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National Police Research Platform



The Diversification of Police Departments

Megan Alderden, Amy Farrell, Wesley Skogan and Dennis Rosenbaum

In the last few decades there has been a particular emphasis on diversifying the police workforce. Much of these efforts have resulted in a significant increase in proportion of police officers that are female or racial and ethnic minorities. In 1987, females accounted for almost 8 percent of police officers while racial and ethnic minorities accounted for nearly 15 percent of police officers. By 2003, these figures had increased to 11 percent and 24 percent, respectively. Large agencies in particular have been successful in recruiting both female and racial and ethnic minorities; police agencies that serve one million or more residents reported in 2003 that 17 percent of their workforce was female and almost 40 percent were racial or ethnic minorities (Hickman & Reaves, 2006). Although these data clearly indicate an increase in both female and racial and ethnic minority officers, little attention has been paid to understanding how diversification impacts the police agency workplace.

The justification for increasing diversity in personnel has focused on both workplace performance as well as the workplace atmosphere. Higher levels of workplace performance and satisfaction within organizations arise when diversification is sought as a way to truly incorporate different employee viewpoints, experiences, and cultures. Using Ely and Thomas's (2001) theoretical constructs on diversification perspectives, we developed several survey questions to assess officer perceptions of their workplace. Ely and Thomas found that an agency's diversification perspective—that is, why they sought to diversify their workforce—influenced workplace performance and satisfaction among employees. Specifically, the discrimination and fairness perspective, which entails agency administrators diversifying their workforce to make things equal and to make up for past discrimination, was associated with more negative workplace experiences and workgroup performance. The access and legitimacy perspective, which entails

The National Police Research Platform

The National Police Research Platform was developed as a vehicle to continuously advance our knowledge of police organizations and their employees and to provide regular and timely feedback to police agencies and policy makers nationwide. In doing so, the Platform is expected to advance both the science of policing and evidence-based learning organizations. This project was supported by Award No. 2008-DN-BX-0005 awarded by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.

agencies diversifying as a way to enter new communities or to legitimize their work with the existing communities they serve, was associated with both negative and positive workplace experiences and performance. The integration and learning perspective, which involves agencies diversifying because administrators believe it is needed to change organizations and their external relationships, encourage agency innovation, and facilitate organizational learning, was associated with positive workplace performance and employee satisfaction.

Measures

Using these perspectives, this report examines how officers perceived their workplace environment in relation to the underlying reasons administrators diversify their workforce (i.e., is diversification sought to make up for past discrimination, to better access the communities they serve, or because administrators believe diversity brings about innovation). This report also examines whether these perspectives are associated with officers' job satisfaction. A total of 14 survey questions were developed to measure the three theoretical perspectives outlined by Ely and Thomas. Below is a description of the survey items for each perspective.

Discrimination and Fairness Perspective

Questions were developed to determine the extent to which officers were treated fairly regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender and if officers believed special programs should be created to address past discrimination experienced by females and racial and ethnic minorities. Two survey questions comprised the fairness index. Officers were asked to indicate whether they

strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed, or strongly agreed with the following statements: “in my current workplace” . . . (a) “people are treated the same regardless of race” and (b) “people are treated the same regardless of gender.” Two survey questions also comprised the special programming index: On the same agree-disagree scale, officers were asked to respond to the following statements: (a) “after years of discrimination, special programs are needed to make sure that minorities in policing are given fair treatment” and (b) “after years of discrimination, special programs are needed to make sure that women in policing are given fair treatment.”

Access and Legitimacy

One question was developed to examine the access and legitimacy perspective. Using the agree-disagree scale, officers were asked to respond to the following statement: “the police should reflect (in terms of race, ethnicity) the area in which they work.”

Learning and Integration

Three indexes were created to measure the learning and integration perspective: socialization, learning, and workplace environment. Two survey questions comprise the socialization index. Officers were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: “in my current workplace” . . . (a) “officers tend to socialize with other officers who are the same gender as themselves” and (b) “officers tend to socialize with other officers who are the same race/ethnicity as themselves.” Four survey items comprise the learning index. Again, using the agree-disagreement format, officers were asked to respond to the following statements: “in my workplace “ . . . (a) “there is a lot of open and honest dialog” , (b) “my personal experiences and opinions are often dismissed by other officers or my supervisors” , (c) “I am encouraged to share my ideas about ways in which the Department can improve” , and (d) “people support each other when things get tough at work.” Finally, three items comprise the workplace environment index. Officers were asked how often they heard the following (responses ranged from never to all the time): (a) “other employees make jokes or sexual comments about female officers”, (b) “other employees make jokes or negative comments about minority officers”, and (c) “other employees make jokes about the sexual orientation of others.”

Job Satisfaction

Two questions were included on the survey to measure officer job satisfaction. Officers were asked whether they were very dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with (a) their present job and (b) their department as a place to work.

