D., my primary reader and Brian Watts, Ph.D., J.D., my secondary reader for all their sound advice and assistance on this project.
To Dad, Mom, Al and Veronica

In dedication to each generation's educational progression.
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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Law enforcement agencies possess a unique organizational culture. One problem discussed in theory as a result of the law enforcement organizational culture is a high attrition ratio. It is hypothesized in this graduate research project that attrition is higher in police organizations than in other public organizations because of the adversarial relationship that exists between sworn and non-sworn personnel. Part of this adversarial relationship is attributable to the police culture. For example, sworn employees dress in a common uniform, carry a weapon, carry out a common task, use a common language/jargon and due to the nature of their work usually associate with one another socially. In contrast, non-sworn law enforcement employees generally dress in civilian clothing, carry out different duties compared with sworn officers and are not always recognized as vital to the organization by sworn personnel. Also, greater career opportunities exist for sworn than for non-sworn personnel. This is especially the case regarding executive management positions, which are almost totally occupied by police officers. This adversarial relationship between sworn personnel and non-sworn personnel causes a civilian career ceiling which is virtually impenetrable, leading to demoralization and attrition.
Key Concepts

The key concepts of this graduate research project are organizational culture/police culture, attrition vs. turnover, sworn personnel, non-sworn personnel and career ladders. The definitions for these concepts are as follows:

1. **Organizational culture/police culture** - Lee Bolman and Terrance Deal offer Shein’s definition for organizational culture in their work, "...a pattern of basic assumptions—invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and integration—that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore has to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to their problems." 1

According to Osborne and Plastrik, "An organization’s culture is a set of behavioral, emotional and psychological frameworks that are deeply internalized and shared by the organization’s members. It has a tangible, physical dimension: people’s habits and routines; their rituals, customs, and conventions; even the stories they tell. It also has an intangible, hidden dimension: people’s beliefs, assumptions, ideas, hopes, and dreams. Every aspect of an organization—its structure, its job descriptions, its standard operating procedures, its language, its polices, even its technologies—contributes to its culture." 2

According to Reiner (1992, P. 111-129), "Features


of police culture are said to include: a sense of mission about police work, an orientation towards action, a cynical or pessimistic perspective regarding the social environment, attitude of constant suspicion, an isolated social life coupled with a strong code of solidarity with other police officers, political conservatism, racial prejudice, sexism, and a clear categorization of the public between the rough and the respectable.”

2. Attrition vs. turnover - Attrition is defined as those positions vacated by employees in an organization during a given period of time due to voluntary resignation, demotion or retirement. According to Cyntthia Berryman-Fink, “Turnover can be defined as the total number of separations of employees from an organization during a given time period. Separations are both voluntary (resignations or retirements) and involuntary (terminations).” For purposes of this study, turnover would also consist of positions vacated due to an employee being released during the probationary period.

3. Sworn Personnel - Those positions within a law enforcement agency who are responsible for such operations as patrol, traffic control, criminal investigations and the supervision of personnel carrying out the above-mentioned duties. Sworn personnel are authorized to carry a weapon in the performance of their duties.

4. Non-sworn Personnel - Those positions within a law enforcement agency who are responsible for providing support to law enforcement sworn personnel. These civilian positions are usually assigned to administrative tasks involving budgeting, contracts, accounting and finance, clerical, planning and research. They are also

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responsible for dispatch and communications, corrections and records. These positions are not responsible for the daily operation carried out by sworn personnel.

5. **Career Ladders** - The ability to promote and move upward within an organization in power, authority, control, and remuneration. The ability of personnel to grow professionally and take on increasing responsibilities within an organization.

6. **Career Ceiling** - The inability to promote and move upward within an organization in power, authority, control, and remuneration due to organizational influences and limitations. The lack ability of personnel to grow professionally and take on increasing responsibilities within an organization.

**Purpose of Research**

The purpose of this investigation is to study the problem of attrition in law enforcement organizations and discover the causal relationship of organizational culture to this phenomenon. The concept of attrition will be defined and compared to the concept of employee turnover. The research examines the existence of career ladders within law enforcement agencies for non-sworn personnel. It is hypothesized that there is a direct causal link between the nonexistence of viable career ladders and attrition rates of non-sworn employees. The graduate research project will study and test the following three hypotheses related to attrition in the law enforcement organizational culture:

H1. Police culture promotes the belief that sworn officers should occupy the majority of management
positions within law enforcement organizations.

H2. Sworn officers do occupy the majority of influential management positions within law enforcement organizations which discourages non sworn personnel from investing time and effort in a long-term career commitment.

H3. The lack of viable career ladders for non-sworn law enforcement employees causes high attrition rates for non-sworn personnel compared with attrition rates of sworn officers.

The information obtained from the research conducted will be used to develop realistic recommendations regarding the issue of high non-sworn attrition in law enforcement organizations.

**Goals of Research**

The goals of the research include testing the above-mentioned hypotheses to prove or disprove their validity. If the hypotheses are proved, it is the intention of this graduate research project to acknowledge the problem's existence, create a benchmark study, and present realistic solutions to correct or at least diminish the problem. Finally, it is the goal of this project to highlight the importance of more viable career ladders within law enforcement agencies for non-sworn personnel. The results will illustrate that non-sworn personnel have a vested interest in the organization and should be provided opportunities for professional growth and involvement (especially at the executive management level).
Units of Analysis

The research will examine the ratio of attrition for non-sworn personnel by focusing on two local southland sheriffs' departments. Only two agencies were solicited for information pertaining to this graduate research project because of limited resources which include time, money and the dependability and nature of the organization's personnel gathering the requested statistical data. The two local southland sheriffs' departments utilized for statistical data were the Riverside County Sheriff's Department and San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department. The research reviews literature pertaining to organizational culture/police culture and attrition. Personal interviews also were conducted with local southland sheriffs' executive management to gather their perspective on the issue. Finally, a mailed survey was conducted to gather information from the two local southland sheriffs' agencies regarding numerical attrition ratios. The findings of the survey are presented and analyzed.

Limitations of Research

During the course of this investigation, several limitations were experienced, which included time constraints, financial resources, nature of organizations supplying data, and a lack of similar previous research
studies. All of these limitations had a bearing on the investigation in one way or another.

Due to the nature of this investigation and the time period in which to conduct the research project, the investigation was limited to two local southland sheriffs' departments. This afforded the necessary time to conduct personal interviews with management representing the Riverside County Sheriff's Department and the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, as well as obtaining the necessary statistical-based mailed survey data.

Since financial resources were limited in connection with this investigation, all research was conducted locally by means of a literature review at the libraries of California State University, San Bernardino, and the University of California at Riverside. In addition, personal interviews and mailed surveys were conducted with the Riverside Sheriff's Department and the San Bernardino Sheriff's Department.

Due to the nature of the organizations supplying the necessary statistical-based data, it was necessary to develop the research survey in a straightforward and information specific format. The statistical data were supplied by the personnel divisions within both Sheriff's Departments. Due to a lack of staff support within law
enforcement organizations, it is very difficult and time consuming for such organizations to direct their resources into conducting and compiling statistical research data. The personnel division within a law enforcement organization is usually over burdened and under-staffed and its main priority is to keep up with the constant hiring needs of the organization.

The literature review process for this investigation was limited by the lack of previous related studies. As a matter of fact, I found that with all of the research conducted relating to law enforcement, not one study examined the issue of sworn and non-sworn attrition in relation to non-sworn career ceilings. Therefore, this investigation can be noted for bench marking the issue and creating the opportunity for future studies related to this problem.
CHAPTER TWO: Significance of the Attrition Problem

Effects on the Organization

Overall, attrition of non-sworn personnel due to closed promotional opportunities has several negative effects on law enforcement agencies that are not present in civilian government bureaucracies. These negative effects include increased costs for personnel recruitment and selection, increased training costs, low agency morale, and loss of valuable non-sworn personnel.

