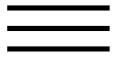


Race, gender, and motivation for becoming a police officer: Implications for building a representative police department.

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Race, gender, and motivation for becoming a police officer: Implications for building a representative police department

Anthony J. Raganella ^a ... Michael D. White ^b

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Abstract

Police departments have come under increasing pressure from community groups, professional organizations, and their constituents to hire more female and minority officers. Although prior research suggested that there might be both gender and racial differences in the factors influencing the decision to enter police work, much of the work was dated and findings were mixed. The current research, conducted in spring 2002, examined motivations for entering police work among a sample of 278 academy recruits in the New York City Police Department (NYPD). Findings indicated that motivations for becoming a police officer were similar regardless of race or gender, and the most influential factors were altruistic and practical, specifically the opportunity to help others, job benefits, and security. Minor differences did emerge among male and female recruits, as well as among Whites, Hispanics, and African Americans, but the practical implications

of those differences seemed limited. The article concludes with a discussion of implications for recruitment efforts as police departments seek to draw more diverse applicant pools and build more representative law enforcement agencies.



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