Sample

Four small agencies, defined as agencies that serve populations between 1,000 to 24,999 persons, and three large agencies, defined as agencies that serve populations of one million or more, were surveyed.¹ Respondents from small agencies tended to be male (90 percent) and white (78 percent). Only 29 percent had a bachelor's or graduate degree and 45 percent had supervisory rank (i.e., sergeant or above). In comparison, a smaller percentage of respondents from large agencies were male (78 percent). Respondents from large agencies were also more racially diverse, with whites accounting for only 59 percent of respondents. Respondents from large agencies were also more likely to have a bachelor's or graduate degree (52 percent) and less likely to have supervisory rank (32 percent).

Diversity Perspectives in Small Police Agencies versus Large Police Agencies

Figures 1.1 to 1.3 show the results for each diversity perspective by agency size. Figure 1.4 shows the percentage of officers who reported being somewhat to very satisfied with their jobs and the departments where they work.

- *Officers from small agencies report more fair treatment than officers from large agencies.* The average scores for police officers from small agencies were significantly higher than those from large agencies for the fair treatment and learning indexes. This indicates that officers from small agencies rated their agencies more positively in terms of fair treatment, being supportive, and valuing officer input and experiences.
- *Officers from small agencies report more socializing between officers regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender and hearing fewer derogatory comments.* Officers from small agencies had lower average scores for the socializing and workplace environment variables. This indicates that

¹ The sample sizes for the four small police agencies were as follows: 16, 18, 18, and 18. The sample sizes for the three large agencies were as follows: 444, 334, and 278.

officers from smaller agencies were less likely than those from large agencies to believe officers only socialized with individuals of their same race, ethnicity, or gender and or report hearing jokes or other derogatory comments about officers of different races and ethnicities, females, or homosexuals.

- *Differences in perceptions of officers working in small and large agencies may be due to actual experiences with workforce diversification.* Although officers from small police agencies report more positive perceptions of diversity (i.e., feeling that officers are more treated fairly or that their workplace is more supportive), these agencies were also less diverse racially, ethnically, and by gender. Thus, officers in small agencies may have less experience dealing with diversity issues. For instance, white male officers may perceive their agencies as both fair and valuing their input because they are members of the dominate work culture (i.e., white and male).
- *Officers from small agencies are more satisfied with their job and department overall.* A significantly higher percentage of officers from small agencies than large agencies reported being satisfied with their job and the department overall. Figure 1.4 also indicates that officers, regardless of agency size, report being satisfied with their job more so than the departments where they work.

Figure 1.1

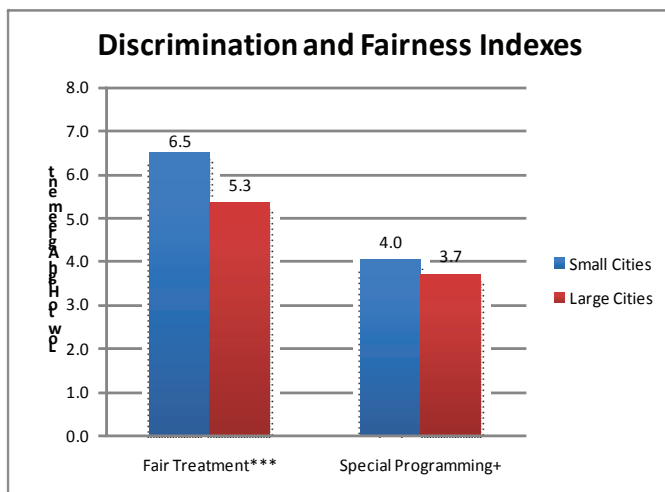
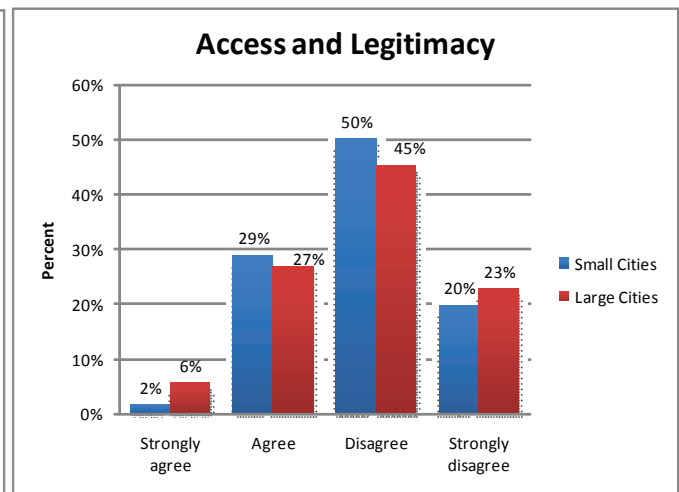