First, there is the lengthy process involved with non-sworn personnel selection for law enforcement organizations. It is a time consuming and costly procedure to hire non-sworn personnel in law enforcement agencies, compared with recruiting and hiring personnel in other public agencies (e.g., the road department or the health department), who only realize those costs attributed to general recruitment costs and physical health examinations. In law enforcement agencies, the recruitment and selection process involves general recruitment costs from the personnel department, in addition to costs attributed to testing (e.g., polygraph testing), background investigations and physical examinations.

Background investigations are necessary for law enforcement agencies in order to screen possible personnel
candidates for a criminal background, nonethical past actions, or other indications of poor judgement that are considered unacceptable traits in law enforcement. I conducted a cost analysis for the Riverside County Sheriff's Department and determined that it costs Riverside County a total of $1,121 per employee to conduct a background investigation of non-sworn personnel candidates being considered for employment. Direct costs associated with background investigations for Riverside County include investigator’s salary and budgeted benefits. Extrapolating from this figure, just background investigations for the department’s 1,197 civilian personnel costs $1,341,837. It is important to note that not all candidates successfully complete their background investigation. This money is basically wasted since the candidate is no longer considered for employment and the police agency must start the process all over again with a new candidate. The additional testing and background investigation required by law enforcement agencies, as compared to other public agencies causes the non-sworn personnel recruitment and selection process to take up to as much as five months to complete.

In addition, there are higher training costs associated with hiring new police agency non-sworn employees, than civilian agency employees. New employees must be properly
trained to be able to carry out their job duties competently. This is problematic when agencies face high attrition, because they are constantly spending additional funds on training new employees and working below non-sworn staffing levels, since they cannot keep positions filled for any duration of time.

High attrition also has a negative effect on agency morale. The recruitment and selection process described above is a time-consuming process. With high attrition, law enforcement agencies are always working below non-sworn staffing levels. This creates for the non-sworn line staff a sense of lack of support from management. Supervision is constantly placed in the position of demanding more from the non-sworn line staff and pushing that staff to the limits. As a result, non-sworn line staff are constantly overworked (due to the necessity of increased overtime) and incidents of sick time abuse increases. This last effect increases the overall problem. It is a vicious cycle, which ultimately leads to the loss of valuable non-sworn personnel. These are employees who might have stayed with the law enforcement agency had the working environment been better or the opportunities for advancement within the organization been available or conducive to professional development.
Since management is constantly focusing on operating efficiently at below acceptable non-sworn staffing levels (e.g., especially in the dispatch, accounting, information technology and correctional functions), there is a lack of opportunity for non-sworn staff development. For example, the majority of management positions in law enforcement agencies are held by sworn personnel. Of those sworn management positions, roughly 35% comprise executive management level positions (executive management positions include chief deputy sheriffs, assistant sheriffs, under sheriffs, executive officers and elected sheriffs). This sends a clear message to the non-sworn personnel that they are not considered to have a vested interest in the organization.

The lack of opportunities for advancement within the organization causes a career ceiling that is impenetrable by non-sworn personnel. This institutional career ceiling perpetuates attrition. Very few talented valuable employees are willing to sacrifice their career to work in an organization that does not or is unwilling to reward or recognize their efforts professionally. If there is no opportunity for professional growth, many valuable non-sworn employees will leave the law enforcement agency to go to a civilian-based organization where the promotional grass is
greener. Also, since non-sworn personnel are perceived to be honest, hard working and competent employees by other public agencies, it is easy for a non-sworn employee (e.g., accountant, office assistant, staff analyst, etc.) to arrange a lateral transfer to another public agency.

**Effects on Community Served**

Attrition also has negative effects on communities served. For example, attrition affects the quality of service provided and increases the expenditure of tax dollars for law enforcement services. Attrition is not just an internal but also an external organizational dilemma.

The quality of service is affected because the loss of trained non-sworn personnel attributed to attrition leads to unseasoned non-sworn employees serving the community. For example, a new dispatcher is assigned to the dispatch unit who may be unfamiliar with the many different situations faced during an emergency call. Even though dispatchers undergo intensive training, they may not be appropriately prepared for the reality of the job. This does not adequately serve the community's needs. It is especially detrimental if the dispatcher makes a wrong decision or does not respond adequately to an emergency call.

Also, if the dispatch unit is understaffed, the community is not being adequately served. It is the
dispatch unit that is responsible for taking emergency calls and dispatching law enforcement units to the scene of trouble. If there are not enough dispatchers to handle the incoming telephone calls, law enforcement units will not be dispatched to the scene in a timely manner, which could lead to serious consequences depending on the nature of the emergency call.

The expenditure of tax dollars increases due to attrition. This is because as law enforcement organizations lose non-sworn employees and hire new employees to fill those vacancies more tax dollars are being spent to recruit, hire and train new non-sworn personnel. This is a public policy issue because those tax dollars could have been used to further community oriented programs, provide additional support to law enforcement personnel, improve the quality of equipment used to accomplish the organization's mission or improve some other aspect of police operations. Tax dollars expended as a result of attrition is wasted tax money. This fact in itself is reason enough to recognize the necessity of correcting the problem of high non-sworn attrition.

Effects on Individual Employees

Finally, it is necessary to demonstrate how attrition negatively affects individual employees in law enforcement agencies. The negative effects are felt by sworn and non-
sworn law enforcement employees alike. Individual non-sworn employees who experience lack of promotional opportunities, career ceilings, and turnover within law enforcement organizations tend to promote attrition within those organizations. The lack of promotional opportunities in law enforcement agencies is the causal factor that leads to career ceilings.

Turnover within law enforcement organizations also leads to attrition. For example, when there is a large ratio of turnover in an organization, it causes a sense of uneasiness and instability in the organization. This is evident as attrition ratios rise. I found that during the period covering FY 1994/95 through 1998/99, the non-sworn personnel attrition rate for the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department increased by an average of 8% annually. The need for stability in the workplace will cause other employees to voluntarily seek employment elsewhere. What should be noted is that this exodus from the organization is not necessarily a conscious one, but can be completely the opposite. This fact is clarified when comparing the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department’s attrition ratio of non-sworn personnel with that of the sworn personnel. As mentioned above, over a period of time, the non-sworn personnel ratio steadily increased by an average of 8%
annually. During the same period of time, the sworn personnel's attrition ratio decreased by an average of (-8%) annually. The fact that turnover is notably higher and consistent among non-sworn personnel is demonstrated by the steadily increasing attrition ratio, compared with the sworn personnel turnover which occurs in a lesser amount and is demonstrated through a steadily decreasing attrition ratio. This exodus can be likened to a self-defensive mechanism for self-preservation. Suddenly, the workplace environment becomes uncomfortable and employees find themselves looking elsewhere for employment.

All of these factors make non-sworn attrition in law enforcement agencies a serious problem. It is obvious that all of these factors are interrelated and have direct causal links to attrition.
CHAPTER THREE: Law Enforcement Culture and Its Relationship to the Attrition Problem

The Three Distinct Law Enforcement Cultures

In order to understand law enforcement culture, it is necessary to understand the role of the police. Carl B. Klockars provides a norm-derivative definition of "police": "Police are institutions or individuals given the general right to use coercive force by the state within the state's domestic territory." According to Klockars, the police exist to handle all problems or situations which may require the use of coercive force. Peter K. Manning states,

They [the police] are both the society as its representative and outside it as enforcers, or reactors against the delicts of others. They are of the society as citizens, but outside it as adversaries of those who commit wrong. They stand not only in an anomalous position within the society but with regard to the line drawn between conceptions of society and nonsociety, chaos, threat, or anarchy. The police view their position as marking the boundaries of the social order, standing between the higher and lower, the sacred and the profane, the clean and the dirty.

Only by having a clear understanding of the police role, can one begin to understand the three distinct cultures that exist within law enforcement. Through an understanding of

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the police role, the problem of high attrition among non-sworn employees is understood.

