

## Reconciling Higher Educational Standards and Minority Recruitment: The New York City Model

### Introduction

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The New York City Police Department's Cadet Corps is an innovative program designed to bring officers with higher levels of education into the ranks of the nation's largest police department.

It is a modest program given the size of the police force, but its implications are greater than its size would indicate. The Cadet Corps is the best effort to date to prove or disprove the long controversial theory that better educated recruits will make better police officers. While it may seem logical to some that degreed officers will make better police managers, there are others who might differ. But, the premise that college education will improve an officer's performance *on the beat* is even more hotly disputed.

As this report points out, it is much too early to settle that dispute. Only extended evaluation of the cadets, their careers, and those of their counterparts will render a definitive answer to the question.

Our study of the Cadet Corps program has already rendered some valuable findings, however. One that we highlight in this Police Foundation Report is the ability of the program to recruit college students while addressing racial imbalances frequently found in the sworn ranks. This should have a positive impact on the attempts by the New York City Police Department to implement community policing, a strategy based in part on the ability of the police force to relate well to the community it serves.

The Cadet Corps program is another indication of the leadership being provided to the law enforcement community by the likes of former NYCPD Commissioner Ben Ward, under whom this program began, and former Commissioner Lee Brown, who continued to support it. Credit must also go to the National Institute of Justice, which funded this study and stands today at the cutting edge of new knowledge about policing. The difference made by these attempts to explore the unknown and measure effectiveness in the policing world makes us better prepared to face the challenges that lie before us than at any other time in our history.

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Two goals that many believed were mutually exclusive—raising the level of education among police officers and increasing the representativeness of minorities—may not be so after all.

A Police Foundation study of the New York City Police Department's innovative Police Cadet Corps, funded by the National Institute of Justice and conducted by foundation researchers Antony Pate and Edwin Hamilton, has found that the program brought 217 college graduates onto the force, 16.1 percent of whom were black and 21.7 percent of whom were Hispanic. These percentages were significantly higher than those found in (1) other groups of recruits, (2) all NYPD sworn personnel, and (3) the New York City population. The results in New York run counter to long-held assumptions about recruiting. Many scholars believed that police departments could recruit more college graduates *or* more minorities, but not both. Sullivan (1989, p.339), for example, notes that, faced with "evidence that agencies which require higher education for their officers have difficulty in recruiting minorities," it "seems that requiring higher education may have the effect, even when unintended, of discriminating

against minority members.” Furthermore, as noted by the National Advisory Commission of Higher Education for Police Officers, many police executives oppose college requirements “because fewer blacks than whites hold college degrees, and the requirement might therefore have the impact of disproportionately excluding blacks” (Sherman, et al., 1978, p.179). The Cadet Corps program may help change these perceptions.

## Why a Cadet Corps?

In 1985, New York City created the Police Cadet Corps, an innovative recruitment program designed to attract college students to careers as police officers. It rested on an idea that has frequently been advanced but seldom stringently tested.

The urban riots of the 1960’s, many of which stemmed from the misconduct of police officers, spurred long-standing efforts to professionalize the police by raising educational standards. In the riots’ aftermath, a number of national commissions endorsed improved training and education for police officers. Many law enforcement agencies have since taken steps to raise the educational level of their personnel. For example, some require applicants for hiring or promotion to have college credits; others give preference to candidates with such credits.

A few decades later, the debate over whether a college degree is desirable for police officers continues. The arguments in favor of higher education are essentially three:

- Higher education would make police officers more effective at their jobs. Proponents of this argument believe that “police science” can be taught, that police bureaucracies require trained specialists, and that a liberal arts education fosters the very qualities police officers need.
- Educated officers would succeed in changing the very nature of policing, reforming it from the inside.
- College education would improve the image of the police and therefore increase the field’s respectability, dignity, and status.

Critics of the value of higher education for the police are not hard to find. They argue that (1) academic training is irrelevant to what the police do; (2) many good officers do not have college degrees, while some poor officers do; (3) college graduates will never find police work—periods of monotony punctuated by moments of hostility, danger, and conflict—attractive;

and (4) police attitudes are so deeply rooted in the requirements, ethic, and reward structure of policing that education alone cannot change them.