Figure 1.2



+ $p = .10$, * $p = .05$, ** $p = .01$, *** $p = .001$

Figure 1.3

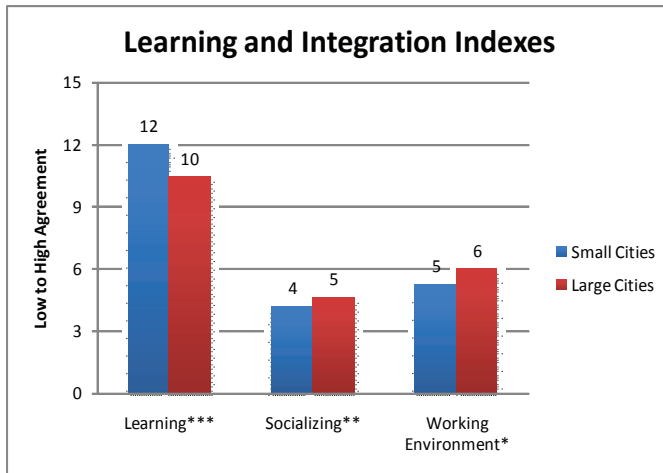
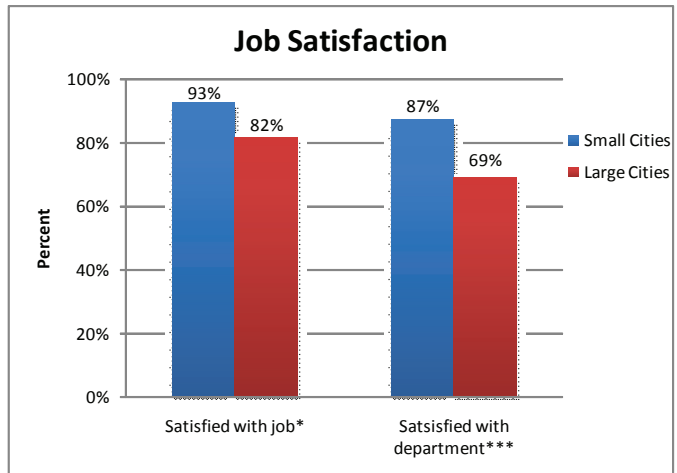


Figure 1.4



+ $p = .10$, * $p = .05$, ** $p = .01$, *** $p = .001$

Diversity Perspectives across the Three Large Police Agencies

Analyses were also conducted to determine whether differences existed between large agencies. Comparisons across large agencies were examined because these agencies have higher percentages of female and racial and ethnic minority officers. Officers in these agencies would have more experience with efforts to diversify the police workforce. Figures 2.1 to 2.3 show the results for each diversity perspective for the three large agencies, while figure 2.4 shows the reported job and department satisfaction for the three large agencies.

- Comparisons indicated that all the officers' perceptions of diversity differed significantly between the three large agencies. Officers in City B tended to rate their agency more positively than officers from Cities A and C. Officers from City B rated their agency higher in terms of fair treatment, need for special programming, and learning. City B officers were also less likely to report officers only socializing with like peers and hearing derogatory remarks. Officers from City B were also significantly more likely to agree that officers should reflect the communities where they work. The only exception was the special programming variable; cities B and C did not differ significantly.
- A much higher percentage of officers from City B reported being satisfied with their current job and with their department overall than City A and City C. Also noted was that officers, regardless of city, reported more satisfaction with their jobs than with their department overall.