Beginning in 1976, Reuss-Ianni and Ianni conducted a two-year study of the social organization of the police precinct in New York City. Reuss-Ianni explains that findings from that study suggest that two separate cultures exist in law enforcement, a "cop culture" and a "management culture." Reuss-Ianni states,

What we learned through the two-year study, after hundreds of hours working, observing, and interviewing officers in two precincts, is that the organization of policing is best described and understood in terms of the interactions of two distinct cultures: a street cop culture and a management cop culture. These two cultures are increasingly characterized by competing and often conflicting perspectives on procedure and practice in policing.7

Reuss-Ianni attributes the existence of the two cultures within law enforcement to economic factors, political climate and the civil rights movement. These three factors created the need for a new headquarters management cop culture, which is maintained separately from the street cop culture. According to Reuss-Ianni,

This new management cop culture, say the cops, is positively oriented towards public administration and looks to scientific management and its associated technologies for guidance on how to run

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the department. Despite their new training and orientation, however, they must continue to justify their positions within the department not by their new expertise or specialization, but because at one time they were also street cops. Regulations require that they continue to display the two most important symbols of the old culture, the shield (i.e., the badge) and the gun. Unlike other bureaucratic systems, in which the upper echelon of the hierarchy is recruited from different socioeconomic and educational levels than the lower ranks, managers at all levels in the NYPD come from the same socioeconomic and work experience groups as the "workers" or cops.8

This is a trend which has continued and spread to many police organizations throughout the United States.

I would go a step further than Reuss-Ianni and suggest that there are not just two distinct cultures within law enforcement, but three. The third culture is the non-sworn culture. It encompasses all non-sworn personnel. Now that three cultures have been identified within law enforcement, it is important to consider the characteristics of each culture and to develop the non-sworn culture in more depth. These characteristics help to define how both the front line officers, law enforcement managers and civilian staff are viewed by society and each other. Further, the non-sworn attrition problem will emerge in clearer view.

Sworn Line Staff Police Culture

As mentioned earlier, the sworn officers dress in a

8Reuss-Ianni, 2-3.
common uniform, carry a weapon, carry out a common task, use a common language/jargon and socialize with one another socially. The very nature of their work creates a bond that is difficult to breach. Manning relates, "The police are symbolized externally as a paramilitary bureaucracy, but lack of internal control, of close supervision of lower participants, and their freedom of action make it more a symbol than a reality."\(^9\) Manning also states,

> Personnel are transferred within the organization without prior training for positions and are expected quickly to assimilate new skills on an apprenticeship basis. Movements between extensively specialized units, such as narcotics, detective division, and traffic, are done with reference to exam proficiency, political clout, or potential more than on the basis of training, skills possessed, or previous experience.\(^10\)

It is because of the strong bond that exists between fellow sworn officers, that many sworn staff have created strong labor bargaining units to represent themselves during meet and confer labor negotiations and disciplinary hearings. Reuss-Ianni relates that many sworn staff have an "us against them" mentality with regard to sworn management. Sworn management is not considered to be part of the troops at all, because sworn management is viewed as only being concerned with their career and not the well-being of the

\(^9\)Manning, 109.

\(^10\)Manning, 109.
sworn line staff. Sworn line staff does not consider civilian staff to be part of the troops, because civilian staff does not fight the good fight or place their lives on the line in order to carry out the mission and goals of the organization. This issue is at the root of the antagonistic relationship between sworn and non-sworn personnel. The non-sworn employee is looking to sworn management for validation and acceptance. The validation and acceptance is not forthcoming, because of a lack of respect with which sworn management regards non-sworn staff.

**Police Management Culture**

As noted earlier, police management culture associates itself with sworn line staff by carrying a badge and a weapon. Also, the fact that many police managers have risen through the ranks indicates that they speak and understand the same language/jargon, follow the paramilitaristic rank system and understand the needs of sworn line staff. This is where the similarities between the two cultures end. Although police managers often wear the common law enforcement uniform during funerals and other ceremonial gatherings, they do not wear the uniform on a daily basis. Instead, they dress in civilian professional attire while conducting daily business.

According to Manning, "Minimal lateral entry is
permitted; virtually all administrative-supervisory command personnel have risen through the ranks in the same organizations they command."\textsuperscript{11} For this reason, law enforcement management tends to band together and associate socially with one another. This perpetuates the career ceiling faced by non-sworn personnel. Sworn management often looks to sworn line staff for future organizational leaders, because sworn management can identify and relate to sworn line staff through shared past experiences. Sworn management does not identify or relate with non-sworn staff, because of the lack of shared experiences and the differences in their various duty assignments. Manning also states, "Police forces as organizations are isolated from other organizations, minimally interact with organizations outside the criminal justice system, and isolate themselves by choice."\textsuperscript{12} This is one reason why law enforcement management is not open to change or innovation. The isolationism practiced by law enforcement management could be seen as detrimental to the organization. Law enforcement management does not realize that by interacting with other government organizations, they create opportunities for organizational improvement. The lack of flexibility and

\textsuperscript{11}Manning, 109.

\textsuperscript{12}Manning, 112.
isolationism practiced by law enforcement management supports and maintains the career ceiling experienced by non-sworn staff. This is evident in the higher attrition ratios experienced by non-sworn personnel compared with sworn personnel. John Bizzack relates that in 1967, the Johnson Administration made the following observation regarding the administration of law enforcement agencies,

Many police agencies are resistant to change. Police organizations frequently fail to determine shortcomings of existing practices through research and analysis. They are reluctant to experiment with alternative methods of solving problems. The police service must encourage, indeed put forth a premium, on innovation, research and analysis, self-criticism, experimentation and business management. 

Bizzack further relates that even as late as 1989, law enforcement agencies had not followed the recommendations set forth by the Johnson Administration. According to Michael D. Breen, Manager or the Community Policing, IACP in Alexandria Virginia,

To the extent that we are still affected by inflexible command-and-control hierarchies—even those with community policing window dressing—we are failing our officers and citizens. By definition, to lead is to anticipate and manage change; it is not to react. We must recognize the current gulf between the commitment to ongoing improvement through a culture of leadership and the predominant management style of the past.

Unlike their predecessors, today’s police executives must assume circumstance-specific multidimensional leadership roles, and empower and motivate subordinates who are much more qualified than their predecessors. This challenge is complicated by collapsing organizational hierarchies, matrix organization implementation, heavier caseloads, a broadening mission, shrinking resources, rapidly evolving administrative and managerial technologies, changing citizen and employee demographics and increasing reliance upon interagency response to multi agency issues.¹⁴

Sworn management should consider abandoning the predominant management style of the past and study other government organizations to learn new and better ways to manage. If sworn management continues to insist on operating in the current fashion, high attrition ratios among non-sworn personnel will continue to be a problem for law enforcement organizations. The current management style employed by sworn management does not motivate non-sworn personnel or encourage dedication to the organization. According to Sergeant Wade Engelson, SWAT Team Leader of the Violent Crime Suppression Unit for the Fresno Police Department in California,

A new kind of leadership is needed to manage organizations because of the need to attain organizational goals in a rapidly changing environment. Successful leadership requires complicated decisions and follow-through by skilled executives capable of cultivating

organizations to see themselves as part of a larger system, rather than as independent entities.  

Clearly, the time has arrived for law enforcement management culture to realize a drastic change in how its non-sworn members are perceived by both sworn management and sworn line staff.

Given the fact that mass organizational change is unlikely due to the nature of police culture, the more progressive sworn manager might consider acknowledging the contributions made to the organization by non-sworn personnel. Sworn management might consider becoming open to change by accepting the fact that sworn personnel cannot efficiently and effectively maintain all aspects of a diversified operation (e.g., technology needs, records management, administrative needs, etc.).

Non-sworn Culture

The non-sworn culture of law enforcement comprises civilian staff who are unwelcome to the law enforcement arena, but whose existence is mandated by necessity. Who else fixes the computers, does the intricate budget analyses, and maintains the records? Non-sworn personnel are mandated by necessity, because past budget shortfalls

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created the necessity to hire non-sworn staff, such as community service officers, sheriff’s service officers, office assistants, dispatchers, crime analysts, and correctional deputies, who perform such tasks as, custodial duties associated with the jails, dispatching, records and warrants processing, clerical, fiscal, crime analysis, etc. Law enforcement organizations realized a significant cost savings from hiring non-sworn personnel to handle those mundane tasks, thus freeing up existing sworn staff to provide better patrol and traffic services to the communities served.

It should be noted that civilian staff speak a similar, but not the same language/jargon as sworn line staff and sworn management. They do not wear a common uniform, but instead, dress in civilian clothing. They do not carry a weapon and they carry out different tasks as compared with sworn staff. Also, they do not receive the same degree of training or pay as provided sworn personnel. Their basic function is to act as support to sworn staff and as such, they are deemed and treated as second class citizens. This perception and attitude is shared by both sworn management and non-sworn line staff and is a causal factor in high non-sworn personnel attrition levels.

As technology and other factors continue to mandate
change in law enforcement organizations, non-sworn staff are noting growth in the importance of their roles within police organizations. The problem that exists is getting sworn management and sworn line staff to acknowledge non-sworn personnel's contributions to the organization. According to Bizzack, "Regardless of history, a practitioner must understand that, as a whole police service is still relatively undimensional [sic] when compared to other dynamic influences on society such as business and education."¹⁶ This lack of notice and appreciation leads to high non-sworn attrition levels within law enforcement organizations compared with sworn personnel. Higher numbers of non-sworn personnel leave law enforcement organizations for civilian-based organizations compared with sworn personnel, because their contribution to the organization is valued more and appreciated in civilian-based organizations. The fact that law enforcement organizations are so slow to change is problematic for the issue of attrition.

**Bridging the Gap**

Clearly there is a gap that exists between sworn management, sworn line staff, and non-sworn staff. This gap is perpetuated by the fact that non-sworn staff are looked upon as second class citizens by sworn management and sworn

¹⁶Bizzack, 4.
line staff.

Once again, the progressive sworn manager might consider recognizing and appreciating the contributions made to the organization by non-sworn staff. By acknowledging non-sworn staff's strengths and relying on their expertise to improve the operation of the organization, sworn management could take the first step toward undoing the negative perception with which non-sworn staff is viewed. To change this perception would constitute a cultural wave of change that would have to break across the board. It would need to be initiated at the top of the organization and flow down through the sworn line staff. It would change completely how the organization views itself. This is not a change that can be implemented at the bottom of the organization and work its way up because of the very nature of law enforcement culture. As Reuss-Ianni concludes,

Here again the maxim advises that the officer not be a "troublemaker" in the bosses' eyes but it also says "Don't mess with the system." Being a troublemaker means that supervisors pay more attention to you, and consequently you bring unnecessary attention to what your peers might be doing as well. Asking too many questions about procedures or making too many suggestions about how the system might be improved also brings too much attention from the bosses.\(^{17}\)

Sworn line staff would be recognized as "troublemakers" by

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\(^{17}\)Reuss-Ianni, 15.
sworn management if they suggested such a cultural change. The suggested change would never be accepted or successfully implemented. In order for this cultural change to be implemented successfully, sworn management might consider adopting a more progressive stance and developing the change top down. Sworn management might consider making a noticeable and visible effort in acknowledging and appreciating non-sworn staff's contributions to the organization. This can only be accomplished by allowing non-sworn staff to play more of a stakeholder role in the organization. However, at the present time, this does not appear to be a possibility, since the perception is that non-sworn staff are not major contributors or viable stakeholders in the law enforcement organization.
CHAPTER FOUR: Sworn and Non-sworn Attrition In the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department

Background

The Riverside County Sheriff’s Department, founded in 1893, has grown dramatically in size and population served over the past 105 years. Since its inception, the organization has developed into a multi-level and multi-functional operation. In 1990, the Sheriff’s Department merged with the Marshall’s Office and the Sheriff assumed responsibility for court services and security. In 1999, the Sheriff’s Department merged with the Coroner and Public Administrator’s Office and assumed responsibility for all coroner and public administrator functions.

The Sheriff’s Department currently serves a population of more than 1,786,500. Riverside County is ranked seventh in population among California’s counties. The Riverside County Sheriff’s Department is the fourth largest sheriff’s department in California. During a personal interview on September 14, 1999, Peggy Behrens, Sheriff’s Personnel Clerk, related that the Sheriff’s executive staff is responsible for overseeing a staff of more than 2,304 (1,107 sworn and 1,197 non-sworn employees combined). The

\[\text{Source: San Bernardino County Department of Economic and Community Development, (http://www.co.san-bernardino.ca.us/sbco/demog.htm, 1999).}\]
executive staff comprises the Sheriff, two (2) Assistant Sheriffs, six (6) Chief Deputy Sheriffs and one (1) Sheriff's Executive Officer. In addition to the executive management staff, the Sheriff's sworn management team includes 24 Captains and 52 Lieutenants. The Sheriff's non-sworn management team includes one (1) Sheriff's Executive Officer (the only non-sworn executive management position within the Department), six (6) Correctional Lieutenants, one (1) Records Manager, one (1) Communications Manager, one (1) Director of Finance, one (1) Chief Technology Officer, and one (1) Administrative Manager. All non-sworn management positions report to Chief Deputy Sheriffs, the first line executive management level responsible for overseeing the above functions, with the exception of the Sheriff's Executive Officer, who reports directly to the elected Sheriff Larry Smith. The current management staffing pattern equates to 85 sworn management positions and 12 non-sworn management positions department-wide. The majority of management positions held in the Sheriff's substations are filled by sworn staff. The Sheriff's current non management line staffing pattern equates to 1,022 sworn positions and 1,185 non-sworn positions department-wide.
Ratio of Attrition between Sworn and Non-sworn Personnel

On August 13, 1999, during a personal interview with Riverside County Chief Deputy Sheriff William Reynolds, I conducted an opinion-based survey regarding the issue of attrition. Reynolds said that the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department does not consider attrition among sworn law enforcement officers to be a serious problem for the Department. However, data collected from my mailed statistical-based survey indicates that sworn attrition for the Department is increasing on average by 23% annually. In addition, Reynolds does not consider police culture to be the main causal variable behind sworn attrition within the Department. Reynolds attributes sworn attrition to salary issues. Currently, sworn personnel’s salaries are not comparable to that of neighboring police agencies. Reynolds indicated that many sworn staff have left the Department to accept positions with other police organizations where the rate of pay is substantially higher.

When asked if attrition among non-sworn personnel is a serious problem for the Department, Reynolds in contrast to the San Bernardino County’s Lieutenant Paul Capitelli, strongly agreed. The data collected from my statistical-based mailed survey supports Reynolds statement and indicates that non-sworn attrition is increasing on average
by 174% annually. However, Reynolds disagrees that police culture is the main causal variable behind non-sworn attrition within the Department. Reynolds related that viable career ladders exist for sworn personnel, but not for non-sworn personnel. Reynolds attributes non-sworn attrition to the lack of existence of career opportunities, lack of training opportunities, and lack of professional development available within the Department for non-sworn personnel. Yet all of these deficiencies are in fact products of police culture, because the Department has willingly chosen to provide the above opportunities to its sworn staff rather than its non-sworn staff. Non-sworn personnel recognize this fact and view the Department's choice as promoting an impenetrable career ceiling perpetuated by police culture and supported by sworn management, as demonstrated by the Department's large margin of non-sworn attrition, compared with sworn attrition.

The research data gathered from the Riverside Sheriff's Department as a result of my statistical-based mailed survey illustrates on average a 151% spread between sworn and non-sworn attrition. For the Riverside Sheriff's Department, sworn attrition increased on average by 23% during the period covering FY 1996/97 through FY 1998/99. Unfortunately, the Department was unable to provide sworn
and non-sworn attrition data covering FY 1994/95 through FY 1995/96. During the same period of time, the Department’s non-sworn attrition increased on average by 174% annually. (See Appendix “A” for statistical-based mailed survey data and trend analysis pertaining to the Riverside Sheriff’s sworn and non-sworn attrition.)

During the above-mentioned period of time, the Department lost on average, 35 sworn and 53 non-sworn positions annually department-wide, as a result of attrition. In order to maintain its workforce, the Department hired on average 97 sworn and 145 non-sworn positions annually during the time period covering FY 1994/95 through FY 1998/99. According to Reynolds at the August 13 personal interview, the Department’s goal is to develop and maintain a sworn workforce which mirrors the population served. This will require gender and race sensitivity. Also, it is the Department’s policy to maintain a sworn staffing ratio the equivalent of one Deputy per 1,000 population served. Reynolds related that the Department’s goals for non-sworn staff include the development and implementation of a non-sworn correctional career ladder; the creation and expansion of training opportunities; and the provision of professional development opportunities. Reynolds indicated that the recent merger
with the Coroner and Public Administrator’s Office would provide the necessary opportunities needed for non-sworn professional development, because it offers the traditional stepping stone career ladder. One position leads to the next step in the promotional ladder all the way up to the management level. Unlike the Sheriff’s Service Officer position, which does not even lead into supervisory positions.

When asked what the Department was currently doing to resolve problems associated with sworn attrition, Reynolds said that the Department was working on ways to increase sworn salaries. When asked what the Department was currently doing to resolve problems associated with non-sworn attrition, Reynolds stated, “Some steps have been taken to reclassify non-sworn positions to retain personnel. For example, the Correctional Assistant classification was established as part of the correctional career ladder.”

Reynolds also related that openings within the Coroner and Public Administrator’s Office are opportunities available to non-sworn personnel in order to enhance the non-sworn career ladder. These additional career steps have the potential to open new avenues to Sheriff’s personnel and provide

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19Chief Deputy Sheriff William Reynolds, personal interview. Riverside County Sheriff’s Department, Riverside, California, 13 August 1999.
professional development opportunities within the Department that were not available previously.

Existence of Career Ladders

The lack of viable career ladders creates an impenetrable career ceiling that may be a causal factor of high attrition rates for non-sworn personnel compared with attrition rates of sworn personnel. This is evident by the number of non-sworn management positions compared with sworn management positions. As mentioned above, currently there are 85 sworn management positions within the Department and only 12 non-sworn management positions department-wide. This imbalance of management positions between sworn and non-sworn personnel is clearly recognizable. In addition, a majority of the 12 non-sworn management positions require specialized training, experience, skills and education (Director of Finance, Sheriff’s Executive Officer, Chief Technology Officer, etc.). These highly specialized management positions cannot be filled by just anyone from the non-sworn ranks. It requires individuals with highly specialized knowledge, experience and abilities. For example, the Director of Finance must be capable of managing an annual budget of over $200 million consisting of multiple funding sources, contending with complex financial dealings and is divided into sub-organizations. In contrast, sworn
personnel have a definite career ladder available which provides the ability and opportunity to promote to Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, Chief Deputy Sheriff, Assistant Sheriff and possibly to be elected Sheriff. Each step in the career ladders provides the necessary learning skills and professional development needed to prepare for the next promotional step. This professional development opportunity is not available to non-sworn personnel.

The lack of non-sworn professional and promotional development opportunities is detrimental to the Department and evident through high non-sworn attrition. There is much to be gained by pro-actively providing opportunities that enhance non-sworn professional development. According to Engleson in a recent article published in *The Police Chief*,

> In changing the focus of law enforcement organizations to proactive problem solving, managers must create shared visions and develop systems that endorse new values in reshaping traditional organizational cultures. Less emphasis is placed on individual and group concerns, while leaders focus on the overall welfare of organizations by devising reward systems that promote teamwork, organizational values and the development of new skills.²⁰

For example, a proactive sworn management team within the Riverside Sheriff’s Department might consider the benefits to be gained by developing adequate career ladders for non-

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²⁰Engelson, 65.
sworn personnel within the field/patrol division of the Department. For example a non-sworn management position in line with an office manager could be developed and utilized within the Sheriff’s substations. Such a position could be utilized to oversee the substation’s administrative and clerical functions. Currently, the Department’s highest non-sworn position assigned to the field substations is an Office Assistant III (a supervisory classification). Overall benefits include reduced non-sworn attrition; enhanced non-sworn staff support provided to sworn staff as a result of the development of operational expertise attributable to increased non-sworn tenure within the Department; and reduced training costs.

The Riverside Sheriff’s Department’s goals discussed during the personal interview with Reynolds confirms that the Department realizes the gravity of the situation concerning non-sworn attrition. The above-mentioned Departmental goals illustrates that the Department’s management team is working together to find ways to create and develop non-sworn career ladders. However, the Department is currently a long way off from solving this dilemma.

Data Analysis

The attrition-related statistical data gathered from
the statistical-based mailed survey completed by the Riverside Sheriff’s Department proves all three hypotheses outlined in this graduate research paper. The data illustrate that there is a direct causal link between the nonexistence of viable career ladders and high attrition rates of non-sworn employees. As stated earlier, the hypotheses for this project maintain:

H1. Police culture promotes the belief that sworn officers should occupy the majority of management positions within law enforcement organizations.

H2. Sworn officers do occupy the majority of influential management positions within law enforcement organizations which discourages non-sworn personnel from investing time and effort in a long-term career commitment.

H3. The lack of viable career ladders for non-sworn law enforcement employees causes high attrition rates for non-sworn personnel compared with attrition rates of sworn officers.

The first hypothesis states that police culture promotes the belief that sworn officers should occupy the majority of management positions within law enforcement organizations. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the Riverside Sheriff’s Department has 85 sworn management positions and only 12 non-sworn management positions department-wide (of the 12 non-sworn management positions only one is at the executive management level). The perception is that if you are not sworn, you can not effectively lead a police organization. This perception is
validated by the fact that the majority of management positions within the Riverside Sheriff’s Department are held by sworn personnel.

The second hypothesis states that sworn officers occupy the majority of influential management positions within law enforcement organizations, thus discouraging non-sworn personnel from investing time and effort in a long-term career commitment. There are a total of 10 executive management positions within the Department, including the non-sworn executive management position. The limited number of non-sworn executive management positions held within the Department strengthens the perception by non-sworn personnel that an almost impenetrable career ceiling exists for non-sworn personnel. This fact promotes and encourages non-sworn staff interested in progressing through the ranks up into management to not make a long-term commitment to the Department, but instead leave the organization and take a position with another agency where viable promotional opportunities exist.

The third hypothesis states that the lack of viable career ladders for non-sworn personnel causes high attrition rates amongst non-sworn staff. The statistical data support this hypothesis. There is currently on average, a 151% spread between sworn and non-sworn attrition. Sworn
attrition is increasing on average by 23% annually, while non-sworn attrition is increasing on average by 174% annually. The fact that sworn attrition occurs at a lesser percentage compared with non-sworn attrition indicates that sworn staff are more willing to make a long-term commitment to the Department compared with non-sworn personnel. This is attributable to the existence of viable career ladders for sworn personnel, which are not available to non-sworn personnel.
CHAPTER FIVE: Sworn and Non-sworn Attrition In the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department

Background

The San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department was founded in 1853. Prior to the establishment of Riverside County in 1893, the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department’s territorial jurisdiction covered a portion of what is now Riverside County. The Department has grown dramatically in size and population served over the past 146 years.

Presently, the San Bernardino Sheriff’s Department is in the midst of an organizational transition as it prepares to merge with the Marshall’s Office. This will be the first merger in the Department’s history. As a result of the merger, the Sheriff will assume the responsibility of providing court services and security.

The Sheriff’s Department currently serves a population of more than 2,099,810.²¹ During a personal interview on September 3, 1999, Sergeant William Lenew stated that the Sheriff’s Department currently oversees a staff of more than 2,270 (1,350 sworn and 920 non-sworn positions). The Sheriff’s executive staff is responsible for managing the

²¹Source: San Bernardino County Department of Economic and Community Development., (http://www.co.san-bernardino.ca.us./sbcodemog.htm, 1999).
Department’s staff as they carry out the organization’s daily operations. Currently, the executive staff comprises the Sheriff, one (1) Undersheriff, two (2) Assistant Sheriffs, and six (6) Chief Deputy Sheriffs. In addition to the executive staff, the Department’s sworn management team comprises 25 Captains and 45 Lieutenants. The Sheriff’s sworn supervisory staff includes 156 Sergeants. The Department’s non-sworn management team includes one (1) Fiscal Services Manager, two (2) Superintendents of Administrative Services, one (1) Food Services Manager, one (1) Health Services Manager, one (1) Sheriff’s Maintenance Superintendent, one (1) Departmental IS Manager (technical services), and one (1) Sheriff’s Records Manager. All non-sworn management positions report to Chief Deputy Sheriffs, the first line executive management level responsible for overseeing the above functions. The current management staffing pattern equates to 80 sworn management positions and eight (8) non-sworn management positions department-wide. The Sheriff’s current non management line staffing pattern equates to 1,270 sworn positions and 912 non-sworn positions.

**Ratio of Attrition Between Sworn and Non-sworn Personnel**

On September 3, 1999, during a personal interview with San Bernardino County’s Lieutenant Paul Capitelli, I
conducted an opinion-based survey regarding the issue of attrition. According to Captielli, the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department does not consider attrition among sworn law enforcement officers to be a serious problem for the organization. This is supported by the statistical data gathered from my mailed survey which indicates that sworn attrition for the Department is decreasing on average by eight percent (-8%) annually. In addition, Capitelli does not consider police culture to be the main causal variable behind sworn attrition. Instead, he attributes the Department’s sworn attrition to the fact that the rate of pay for San Bernardino County deputies is not comparable to other neighboring police agencies. When asked if attrition among non-sworn personnel is a serious problem for the Department, Capitelli said that he does not consider non-sworn attrition to be a serious problem, nor does he attribute police culture as the main causal variable behind non-sworn attrition. This statement is contradicted by the statistical data gathered from my mailed survey, which illustrates that non-sworn attrition is increasing on average by eight percent (8) annually. Capitelli attributes non-sworn attrition to the lack of career opportunities for non-sworn personnel within the organization. This is in fact a product of police culture, because the Department has
willingly chosen to recruit and fill the majority of management positions and all executive management positions with sworn personnel. This is recognized by non-sworn personnel as an impenetrable career ceiling perpetuated by police culture and controlled by sworn management as demonstrated by the Department's steadily increasing non-sworn attrition ratio.

The research data gathered from the San Bernardino Sheriff's Department as a result of my statistical-based mailed survey illustrates on average a 15% spread between sworn and non-sworn attrition. For the San Bernardino Sheriff's Department, sworn attrition decreased on average by eight percent (-8%) annually during the period covering FY 1994/95 through FY 1998/99. During the same time period, the department's non-sworn attrition increased on average by eight percent annually. (See Appendix "B" for statistical-based mailed survey data and trend analysis pertaining to the San Bernardino Sheriff's sworn and non-sworn attrition.)

During the above-mentioned period of time, the Department lost on average, 56 sworn and 93 non-sworn positions annually department-wide, as a result of attrition. In order to maintain its workforce, the Department hired on average, 76 sworn and 103 non-sworn positions annually department-wide. According to Capitelli,
at the September 3 personal interview, the immediate goal of the Department is to hire and train enough staff to keep up with attrition. Capitelli’s statement contradicts his opinion that neither sworn nor non-sworn attrition is a serious problem for the Department. If it is not a problem, why is there a need for the department to make an effort to keep up with attrition levels?

**Existence of Career Ladders**

One of the hypotheses of this investigation is that the lack of viable career ladders for non-sworn personnel causes high attrition rates for non-sworn personnel compared with attrition rates of sworn personnel. During the personal interview with Capielli, he indicated that there is a viable career ladder within the Department for sworn personnel that does not exist for non-sworn personnel. As mentioned above, currently there are 80 sworn management positions within the organization and only eight non-sworn management positions. There is a definite imbalance within the department between sworn management and non-sworn management positions. Also, the eight non-sworn management positions require specialized experience and skills (Fiscal Services Manager, Superintendent of Administrative Services, Food Services Manager, Health Services Manager, Sheriff’s Maintenance Superintendent, Departmental Information
Services Manager, and Sheriff's Records Manager). Not just anyone from the non-sworn ranks can perform the necessary management tasks required of these positions. In contrast sworn officers have the ability and opportunity to promote to Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, Chief Deputy Sheriff, Assistant Sheriff, Under Sheriff and possibly to be elected Sheriff. The sworn management positions can be likened to building blocks. Each position provides the necessary learning tools and opportunities to prepare for the next promotional step. This avenue of promotional progression is nonexistent among the non-sworn ranks. The lack of such career ladders within the Department appears to be a causal factor of high attrition among non-sworn personnel.

Job status and promotional opportunities within an organization are the reasons why employees commit to an organization. According to Lieutenant David Brand of the Tallahassee Police Department, "Commitment to an organization and a profession cannot simply be purchased with a paycheck. Issues such as total compensation, job status and job security will need to be addressed." Sworn personnel are able to promote to the executive management

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level within the Department to a greater degree than non-sworn personnel, who do not have that ability or opportunity. This career ceiling is demoralizing to non-sworn staff. When asked what steps were being taken by the Department to resolve problems associated with non-sworn attrition, Capitelli stated,

The Department is attempting to establish more career opportunities for non-sworn personnel. The Department is attempting to use recognition and acknowledgment of non-sworn personnel’s work as a cornerstone of practice. We are looking for what they [non-sworn personnel] are doing right. We are taking a proactive stance.\textsuperscript{23}

Capitelli’s statement illustrates that the Department realizes that high non-sworn attrition rates are due in part to the lack of career opportunities that currently exist for non-sworn personnel.

**Data Analysis**

The attrition-related statistical data gathered from the statistical-based mailed survey completed by the San Bernardino Sheriff’s Department proves all three hypotheses outlined in this graduate research paper. The data illustrate that there is a direct causal link between the nonexistence of viable career ladders and high attrition rates of non-sworn employees. Again, the hypotheses for

\textsuperscript{23}Lieutenant Paul Capitelli, personal interview. San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department, San Bernardino, California, 3 September 1999.
this project maintain:

H1. Police culture promotes the belief that sworn officers should occupy the majority of management positions within law enforcement organizations.

H2. Sworn officers do occupy the majority of influential management positions within law enforcement organizations which discourages non-sworn personnel from investing time and effort in a long-term career commitment.

H3. The lack of viable career ladders for non-sworn law enforcement employees causes high attrition rates for non-sworn personnel compared with attrition rates of sworn officers.

The first hypothesis states that police culture promotes the belief that sworn officers should occupy the majority of management positions within law enforcement organizations. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the San Bernardino Sheriff's Department has only eight non-sworn management positions and not one of those positions is at the executive management level. There are a total of 10 executive management positions within the Department and all 10 are held by sworn personnel department-wide. In addition, not one of the eight non-sworn management positions has the ability or the opportunity to lead to an executive management position within the Department.

It is police culture that maintains and dictates that only sworn personnel have the skills and abilities to
understand the Department’s needs and make the necessary operational decisions. Since non-sworn personnel lack the necessary field operations experience, they cannot make viable operational decisions. When it comes to making crucial executive management decisions related to field operations, it may be true that sworn personnel are better trained and prepared to fill that role compared with non-sworn personnel, who lack the necessary background and experience. Conversely, non-sworn personnel experienced in fiscal, personnel, and administrative matters are better trained and prepared to make crucial executive management decisions related to administrative operations, compared with sworn personnel who have very little experience administratively and lack the necessary understanding of administrative systems. The same can be said for the executive manager responsible for the Department’s information technology needs. Non-sworn personnel specializing in information technology is better trained and prepared to make crucial technology decisions, compared with sworn personnel who have very little knowledge or training required to make competent decisions. The fact that police culture promotes the belief that sworn officers should occupy the majority of management positions within law enforcement organizations is evident in the fact that the
San Bernardino Sheriff’s Department has sworn personnel in the form of Chief Deputy Sheriffs holding the executive management positions responsible for overseeing the administrative and information technology functions of the Department.

The second hypothesis states that sworn officers occupy the majority of influential management positions within law enforcement organizations, thus discouraging non-sworn personnel from investing time and effort in a long-term career commitment. The data prove this hypothesis because there are currently no non-sworn staff holding executive management positions within the Department. A sample size of one sheriff’s department is extremely small. Nonetheless, a cursory review of some other departments shows the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department to be typical.

Also, as noted above, there are no opportunities available for non-sworn staff to promote into executive management positions. The ability of non-sworn personnel to promote into executive management positions might be a strong incentive for non-sworn staff to invest their time and effort in a long-term career commitment. The fact that non-sworn attrition is increasing on average by eight percent annually illustrates that the long-term commitment from non-sworn personnel is lacking in the Department.
The third hypothesis states that the lack of viable career ladders for non-sworn law enforcement personnel causes high attrition rates for non-sworn employees compared with attrition rates of sworn personnel. The statistical data supports this hypothesis. There is currently on average, a 15% spread between sworn and non-sworn attrition. Sworn attrition is decreasing on average by eight percent (-8%) annually, while non-sworn attrition is increasing on average by eight percent annually. Clearly, more sworn personnel are making the long-term commitment to the Department since viable career ladders exist. It is the lack of viable career ladders within the Department that is causing the steady increase in non-sworn attrition from year-to-year. The majority of non-sworn personnel are unwilling to make a long-term commitment without the existence of viable career ladders.

Summary of Regional Findings

In order to understand the effects of attrition in a broader sense, a regional picture was developed using the statistical-based data from the mailed surveys provided by the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department and the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department. Regional statistical data illustrate that during the time period covering FY 1996/97 through FY 1998/99, sworn attrition
decreased on average by one percent (1%) annually, while non-sworn attrition increased on average by three percent (3%) annually. In addition, the data illustrate that within the region on average 89 sworn positions and 154 non-sworn positions were vacated annually due to attrition. The statistical data gathered from both counties suggest that non-sworn attrition is a regional issue. (See Appendix “C” for statistical-based data and trend analysis pertaining to the combined sheriffs’ regional sworn and non-sworn attrition ratio for the Inland Empire.)

During the time period covering FY 1994/95 through FY 1998/99, on average 173 sworn and 248 non-sworn positions were filled annually to maintain viable workforce levels within the region. This fact is in line with the disparity between sworn and non-sworn attrition rates within the region. It is necessary to note that since sworn attrition ratios are lower compared with non-sworn attrition within the region, so are the position fill rates. Clearly, there is a direct regional correlation between attrition rates and position fill rates.
CHAPTER SIX: Recommendations

Suggestions for Correcting or Diminishing High Non-sworn Attrition

When recognizing the effects of high non-sworn attrition on law enforcement organizations, the question arises, "How can this problem be resolved?" In order to implement effectively a change within law enforcement culture that would correct or diminish the issue of non-sworn attrition, progressive senior law enforcement managers might consider the following recommendations, since change must begin at the top and trickle down.

When considering the effect of career ceilings on non-sworn attrition, law enforcement management might consider conducting a study of all of its sworn management and sworn executive management positions in order to analyze the rational of only filling those positions with sworn management personnel. Upon closer review, sworn management would likely recognize that certain sworn management and sworn executive management positions do not necessarily require that only personnel with a sworn background hold those positions. For example, a Chief Deputy Sheriff in charge of the organization's administrative division does not necessarily require sworn experience to successfully execute the duties associated with the position. In
reality, a non-sworn person with a strong background in fiscal, government relations, and personnel matters might more effectively and efficiently perform the necessary job duties, compared with a sworn employee who has probably less experience in fiscal, government relations, or personnel issues. This could be the case because a more highly trained and knowledgeable non-sworn manager would have the necessary savvy not to make political mistakes which could harm the organization, compared with a sworn manager who has less experience and background knowledge necessary to recognize administrative pitfalls as they arise.

By eliminating career ceilings for non-sworn personnel, law enforcement organizations would experience a decrease in non-sworn attrition and would recognize an increase in the number of non-sworn personnel willing to make a long-term career commitment to these organizations. This outcome would have more than one effect on police departments. For example, it would decrease the costs associated with non-sworn background investigations. As more non-sworn personnel make a long-term commitment to the organization, the need to back-fill non-sworn positions would decrease. Concomitantly, tax dollars attributable to background investigations associated with high non-sworn attrition would be reduced.
When reviewing the effect of overworked and understaffed non-sworn support staff in connection with the issue of attrition, sworn management might also consider allocating additional funds toward hiring adequate support staff. By retaining its current non-sworn personnel and adding additional non-sworn staff, in order to more evenly distribute the work load, the organization’s non-sworn support staff would recognize the support they are receiving from sworn management in accomplishing their jobs. This would help to diminish non-sworn staff’s sense of being over worked, under paid, and under appreciated. This perception of appreciation and support from sworn management would be recognized through a decrease in non-sworn attrition.

When studying the effect of the disparity between sworn salaries and non-sworn salaries, sworn management might consider approaching the sworn personnel’s labor bargaining unit and requesting that management and the union work together collectively to reclassify non-sworn personnel and include them under the law enforcement bargaining unit. This would have a two-fold outcome for the organization. First, it would allow the organization to increase non-sworn salary bases, causing non-sworn positions to be more lucrative, compared with positions available in other civilian-based organizations. Second, it would increase
non-sworn personnel’s perception of inclusion and belonging within the law enforcement organization. Thus, a change in law enforcement culture would be effected.

**Implications of the Project for Future Research, Study, and Practice in Public Administration**

This investigation represents the first known study that acknowledges the causal relationship between career ceilings and non-sworn attrition. It focuses on the strained relationship that exists between sworn and non-sworn personnel within law enforcement organizations. The study was conducted to illustrate ways of improving not only the current relationship between sworn and non-sworn personnel, but also as a means of recognizing the opportunities to be gained from sworn and non-sworn personnel working together collectively as a team for the betterment of the organization and improved law enforcement services provided to the communities served.

This investigation creates a benchmark study from which other law enforcement and public administration practitioners may further study the issues involved with non-sworn attrition and their effects on the organization. This benchmark study could be used to aid in solving or diminishing high non-sworn attrition, which affects law enforcement organizations not only financially, but also in
terms of overall morale. By correcting or diminishing this
dilemma, law enforcement organizations would be
strengthening themselves and enhancing their ability to
serve and protect the public.

The recommendations presented in this graduate research
project are all realistic and achievable. With commitment
and perseverance, these recommendations could be implemented
and a recognizable decrease in non-sworn attrition would be
noted. However, if sworn management continues to travel its
current path, the issues associated with non-sworn attrition
will neither be diminished nor corrected. Law enforcement
organizations will continue to realize high non-sworn
attrition, related increased background investigation costs
and low organizational morale.
CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusion

There exists a causal link between career ceilings and non-sworn attrition within law enforcement organizations. The current adversarial relationship that exists between sworn and non-sworn personnel is evidenced by the fact that the majority of executive management positions within law enforcement organizations are held by sworn management personnel. This creates a career ceiling which is virtually impenetrable by civilians, leading to demoralization of non-sworn personnel and high non-sworn attrition.

The issue of non-sworn attrition hinders law enforcement organizations in various ways. For example, high non-sworn attrition leads to increased background investigation costs associated with hiring replacement personnel. As non-sworn personnel continue to leave the organization for better promotional opportunities in civilian-based organizations, law enforcement organizations are paying out more and more tax dollars to continuously fill vacated non-sworn positions. Also, law enforcement organizations realize increased training costs. For example, the resources utilized to train non-sworn staff, like dispatchers add considerably to the organization's costs. These are all funds which could be used to better serve the public, if law enforcement organizations corrected
or diminished the issue of high non-sworn attrition.

It is important for law enforcement organizations to find ways to retain non-sworn personnel and decrease non-sworn attrition. This could be achieved by enhancing non-sworn promotional opportunities, increasing non-sworn base salaries (which would give law enforcement organizations an edge over civilian-based organizations), increasing the number of non-sworn personnel to provide adequate support to sworn staff and decrease the perception of non-sworn staff being overworked and under appreciated, and incorporating non-sworn personnel into the law enforcement culture as a vital component of the organization. By increasing the sense of team between sworn and non-sworn personnel, the organization will improve its ability to function and provide superior service to the public.

Clearly, it is in law enforcement’s best interest to correct or diminish the costly problem of high non-sworn attrition. By resolving the issues associated with high non-sworn attrition, law enforcement organizations would decrease operating costs, while increasing the quality of services provided to the public. This is definitely in the best interests of all involved.
## APPENDIX A: Attrition Ratio for Riverside County Sheriff's Department

### Positions Filled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% (±%)</td>
<td>% (±%)</td>
<td>% (±%)</td>
<td>% (±%)</td>
<td>% (±%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sworn Personnel</td>
<td>61 (29%) N/A</td>
<td>123 (45%) 102%</td>
<td>96 (32%) -22%</td>
<td>45 (33%) -53%</td>
<td>158 (54%) 251%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-sworn Personnel</td>
<td>150 (71%) N/A</td>
<td>140 (55%) -11%</td>
<td>200 (68%) 35%</td>
<td>93 (67%) -54%</td>
<td>133 (46%) 43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>211 (100%) N/A</td>
<td>271 (100%) 28%</td>
<td>296 (100%) 9%</td>
<td>130 (100%) -53%</td>
<td>291 (100%) 111%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Sworn Positions Filled: 96.6
Average Non-sworn Positions Filled: 144.8
Average % Change (+/-) of Sworn Positions Filled: 69%
Average % Change (+/-) of Non-sworn Positions Filled: 6%

### Positions Vacated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% (±%)</td>
<td>% (±%)</td>
<td>% (±%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sworn Personnel</td>
<td>30 (28%) N/A</td>
<td>30 (70%) 0%</td>
<td>44 (39%) 47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-sworn Personnel</td>
<td>76 (72%) N/A</td>
<td>13 (30%) -83%</td>
<td>69 (61%) 431%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>106 (100%) N/A</td>
<td>43 (100%) -59%</td>
<td>113 (100%) 163%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Sworn Positions Vacated Due to Attrition: 34.7
Average % Change (+/-) of Sworn Positions Vacated Due to Attrition: 23%

Average Non-sworn Positions Vacated Due to Attrition: 52.7
Average % Change (+/-) of Non-sworn Positions Vacated Due to Attrition: 174%

Average Annual % Change (+/-) Spread Between Sworn and Non-sworn Attrition: 151%

**Note:** Riverside County Sheriff's attrition data is based only on FY 1996/97 through FY 1998/99, due to limited statistical data provided by the Riverside County Sheriff's Department.
## APPENDIX B: Attrition Ratio for San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department

### Positions Filled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel Classification</th>
<th>FY 1994/95 %</th>
<th>% +/-</th>
<th>FY 1995/96 %</th>
<th>% +/-</th>
<th>FY 1996/97 %</th>
<th>% +/-</th>
<th>FY 1997/98 %</th>
<th>% +/-</th>
<th>FY 1998/99 %</th>
<th>% +/-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sworn Personnel</strong></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>154%</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-sworn Personnel</strong></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Sworn Positions Filled: 76
Average Non-sworn Positions Filled: 103.2
Average % Change (+/-) of Sworn Positions Filled: 35%
Average % Change (+/-) of Non-sworn Positions Filled: 21%

### Positions Vacated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel Classification</th>
<th>FY 1994/95 %</th>
<th>% +/-</th>
<th>FY 1995/96 %</th>
<th>% +/-</th>
<th>FY 1996/97 %</th>
<th>% +/-</th>
<th>FY 1997/98 %</th>
<th>% +/-</th>
<th>FY 1998/99 %</th>
<th>% +/-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sworn Personnel</strong></td>
<td>68</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>-26%</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-sworn Personnel</strong></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>142</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>-6%</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Sworn Positions Vacated Due to Attrition: 56.4
Average Non-sworn Positions Vacated Due to Attrition: 92.6
Average % Change (+/-) of Sworn Positions Vacated Due to Attrition: -8%
Average % Change (+/-) of Non-sworn Positions Vacated Due to Attrition: 8%
Average Annual % Change (+/-) Spread Between Sworn and Non-sworn Attrition: 15%

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APPENDIX C: Regional Sheriffs' Attrition Ratio For The Inland Empire

### Positions Filled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel Classification</th>
<th>FY 1994/95</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>% +/−</th>
<th>FY 1995/96</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>% +/−</th>
<th>FY 1996/97</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>% +/−</th>
<th>FY 1997/98</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>% +/−</th>
<th>FY 1998/99</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>% +/−</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sworn Personnel</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>121%</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>−6%</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>−8%</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-sworn Personnel</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>−37%</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>−37%</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Sworn Positions Filled: 172.6
Average Non-sworn Positions Filled: 248

### Positions Vacated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel Classification</th>
<th>FY 1996/97</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>% +/−</th>
<th>FY 1997/98</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>% +/−</th>
<th>FY 1998/99</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>% +/−</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sworn Personnel</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>−7%</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-sworn Personnel</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>−2%</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>−2%</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Sworn Positions Vacated Due to Attrition: 89.3
Average Non-sworn Positions Vacated Due to Attrition: 154.3

Note: Regional data is based on statistical data gathered from the mailed statistical-based attrition survey completed by both the Riverside County Sheriff's Department and the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department.

Regional attrition data is based only on FY 1996/97 through FY 1998/99, due to limited statistical data provided by the Riverside County Sheriff's Department.
APPENDIX D: Opinion-Based Survey

Survey of Attrition in Law Enforcement Organizations

High attrition rates are deemed a problem for law enforcement agencies. The following survey is being conducted to determine the average attrition ratio in local southland sheriffs' agencies, as well as the organizational outlook regarding the issue of attrition. The goal is to determine the effects of attrition on law enforcement organizations and to develop viable solutions to deal with this problem. Please take a few minutes to complete and return this survey in the attached self-addressed stamped envelop. Information obtained from your organization is vitally important to the successful outcomes of this study.

Please Note: Attrition for this study is defined as positions that are lost due to employees voluntarily resigning, retiring, or demoting from a given position. It does not refer to positions which have been vacated due to termination or early release from probation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Attrition among sworn law enforcement officers is a serious problem for my organization.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Police culture is the main causal variable behind sworn attrition in my organization.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Attrition among non-sworn personnel is a serious problem for my organization.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Police culture is the main causal variable behind non-sworn attrition in my organization.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Viable career ladders exist in my organization for sworn officers (e.g., ability to promote into executive management positions).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Viable career ladders exist in my Organization for non-sworn positions (e.g., ability to promote into executive management positions).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Is your organization taking steps to resolve problems associated with sworn attrition ratios? If so, please explain what steps are currently being taken.

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8. Is your organization taking steps to resolve problems associated with non-sworn attrition ratios? If so, please explain what steps are currently being taken.

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9. What are your organization's goals regarding attrition? (e.g., To decrease the organization’s overall attrition ratio by 60% within the next 5-years.) Please explain in detail goals, objectives and expected outcomes regarding attrition.

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APPENDIX E: Statistical-Based Survey

Survey of Attrition in Law Enforcement Organizations

High attrition rates are deemed a problem for law enforcement agencies. The following survey is being conducted to determine the average attrition ratio in local southland sheriff’s agencies, as well as the organizational outlook regarding the issue of attrition. The goal is to determine the effects of attrition on law enforcement organizations and to develop viable solutions to deal with this problem. Please take a few minutes to complete and return this survey in the attached self-addressed stamped envelop. Information obtained from your organization is vitally important to this study.

Please Note: Attrition for this study is defined as positions that are lost due to employees voluntarily resigning, retiring, or demoting from a given position. It does not refer to positions which have been vacated due to termination or early release from probation.

1. Please provide the following attrition information pertaining to your Sheriff’s Department:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sworn Personnel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sworn Personnel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please do not include information pertaining to those positions which were released during probation or terminated.

2. What are the total number of management positions in your organization?

3. Of the total management positions, provide the number of sworn management positions and their respective titles currently funded in your Sheriff’s Department.

4. Of the total management positions, provide the number of non-sworn management positions and their respective titles currently funded in your Sheriff’s Department.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