Studies of how college educated police officers do on the job have not settled the issue; the lessons have been inconclusive. There have been few valid studies and their findings can be read in different ways. New York City’s Police Cadet Corps offered a welcome opportunity to begin rigorous research on this still unanswered question.

## The Cadet Corps Program

The Police Cadet Corps program in New York provided that full-time sophomores in colleges and universities in New York City who were residents of the city could, if they met other qualifications, receive \$9,000 toward their future tuition.

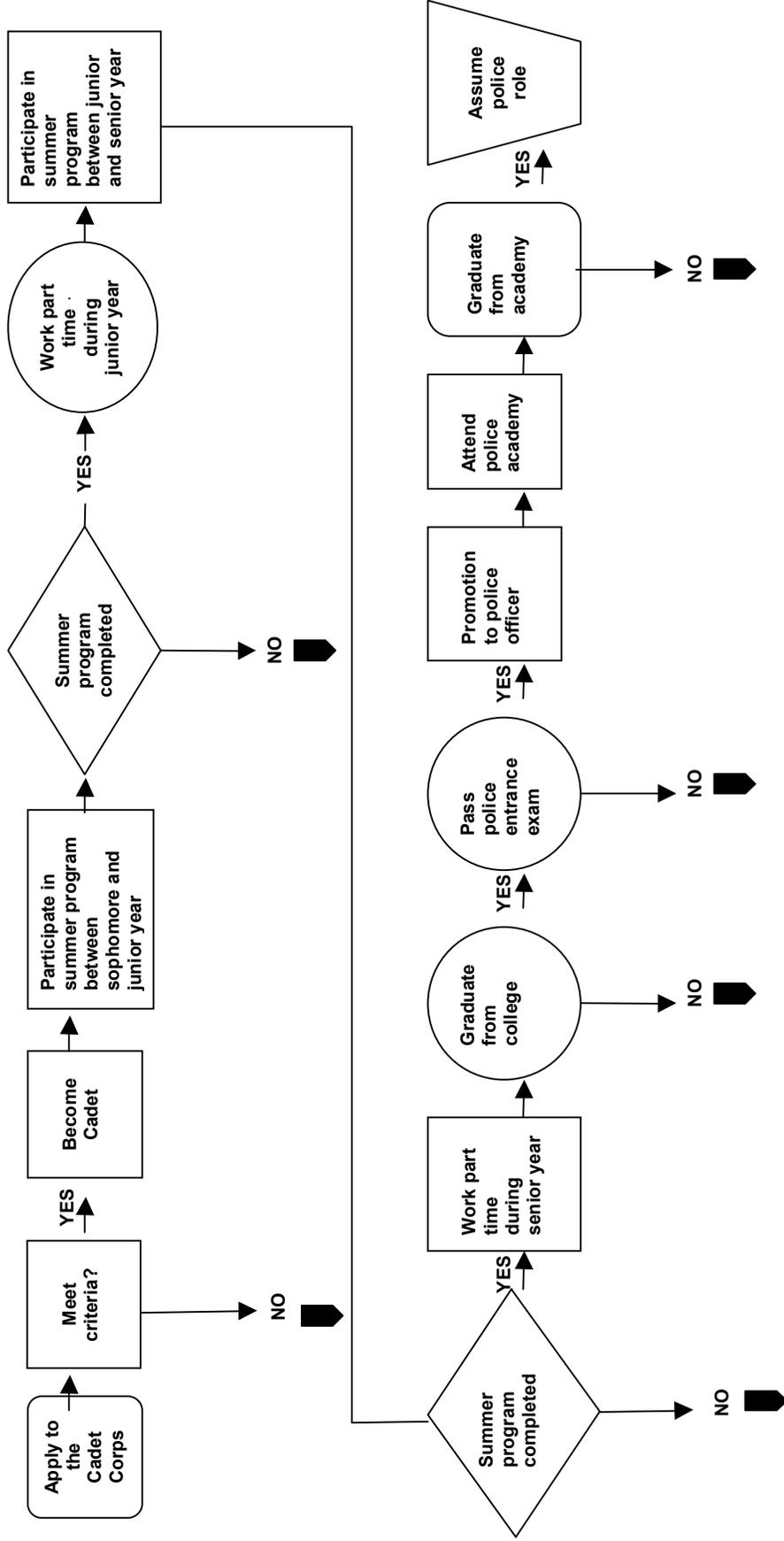
Of this amount, \$6,000 would be in payment for work, and \$3,000 in an interest-free loan that would be forgiven altogether if the cadet served two years as a police officer. They were to be given full-time jobs during the summer at \$5 an hour and part-time employment during the school year, amounting to three days per month.

(After the program began, the cadets’ hourly rate was raised from \$5 to \$7 and then to \$8.14 per hour, bringing their pay to \$7,500 and their total benefit to \$10,500 and, eventually, to \$17,490. In addition, eligibility was extended to include residents of Nassau and Westchester counties.)

The police department had five major objectives for the program:

1. **To increase the educational level of the department.** When the Cadet Corps was created, 12.5 percent of police officers and 17.8 percent of all personnel had a bachelor’s degree or higher.
2. **To test a more rigorous selection process for recruits.** Under the usual selection process, recruits are screened by physical and psychological examinations, a background investigation, and academy training. The new program added a selection interview and in-the-field training before cadets entered the academy. The in-field training provided another opportunity to screen out those deemed not qualified to serve as police officers.

**Figure 1: Stages of Cadet Corps Program**



3. **To increase the representativeness of the uniformed force.** Unlike other police officers, who are required to reside in New York City or one of the six surrounding counties, cadets had to live in one of the city's five boroughs. This requirement was expected to make cadets more demographically representative of the city than other recruits. In addition, by recruiting among college students, the department would draw on a largely untapped pool of potential police officers.
4. **To increase the orientation toward community policing.** As part of its commitment to community policing, the police department had started a Community Patrol Officer Program: individual officers were assigned to a permanent beat of about 15 square blocks and worked with the community to control crime. By assigning cadets to serve as aides to these officers, the department expected to expose them to community policing even before they entered the academy.
5. **To improve the leadership skills of new officers.** The department expected the Cadet Corps to produce a disproportionate number of its future leaders because of their college education, the higher entrance standards applied to them, and their more extensive training and experience.

To become cadets, students had to be in good standing at a local college or university and pass medical, psychological, and oral examinations, as well as a background investigation. During the summer after their sophomore year, they took part in an 80-hour training and orientation program. During their junior and senior years and the summer between them, they participated in the Community Patrol Officer program. Their duties as patrol officers included crime prevention inspections, service referrals, and work with community organizations.

Cadets took the police entrance exam, but as a promotional exam for advancement to police officer. Those who passed were placed on a separate promotion list. If they passed the entrance exam and graduated from college, cadets entered the Police Academy as recruits. A cadet who graduated from the academy was promoted to police officer. The cadet would also receive one year's credit toward eligibility for the sergeant's exam. This in part compensated for

the fact that they could have joined the department at age 20, before graduation from college.

The police department sought to select approximately 200 cadets by the summer of 1986. If the program proved a success, it planned to choose more cadets in the future. The department anticipated that eventually as many as half its recruits might enter through the Cadet Corps.

The first cohort of 133 cadets was hired in June, 1986 (the 1986 cohort). A second group of 140 cadets was brought in a year later (the 1987A cohort). Seeking to increase the number of cadets in the program, the department hired another 101 in August of 1987 (the 1987B cohort); these were drawn primarily from those who did not complete the original screening procedures for the June, 1987 hires. In June of 1988, another 131 cadets were hired (the 1988 cohort).

## Recruitment

The department began recruiting cadets in the fall of 1985. It invited the presidents of 44 colleges and universities in the city to meet with Commissioner Benjamin Ward and other officials who described the Cadet Corps plan. They also reassured the presidents that the program had no intention of luring students out of college and onto the police force; indeed, they said, the Cadet Corps program depended on students graduating. The presidents, in turn, offered cooperation and a hospitable reception from campus career placement offices.

The department conducted presentations on 33 of the 44 campuses. Information about the Cadet Corps and applications were left at career centers. The recruitment campaign also included advertising on the radio, in school newspapers, in posters and flyers posted or distributed on campus, and in direct mailings. The text of a radio commercial for the Cadet Corps program was indicative of the campaign message:

*The NYPD is looking for a select group of college sophomores, who will go on to become a new breed of New York City cop. If you're graduating from college in the class of '88, there's a chance you could be one of them, one of this choice group that makes up the New York City Police Cadet Corps.*

*If accepted, you'll begin training in the spring. You'll work in your community full-time summers and part-time during the year. And you'll receive \$750 a semester toward tuition for your junior and senior years. That amounts to a \$3,000 loan you won't have to pay back if you remain a police officer for two years.*

*To be considered for selection, call 212-RECRUIT or your career counselor for an application. Remember, to be chosen you have to stand out. Because the NYPD expects tomorrow's leaders to come from the Cadet Corps.*

Recruiters tried a number of strategies, including attendance at meetings of minority groups, but the best strategy proved to be direct mail. The city university system gave recruiters labels bearing the names and addresses of 22,000 sophomores. Confidentiality rules prohibited the private colleges from turning over students' names and addresses, but after recruiters stuffed the envelopes and affixed stamps, the colleges did the mailings.

By the end of the first year's campaign, 1,479 students had expressed interest in the program. This represented 3.7 percent of the 39,801 full-time sophomores attending college in New York City. Because many were not city residents, it is believed that as many as 5 percent of the eligible students applied.

In all, students from 87 schools applied. By far the greatest percentage of applicants (20 percent) were majors in criminal justice or police science. In fact, 18.7 percent of the total were enrolled in the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Other majors included accounting (6 percent), liberal arts (5 percent), business (5 percent), and psychology (3 percent).

The applicants that first year reflected a balanced racial and gender mix: 39.6 percent were white, 33.8 percent black, 22.2 percent Hispanic, and 2.4 percent Asian or Pacific Islander. Men made up 67 percent of the applicants, women 33 percent. Women were more prevalent among minorities than among whites. Unfortunately, no count was kept of the total number of applicants in 1987 and 1988. Consequently, no analysis of applicants after 1986 could be made.

## Screening Hurdles—The 1986 Class

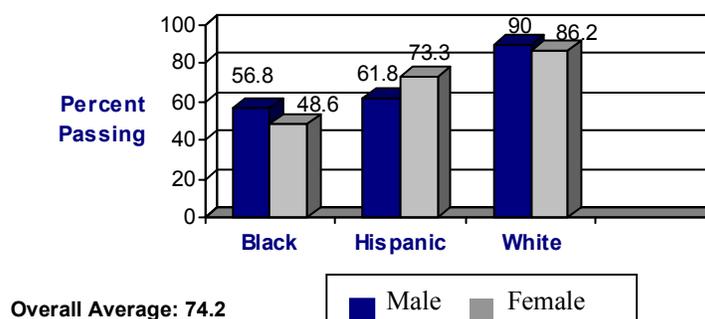
Since records of the total number of cadet applicants were available only for the 1986 cohort, researchers could not determine the pass rates for screening tests of the other cohorts. But data for the 1986 class was revealing in itself.

Of the 1,479 people who expressed an interest in the cadet program in 1986, a total of 419 were not city residents and were therefore ineligible. Of the 1,060 eligible, 684 appeared for an orientation meeting at which the details of the program were described and application forms accepted. They were invited to undergo the same background investigation and take the same medical and psychological tests as other police candidates. They also had to take part in an oral interview conducted by three lieutenants.

Of the 373 who took the medical exam, 74.3 percent passed it, compared to the department's usual pass rate of 76.3 percent. There was little difference in results by race or gender.

The psychological exam was taken by 267 candidates. The exam consisted of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), a test for neuroses such as paranoia and schizophrenia; the California Personality Inventory, a general set of measures of personality characteristics; the Detroit test, a group test of general intelligence; the Cornell test of motor skills; the House-Tree-Person test, a projective test of self-concept; and a general personality inventory. In all, 74.2 percent of the cadets managed to pass. This is somewhat lower than the 80 percent pass rate attained by non-cadet candidates. The pass rates for blacks and Hispanic applicants were significantly lower than those for whites. The success rate (male and female) for blacks was 52.8 percent, for Hispanics 65.3 percent, and for whites 89.2 percent (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Percent of Cadet Corps Applicants Passing Psychological Examination by Race and Sex, 1986**



These differences must be interpreted in light of the considerable amount of research that has explored the possible cultural bias inherent in several of the most common psychological tests used in the selection of cadets. (See Anastasi (1988) and Greene (1991) for summaries of this literature.) Although there are conflicting findings, the general conclusion is summarized by Anastasi (1988, p.357): “Every test tends to favor persons for the culture in which it was developed.”

The New York City Police Department requires that all its applicants undergo a complete background investigation. Each applicant’s criminal record, employment history, military and school records, and associations were scrutinized. Of the 259 applicants investigated, 66.0 percent passed. Again, there were statistically significant differences among the success rates for whites (78.4 percent), blacks (45.5 percent), Hispanics (58.0 percent).

Of the 251 candidates who sat for personal oral interviews, 89.2 percent passed. The results differed little by race or gender.

Only 134 candidates passed all four parts of the screening process and so qualified as cadets. These 134 were 12.7 percent of the 1,060 who were eligible for screening and 25.8 percent of the 519 applicants who took one or more screening tests.

Ultimately, success rates for acceptance of applicants to become cadets differed widely among gender and racial groups in the 1986 class (Figure 3).

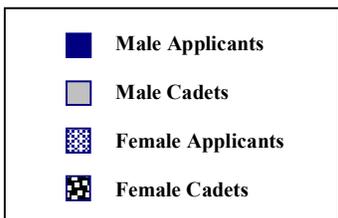
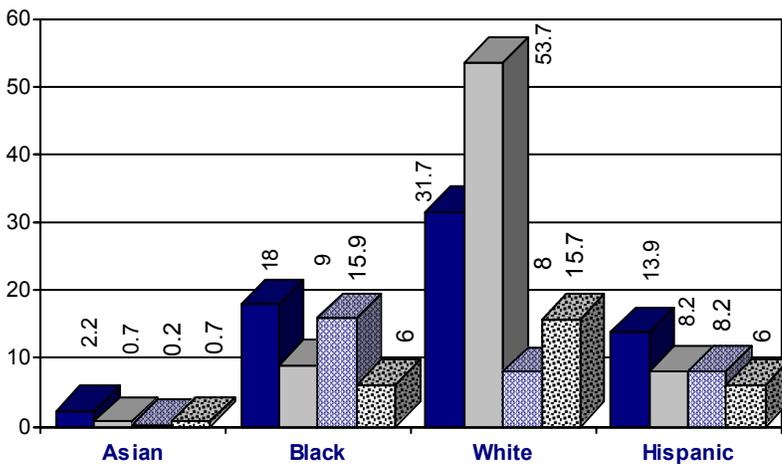
White males, for instance, constituted almost 32 percent of initial applicants, but rose to nearly 54 percent of cadets. White females experienced an even larger increase in representation, from 8 percent of applicants to 15.7 of cadets. The experience for black males and females was just the reverse. Representation of black males decreased from a level of 18.0 percent of the applicants to 9.0 percent of cadets, and black females from 15.9 percent to 6.0 percent. Hispanic representation also decreased, although not as much, from 13.9 percent of male applicants to 8.2 percent of cadets, and from 8.2 percent of female applicants to 6.0 percent of the cadets.

### The Cadets

All four Cadet Corps classes were predominantly male, but minority representation fluctuated a great deal. Among 1986 cadets, almost 70 percent were white, 15 percent were black, and 13.5 percent were Hispanic. This was to change significantly in later classes.

The June, 1987 class, for instance, was quite different from that of 1986. The percentage of whites hired was much smaller than in the 1986 class, and there was a concomitant rise in the number of minorities. The proportions of minorities were even higher among cadet recruits hired in August, 1987. In fact, blacks actually outnumbered whites, while Hispanics accounted for more than a quarter of the class. The percentages may reflect continued emphasis on minority recruitment, although the second

**Figure 3: Percent of Applicants and Cadets by Race and Sex, 1986**



1987 cohort consisted largely of applicants who had failed to complete the earlier application process. The disproportionate presence of minorities in that group would explain their overrepresentation in the second 1987 class. Minority representation decreased somewhat in the 1988 cohort. In this group, 48.1 percent were white, 22.9 percent were black, and 26.0 percent were Hispanic.

Taking the four cohorts as a whole, 51.1 percent were white, 24.8 percent were Hispanic, and 24.0 percent were black. Considering gender as well as race, white males accounted for 39.3 percent of all cadets, Hispanic males for 15.4 percent, and black males for 12.6 percent. White and black females both constituted 11.6 percent, and Hispanic females 9.4 percent. The real question, of course, is how does minority representation in the Cadet Corps compare to that in the population of New York, the recruit class when the program began, and the department's uniformed police as a whole? The evidence shows that when the Cadet Corps program began, minorities were clearly underrepresented in the department and underrepresented in the cadet class, although less so than in the sworn ranks.

According to 1980 Census data, among the city's population aged 18 to 29 (the range from which most police officers are recruited) 24.1 percent were white males, 13.9 percent white females, 10.7 percent black males, 13.7 black females, 9.8 percent Hispanic males, and 12.3 percent Hispanic females. The overrepresentation of white males in the department and in the first cadet class is clear (see Table 1).

<b>Table 1 Rates of Racial and Gender Representation (percent)</b>						
	W/M	W/F	B/M	B/F	H/M	H/F*
NYC Population**	24.1	13.9	10.7	13.7	9.8	12.3
NYCPD Sworn	72.1	5.8	8.1	2.7	8.3	1.7
1986 Cadet Class	61.8	10.1	7.0	4.3	9.8	3.6
* W/M—white male, W/F—white female, B/M—black male, B/F—black female, H/M—Hispanic male, H/F—Hispanic female. ** Based on 1980 Census						

How well did the Cadet Corps program address this underrepresentation of minorities? To provide a measure of the extent to which the demographic composition of various cadet recruit classes, the 1986 recruit class, and the 1986 department personnel are representative of the city as a whole, indices of representativeness were calculated by dividing the percentage of each police subgroup who belonged to a particular ethnic or gender group by the percentage belonging to that group in the city as a whole. Thus, if exactly the same percentage of any ethnic or gender group were found in a subgroup and the city, the index would equal 1.0.

In general, the cohorts became much more representative of the city as time passed (Figure 4, page 7). Black cadets, underrepresented in 1986, nearly attained full representativeness in the 1987A class and then exceeded it in the 1987B class. Hispanic personnel were also seriously underrepresented in 1986, but in the next three years were actually overrepresented. Females were consistently underrepresented, although underrepresentation was significantly greater in the 1986 class than in any other.

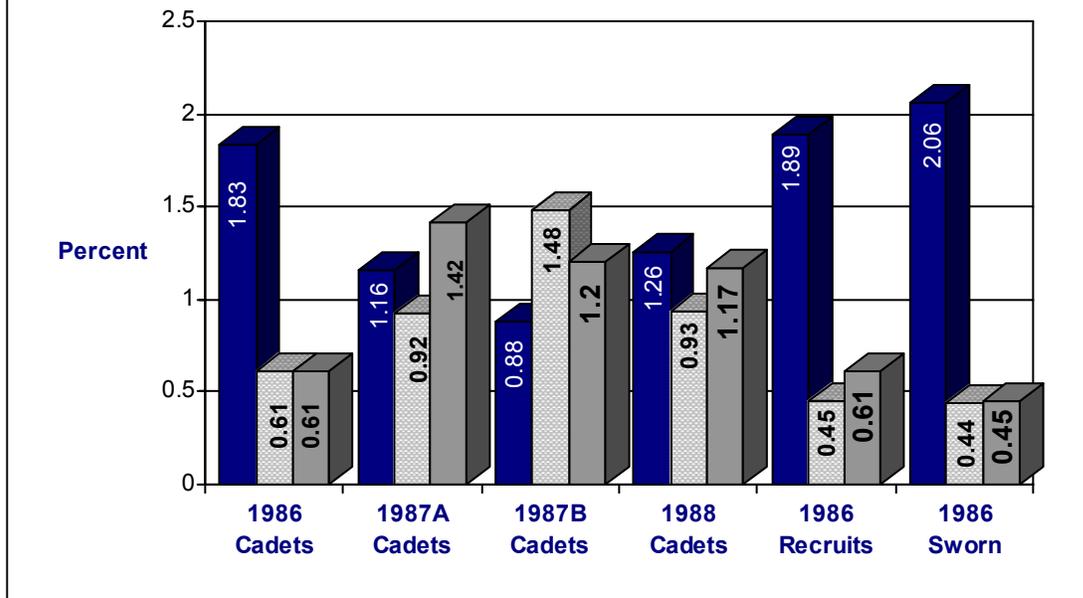
## The Learning Process

Once in the program, the cadets were issued uniforms and a manual of instructions, and were required to undergo physical training and attend classes in law, department orientation, social science, and communications. They went through a three-day leadership and teamwork program, similar in nature to the Outward Bound approach in which participants learn to work together to overcome challenges. Cadets also were versed on the Community Patrol Officer Program (CPOP), the city's experiment in community oriented policing.

In the third week, the department assigned cadets to precincts where they would work as aides to officers in CPOP. The cadets were required to perform such duties as walking foot patrol, attending community meetings, riding the CPOP van, visiting crime victims and performing clerical work.

Fridays were reserved for intensive training, beginning with two hours of gymnastic exercises and lifesaving training. The remainder of the morning was devoted to lectures from city officials about a broad range of issues, including the relationship

**Figure 4: Ethnic Representativeness of the Cadet Cohorts, 1986 Recruits and 1986 Sworn Personnel**



■ White    ■ Black    ■ Hispanic

NOTE: Ethnic representativeness is computed by dividing the percentage of cadets who belong to a given ethnic group by the percentage of the general population for that group.

between city and state governments, the theory and practice of punishment, environmental pollution, homelessness, organized crime, and the protection of individual rights. Afternoons were devoted to discussion of the morning presentation and “professional” training consisting primarily of uniform inspection, parade procedures, rule enforcement, etc.

When asked what they liked best about the program, all classes cited the training and experience received, the tuition loan, and the opportunity to earn a salary. Complaints about the program differed widely among the classes, which was due at least in part to the different kinds of assignments and supervision provided to various cadets.

### Promotion of Cadets

As of January, 1991, half of the 1986 cohort had completed the program and been promoted to police officer. Notably, at least 15 of the 54 resignations

were cadets who had left the corps to enter the Police Academy.

As of January, 1991, the promotion rates of the 1987A, 1987B, and 1988 cohorts were 50.7, 31.7, and 42.3 percent respectively. The low rate in 1987B appears to stem partially from this group being admitted to the program without first meeting all the eligibility criteria. Many were disqualified later when they failed to pass certain screening measures.

**Table 2  
Cohorts—Percentage Promoted to  
Police Officer as of January 10, 1991**

	White	Hispanic	Black
1986	57.0	50.0	20.0
1987A	53.2	43.3	41.0
1987B	29.4	33.3	32.4
1988	49.2	26.5	16.7

The rate of promotion from cadet to police officer among minorities was consistently lower than that for whites

Despite the fact that minorities were promoted at lower rates than whites, the percentage of minority recruits coming into the department through the Cadet Corps was much higher than those entering through normal channels, and far higher than the percentage of minorities in the ranks of New York City Police Department's sworn personnel.

## What Kind of Cadets Emerged?

To help determine the kind of officer the Cadet Corps was producing, Police Foundation researchers administered questionnaires to various cohorts. While the results were mixed, some trends emerged. When compared to other classmates in the Police Academy, Cadet Corps recruits:

- placed more emphasis on a community orientation and less on traditional policing strategies;
- were less likely than their classmates to say they entered the Academy because of the excitement and challenge of policing or because they had always wanted to be police officers;
- were less likely to believe that laws should be rigidly enforced;
- were more likely to believe that good officers can depart from standard operating procedures in order to solve a problem;
- were more likely to consider a college education important to their work; and
- were less likely to think that citizen complaints are an inevitable part of the job and less likely to believe that the ideals of politeness and decency are unworkable on the street.

## Summing Up

Did the Police Cadet Corps achieve its five main objectives? To comprehensively assess how well the program has succeeded would require a long-term evaluation that considered field performance, supervisor's ratings, promotion experience, and demonstrated leadership. It is too soon for such an evaluation, but some preliminary assessments can be made.

### **Objective 1: To increase the department's educational level.**

A total of 217 cadets graduated from the program and became police officers by early 1991, far less than the 200 per year that was the program's goal. These 217 amount to less than one percent of the department's sworn personnel.

### **Objective 2: To test a more rigorous recruit selection process.**

The program altered the selection process by inaugurating an oral interview and two years of in-the-field training for cadets. While black males and Hispanic females performed somewhat poorly on the oral interview, ethnic and gender differences on the interview were smaller than on the background investigation and psychological examination.

### **Objective 3: To make the uniformed force more representative.**

The percentages of black and Hispanic cadets were consistently higher than those for sworn officers or other recruit classes. White females were more representative in two classes, but less representative in the other two.

### **Objective 4: To increase the orientation toward community policing.**

All cohorts placed strong emphasis on both a community orientation and a helping orientation as criteria for evaluating police officer performance. Some cadets' belief in the importance of community policing was strengthened after two years in the program. But it remains to be seen if this orientation survives after cadets become police officers and are exposed to the prevailing police culture.

### **Objective 5: To improve the leadership skills of new officers.**

It is too early to determine to what extent such leaders have been created.

Thus, the Cadet Corps has succeeded in making considerable headway toward meeting its preliminary objectives. It has shown that it is possible to increase minority representation and raise educational standards simultaneously. Given the importance of representativeness to the practice of community policing, this stands as a significant finding. How well the Cadet Corps program achieves its long-term goals of creating a "new elite corps" of leaders with a community-oriented approach to policing, only time and further investigation will tell.

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## About the Police Foundation

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The Police Foundation is a private, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting innovation and improvement in policing. Established in 1970, the foundation has conducted seminal research in police behavior, policy, and procedure, and works to transfer to local agencies the best information about practices for dealing effectively with a range of important police operational and administrative concerns.

Our purpose is to help the police be more effective in doing their job, whether it be deterring robberies, intervening in potentially injurious domestic disputes, or working to improve relationships between the police and the communities they serve. To accomplish our mission, we work closely with police officers and police departments across the country, and it is in their hard work and contributions that our accomplishments are rooted.

The foundation has done much of the research that led to a questioning of the traditional model of professional law enforcement and toward a new view of policing—one emphasizing a community orientation. As a partner in the Community Policing Consortium, the foundation, along with four other leading national law enforcement organizations, plays a principal role in the development of community policing research, training, and technical assistance.

The foundation's Institute for Integrity, Leadership, and Professionalism in Policing (IILPP) helps police departments to acquire both the knowledge gained through research and the tools needed to integrate

that knowledge into police practices. Working with law enforcement agencies seeking to improve accountability, performance, service delivery, and community satisfaction with police services, the IILPP offers a wide range of assessment, technology, training, education, certification, management, and human resources services.

The foundation has developed two state-of-the-art technologies to enable police agencies to systematically collect and analyze a wide range of performance-related data. The RAMS™II (The Risk Analysis Management System) is an early warning device that helps agencies manage and minimize risk. The QSI™ (Quality of Service Indicator) collects and analyzes officer-citizen contacts, including traffic stop data. Both The RAMS™II and the QSI™ produce detailed reports to assist police managers in making critical personnel and operational decisions.

The foundation's state-of-the-art Crime Mapping Laboratory (CML) works to advance the understanding of computer mapping and to pioneer new applications of computer mapping. The CML provides training and technical assistance to police agencies seeking to incorporate mapping technologies and applications into their crime analysis and patrol operations.

Other foundation projects are also directed at the improvement of policing. For example, the foundation has helped to create independent organizations dedicated to the advancement of policing, including the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), and the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF).

Motivating all of the foundation's efforts is the goal of efficient, effective, humane policing that operates within the framework of democratic principles and the highest ideals of the nation.



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