Figure 2.1

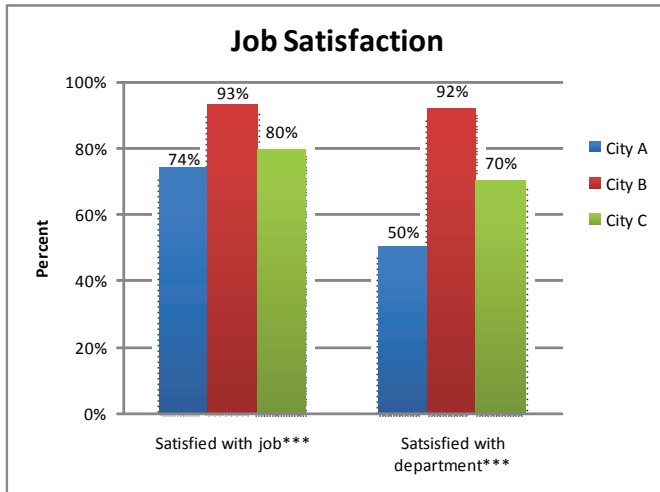


Figure 2.2

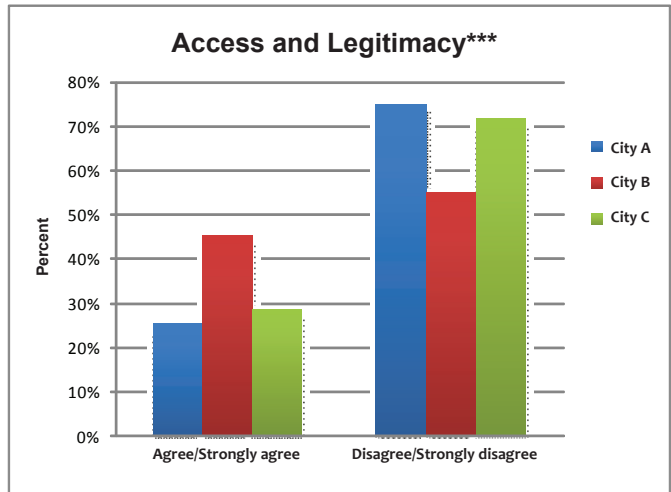


Figure 2.3

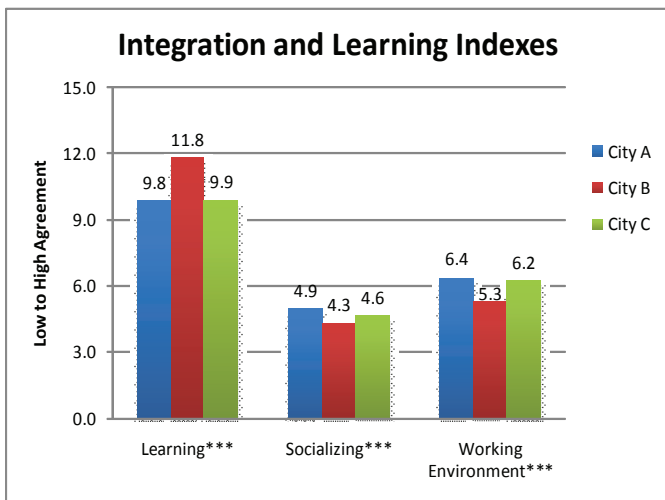
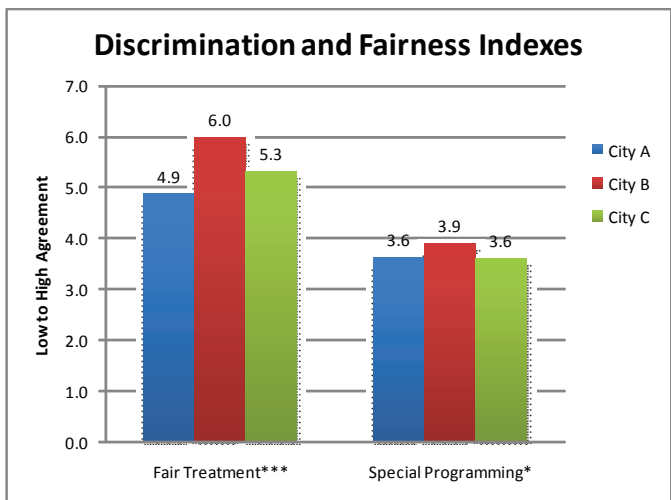


Figure 2.4



+ $p = .10$, * $p = .05$, ** $p = .01$, *** $p = .001$

For the large agencies, multivariate analyses were also conducted to examine the relationship between the diversity perspectives and officers' job and department satisfaction controlling for officers' demographics and city. Table 1 shows the variables that were significantly related to satisfaction with one's job and one's department. Overall, the analyses indicate the following:

- Perceptions that one's workplace is supportive and that your opinions and experiences are valued were associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and satisfaction with one's department overall.

- *Perceptions that one’s workplace is supportive and that your opinions and experiences are valued was the most important variable for both the job satisfaction and department satisfaction models.* These findings suggest that positive integration transcends fairness and access paradigms. In other words, creating workplace environments that are supportive and where one’s opinions and experiences are valued is more important in terms of officer job satisfaction than making things appear equal and fair or to diversify the workforce to simply look more like the communities served. As a methodological test within the National Police Research Platform, the diversity survey was successful in detecting differences within and between departments. Not only are small and larger departments different in their views and approaches to diversity; not all large departments are the same. Some large departments have substantially more positive views of diversity issues than others.

Table 1
Diversity Perspectives Associated with Changes in Job and Department Satisfaction

Increases in perceptions that . . .	Change in Satisfaction with Job
Workplace perceived as fair	Increase
Special programming needed	Increase
Officers should reflect communities	Increase
Officers feel valued and supported*	Increase
Increases in perceptions that . . .	Change in Satisfaction with Department
Special programming needed	Increase
Officers should reflect communities	Increase
Officers feel valued and supported*	Increase

* Most important variable in model.

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- Hickman, M. J., & Reaves, B. A. (2006). *Local police departments* (NCJ Publication No. 210118). U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics.