

10-23-2023

Recruitment and Retention of Millennials and Generation Z in the Criminal Justice Field: How Do We Replenish the Ranks?

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Recruitment and Retention of Millennials and Generation Z in the Criminal Justice Field: How Do We Replenish the Ranks?

by

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October 2023

Submitted to Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS CRIMINAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP

Acknowledgement

To the Mayor, if it wasn't for your candid explanation as to why I would never progress in my current occupation I would never have undertaken this endeavor.

Dedication

There are several people I would like to dedicate this paper to who encouraged me to complete this journey. First, I would like to thank my parents for forcing me to attend college. Without that, who knows where I would be. I would also like to thank my children. If it wasn't for them, I would not have undertaken this journey. Last but not least, I would like to thank my tried-and-true partner for life, Shana. If it were not for your love and support, I don't know that I would have ever finished this program.

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Abstract

The Criminal Justice field is, and has been, experiencing a drastic decrease in the number of individuals willing to take on this unique calling. This decline can be attributed to several factors, primarily concerns about safety, the current political and social environment, work schedules, and personal life influences. The purpose of this paper and research is to examine the causes of the ongoing hiring crisis in the field of Criminal Justice and propose potential solutions. Through research, several contributing factors have been identified that can help agencies at various levels recruit and retain Criminal Justice candidates. This is an ongoing area of study, as the hiring issues are just beginning to emerge, requiring further research and investigation. Law Enforcement agencies and government will have to work together to present multiple viable options for the continued recruitment and retainment of Millennials and Generation Z in the Criminal Justice field. This paper will present some of those options while delivering other possibilities that have yet to be discussed or decided on.

Chapter 1: So, what's the problem?

Law enforcement, like every other employer in the world, is currently feeling the crisis associated with the lack of available candidates to fill open positions. This is not just an issue that is plaguing the United States, it is a global issue. There are multiple reasons why this is occurring, and why those factors are affecting the law enforcement profession specifically. This paper will discuss why it is so difficult for the Criminal Justice system to recruit and retain individuals and what many agencies are doing to combat the issue. Some agencies are turning to hiring incentives such as thousands of dollars in money up front, changing schedules, front loading time off, and for experienced officers they are increasing their pay rate and guaranteeing certain shifts.

As we discuss the topic of Recruitment and Retention of Millennials and Generation Z in the Criminal Justice Field, we will explore new and innovative hiring and recruitment ideas, as well as current proposals being discussed at all levels of government and society, to bring people back to this honorable profession. As we know, pursuing a career in law enforcement has not always been an easy task. Since it's earliest inception, law enforcement in the United States has always been fraught with danger. From the days of the wild west to the current era, violent encounters between police and suspects have always been a distinct possibility. But like soldiers going to war, police officers have always been seen as the guardians of society who people know they can turn to when they need help. Because of this, society has always looked at police officers as being trustworthy, caring, loyal, humble, and courageous.

In the last several years, there has been a large shift away from this profession. As we continue, we will discuss factors that have deterred individuals from pursuing this profession. These factors include social and political motivations, but also personal reasons such as self-protection or knowing that one could not physically, mentally, or emotionally do the job. Most importantly, hopefully some solutions will be presented that can assist current law enforcement agencies in replenishing their ranks.

In order to know what needs to be accomplished, we must first define what being a member of the Millennial generation and Generation Z means. Pew Research states a Millennial is an individual born between 1981-1996. As of 2019, Millennials represented the largest living adult population in the world due to the decline of the living Baby Boomer generation. Millennials are considered very adaptable because of the world incidents they grew up with, including the September 11th attacks, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the recession of the early 2000's. Because of the recession, Millennials were not raised in a strong economy which likely led to some of their traits such as living at home longer and postponing life events such as marriage, buying a house, and starting a family. Millennials, scientifically referred to as Generation Y, are the first generation to be raised in the modern era of technology which includes the internet, cell phone technology, and online gaming. (Pew Research, 2019).

Generation Z is considered any individual born between 1996 and 2010. According to Pew Research, unlike Millennials, Generation Z individuals were born into a strong economy and are considered the first generation to be known as "digitally native", meaning they are the first generation to not know how the world was prior to smartphone technology (Pew Research, 2020). Members of Generation Z tend to be more Democratic or Socialistic in political views and

believe the government should take a much stronger role in solving social and economic problems. Generation Z is also the most ethnically and racially diverse and is on track to be the most well-educated generation so far.

As part of this journey, we will explore not only why law enforcement agencies need to change the way they do things, but we will also look at the criminal justice system as a whole. This will include looking at the changes in how laws are enforced, to changes in the court system, to changes in the jail and prison system to reflect less harsh punishments, how probation handles their clients, and how coupling all of these changes together may lead to lower crime rates as a result of the changes proposed by Millennials and Generation Z. This section is important to the research as it will assist the reader in understanding the changes Millennials and Generation Z want to see in our current criminal justice system. As with any person, change cannot happen without its agents, and having ownership in changing the criminal justice system will help bring more candidates back into the profession.

Once we have explored the changes suggested in the criminal justice system, we will look at potential legal issues facing employers as they offer huge incentives and other bonuses in order to attract prospective candidates while current employees are not afforded the same incentives or bonuses. While there is not much research available on this portion of the topic, it is certainly an important part of this discussion as it pertains not only to the retention of new employees but also to the retention of current employees. Potential legal issues that have not been explored yet pertain more to the current employees, as these employees are being left behind in this hiring frenzy. This paper will discuss potential litigation such as discrimination lawsuits that could be brought against employers. While past lawsuits for discrimination and

unfair business practices have, for the most part, been unsuccessful as age discrimination or current incentives are not considered illegal, there is the potential that some of these hiring incentives could turn into lawsuits that may be winnable unless departments take some action to show their current employees that they are valued too. If departments do not do anything to retain their current staff, there is no incentive for them to stay.

By the end of this paper, the reader should have a better understanding of where staffing levels in the Criminal Justice System were, what they currently are, where they need to be in order to move forward, and what can be done to help get them there. This will include presenting recruitment and retention strategies for Millennials and Generation Z in greater detail, presenting the changes that are needed in the criminal justice system as a whole in order to recruit and retain Millennials and Generation Z, and potential legal implications associated with current hiring practices such as hiring incentives and bonuses that, in the long run, could jeopardize the current staffing levels departments already have.

Chapter 2 – The Research

Over the last century, the face of Law Enforcement has taken on many different roles. In what used to strictly be enforcing the law and arresting those that broke it has now turned into a variety of roles including that of social worker, peacekeeper, marriage counselor, medical professional, attorney, and mediator amongst many other roles. With all that is expected of law enforcement officers in today's world, it is no wonder why it is getting harder and harder to find people willing to step up and take on the many above listed responsibilities. Coupled with today's current political and social climate, with the narrative being portrayed that police officers are not to be trusted as they once were, is having a large impact on the number people entering the law enforcement career.

There have been several changes over the past decade that have greatly affected departments, big and small. One of the greatest changes has been the decline of the "baby boomer" generation in the workforce. This generation is the largest there has ever been in United States (and the world's) history, so it comes as no surprise that as they retire there simply are not the number of people available anymore to take their place.

In an article published on December 25, 2020, for the Missouri Sheriff's Association, according to research conducted by Richard Fry on the 2018 US Census data that the U.S. workforce was comprised of the following generational percentages: Baby Boomers (25%), Generation X (33%), millennials (35%), and post-millennials (5%). Millennials are currently the

largest cohort (35%) in the workforce (Fry, 2018). The premise of this article was to assist current law enforcement leaders in knowing with demographic they should focus most on recruiting to attract the right individuals to the field.

Some of the suggestions included changing the hiring process and adapting to the new “social norms”. The new “social norms” include the use of social media to advertise and promote the agency, using hiring companies such as “Indeed” to assist in finding qualified candidates, the use of billboards and radio ads, and making the hiring process overall more streamline by having online job applications that can be filled out on smartphones to help attract people into the field.

The author, Dr. Nicole Cain, pointed out that law enforcement has not done an exceptional job of recruiting potential candidates. Cain suggests that law enforcement open its doors by attending job fairs and college fairs, and allowing prospective candidates to conduct “ride-alongs” so they can see firsthand what the hiring process looks like. Cain also suggests the use of social media platforms to highlight what officers do in the field on a daily basis. Cain proposes that through transparency, meaning through law enforcement being more open and clear about what an officer does on a daily basis, law enforcement will attract more candidates because they are not just seeing what is presented on the news. In a recent conversation this author had with a local resident, the resident confided that they had a child who was excited to go into the field of law enforcement until the recent social unrest and stories of officers being arrested and charged for crimes they may or may not have committed by the media.

Another suggestion, also written for the Missouri Sheriff's Association on May 6, 2022, by Paul Peluso was to begin grooming prospective candidates as young as high school. Peluso (2022) likened this type of hiring process to that of Major League Baseball's "Farm System", where law enforcement agencies begin grooming prospective officers at a young age. This could be accomplished by creating an explorer or volunteer reserve officer position. Peluso (2022) suggests engaging high school students who have an affinity for law enforcement at an early age and getting them into the field as soon as possible so the prospective student can determine if the career is a good fit for them and also give agencies an opportunity to determine if a student would be a good fit for law enforcement.

Programs, such as explorer posts, give students a small taste of what the law enforcement world is like in a controlled environment. This provides students with the opportunity to learn law enforcement tactics and techniques that they can take with them as they graduate high school and enter college. Students can further develop their skills once in college by being volunteer reserve officers. In this capacity, students not only get to ride along with officers and see more of the day-to-day functions, but they are also allowed to do more hands-on activities like patrol in a squad car, direct traffic at events and, depending on the department, assist with calls for service.

Also, as part of the Peluso (2022) "Farm System", instead of terminating of an officer that is not a good fit for a certain department because they are not learning quickly enough or cannot handle the number of calls for service and paperwork, Peluso suggests "trading" the officer to another department where they might be a better fit. In this type of situation, an officer that may be struggling at a larger agency could go to a smaller agency where they would

have time to develop their skills. Once the officer has learned and shown proficiency in being able to handle calls for service, the officer would be sent back to the original agency in exchange for another officer that may be struggling. Much like how baseball players are traded between teams and levels of play. Larger agencies are able to sustain such trades, giving away inexperienced officers for one or two experienced ones from smaller agencies.

While this type of recruitment may work in some states that have training academies or state-run law enforcement schools, not every state trains its officers in this manner. Also, not every department pays the same. Minnesota, for instance, does not have a state training facility for officers. Instead, it is up to the various colleges throughout the state of Minnesota to provide prospective candidates with the required knowledge to pass the POST test.

Other states, like Delaware, have a state academy that all potential candidates must attend in order to become an officer. In contrast to Minnesota, states that have state run academies may have less stringent guidelines for acceptance into the academy. Some states, particularly states in the southern United States, require only a high school diploma and a 16-week academy to become a police officer.

Also, in states like Delaware, it can be a lot easier to find a potential candidate because they have already passed any physical or psychological testing required and have been accepted into the program, thus alleviating the need for agencies to do it a second time. This screening can show that a candidate might not fit well in a large department but would fit in a smaller department.

The “Farm System” is not without its costs though, as smaller departments are often the training grounds, and these departments spend a considerable amount of their resources developing these officers only to have them leave for larger agencies with little or no recuperation of the training costs. In an interview conducted by Peluso (2022), an unnamed Chief of Police in Delaware stated this was something they were willing to accept if it means maintaining minimum staffing levels. This Chief was well aware that they were a small agency (only 4 officers) and accepted that they were going to lose officers to other agencies because they could not afford the salaries the bigger agencies could provide.

Another way to offset these costs is through grants. Through grants, an agency may be able to grow the size of their department to staffing levels required to police their area or provide better police services to the community. Unfortunately, over the last several years, grants that were once available to smaller law enforcement agencies have been dwindling due to government cutbacks. This is because the majority of the grant money available often goes to the larger agencies to maintain their minimum staffing and equipment levels. Because the Sheriff is not receiving the grant funds they used to, they are unable to compete with the salaries larger departments offer and are slowly losing officers through the process of attrition to these departments and retirement.

A recent illustration of this was addressed during a violent crime summit that the author attended in St Paul, MN on July 19, 2022. Not only did the keynote speakers, which included current Ramsey County Sheriff Bob Fletcher, address the topic of violent crime; but a key discussion was had amongst the panel about departments “stealing” staff from other departments. While this was not the main focus of the summit, it was an important topic to be

discussed amongst the panel members because it touched on how departments not being at full staffing levels has hurt a department's ability to proactively deter crime, thus leading to more violent offenses.

A Lieutenant from the St. Cloud Police Department addressed their current staffing levels and how they are unable to compete with comparable size departments like Maple Grove, Woodbury, Bloomington, and Eden Prairie due to tax revenues these departments receive and incentives they offer lateral transfer officers. The Lieutenant addressed that their department was down 15 officers, and were recruiting heavily at local colleges and universities, but were still unable to sustain their allotted strength. The Lieutenant said the major reason St. Cloud Police were not able to sustain their numbers was that they simply could not pay what these departments were paying.

The author's own department was a recent casualty of this type of "stealing" when a 14-year veteran of the department left for a nearby agency because that agency guaranteed the officer dayshift hours and only \$.50 less per hour in pay. As previously stated, this is where it is important to take care of your current staff in order to retain them. While there were other mitigating factors in this particular officer leaving, had that officer been given what they felt was fair compensation then they may have stayed. Again, this is all up to personal perspective in this incident, but the reason most people leave their current department is because of pay and benefits.

This brings up the question of retention and what it would take for an experienced officer to stay with their current department, and could that department financially sustain

retention “bonuses”? Many departments are focusing on recruiting new officers and are paying little attention to keeping the officers they currently have. This will be addressed again later in this paper; but some of the creative problem-solving solutions that have been discussed have been significant pay raises, no income tax for first responders, lifetime health benefits paid for by the department or State, “perks” such as take-home vehicles, offering two week paid sabbaticals every few years, bonuses for good work, and other incentives by department.

Yet another challenge facing employers is loyalty to the department, or more specifically, lack thereof. Several recent studies have shown that the Millennial and younger generations lack the traditional loyalty towards their employers found in older generations. In a paper written by T. Hubbard in 2019, he discovered a 2010 study conducted by J. Mosmon that suggests “Loyalty to the department is not automatic with this generation. They will quickly leave if not satisfied or motivated with their position in the department (p. 3)”. Other key factors in why Millennials are willing to leave employers include a need to know their role in the agency, flexibility with scheduling, and that they are not accustomed to the “militaristic” command structure that agencies typically follow (Hubbard 2019). Mosmon’s study (2010) did find that Millennials seemingly have a strong work ethic yet require constant attention and praise for what they accomplish.

In the author’s own department, the author has seen some of the behaviors outlined in Mosmon’s study (2010) such as the need for constant praise, do not take criticism well, but that they are hard working. At the moment, the author’s department is split. 50% of current staff are Baby Boomers or Generation X, while the other 50% are Millennials or younger. There is an

almost 10-year age gap between the two sides. This is partially because for a long time there were not any openings in the department. In 2007, the department had a hiring process for the first time in almost 15 years. Prior to that opening, the last opening for employment was in 1993. When the author was hired in 2007, the age gap between the author and the next eldest employee was nine years.

Since 2007, the department has hired nine new officers, turning over almost the entire staff as the department has a current staffing level complement of ten officers. Since 1973, when the department was conceived, it had never lost an employee to another agency because the department was so well paid, and the benefits were second to none. The 2007 hiring of two new officers was to replace two officers that were retiring. Starting in 2009, and in the years that followed, one officer left to be the Chief of Police at another agency, one officer was terminated (a first for the department), four officers retired, two officers moved on to other departments and were replaced, and two totally new positions were created, bringing the current compliment of officers to 11 total. Of those 11 current officers, 5 are from Generation X. The other 6 are Millennials or younger. The baby boomers have long since retired. Your author has seen the differences between the generations that the studies have shown. Younger officers on the department, and neighboring agencies, have worked extremely hard to prove their worth and are very self-motivated. Their comradery is second to none, if you are in the right groups. These groups do everything together, to the point of creating social media pages to offer each other support. They consistently have social gatherings with their families, rely on each other to help watch and raise their children during their shifts, and form their own

miniature social groups within the much larger organizational group of Law Enforcement officers. As a result of these social groups, elder officers are often seen as being adversarial.

Researchers suggest that a way to combat this adversarial behavior is to implement mentoring programs. Through these programs, Millennials and younger generations can learn the more traditional aspects of policing while still maintaining their individuality within the organization. Again, as previously mentioned, Millennials and Generation Z have a need to feel appreciated and valued. By having the department liaisons to assist Millennials and Generation Z in their integration into the department, they will be able to find the niche in the department sooner and therefore feel more accepted by their elder peers.

“Other discussions are currently being had at the Capital level” in a candid interview conducted with Chief of Police Steve Hansen (2022). Chief Hansen (2022) admits there is a shortage of qualified candidates, and that it will be some time before the “ranks” are replaced.

Chief Hansen (2022) advised the State of Minnesota is looking at several options to retain current police officers, no matter what agency they work for because the labor shortage is so high. Chief Hansen explained the State is looking at offering healthcare incentives to employees who stay past minimum retirement age, monthly bonuses to officers who stay with their current departments, incentives for retired officers to return to duty, free college to those looking to go into the Emergency Medical System (EMS) field (specifically police and paramedics), no State Income tax for first responders, and several other solutions. Chief Hansen said some of these are short term fixes, while others are intended to be long term solutions to attract people back into the law enforcement field. By utilizing some, or all of these, the hope is

to retain the minimum staffing levels most departments are currently experiencing until the “new blood” can come in to law enforcement.

Change is inevitable in any organization, career, or business. Looking at history, even the very family dynamics we were raised with have changed. These changes include the opinions and attitudes of the next generation such as familial beliefs, personal values, and societal influences. While population numbers play a large role in job retainment and recruitment, so does interest in the jobs that need to be filled. Many Millennials and beyond are hardworking and want to do a good job, but they are not going to stick with an employer that they feel does not appreciate them. Through mentoring, incentives, transparency, and better recruitment staffing levels will eventually increase to meet the current demands.

For centuries the United States, and several other countries, criminal justice systems have been focused on physical punishment, meaning jail or prison time for crimes committed, rather than reformation and rehabilitation. Since humans inhabited the earth, it seems there has always been some sort of punishment for wrongdoing. Whether it was leaving Ungar out for the dinosaurs or gladiators fighting to spare their lives for their crimes; punitive punishment seems to always have been the standard for the criminal justice system, until now....

Recently, the growing trend in corrections is to seek rehabilitation and reform over punitive punishments. In short, society has seen that punitive punishment is not curtailing criminal behavior. Statistics have shown that educating those that commit crimes has had a positive impact on recidivism rates. But education alone will not decrease the problem. There is

a myriad of factors that play into whether a convicted felon will reoffend or not. These factors include their upbringing, family & friends, employment, and other factors.

To assist in reducing the recidivism rates, a repeat offender needs to receive a higher education, but also depends on that offender changing the way they think (Mereness, J 2023). Cognitive Behavior Intervention (CBI) plays a substantial role in improving an offender's chances of not reoffending. Both of these concepts play into the Millennial and Generation Z's opinions that government should be taking a larger role in the problems that are plaguing society. Previously, the Criminal Justice system has primarily focused on physical punishment, meaning putting offenders in prison to repay their debt to society.

Cognitive Behavior Intervention (CBI) focuses on "retraining" an offender's brain to keep them from making the poor choices they made in the first place. With this theory in mind, several nations, including the United States, have now turned to this theory of reform. The thought, and notion, is by training offenders to "re-think" the way they are used to, meaning they re-program their brain to fit societal norms, they will no longer commit crimes and will instead be upstanding members of society.

As previously stated, nations for centuries have deemed punishment for crimes to be punitive in nature. So much so that the United Kingdom once sent its prisoners to an island, now known as Australia. Perhaps part of the British government's failure in that particular plan was that the island they chose was inhabitable?

Another consideration that perhaps the British did not think of, and did not recognize at the time, is that people can and will change their way of thinking over time. This is a prime

example of Cognitive Behavior Intervention as mentioned previously. In the scenario of the Australians, the “criminals” changed their thinking from criminal to survival. In doing so, they actually made a powerful and independent country, which to date is thriving! While still under semi-British rule; only in the sense that their government is loosely based on British rules and regulations; this scenario has shown that CBI works and works well.

So how can we apply CBI to United States corrections and what effect does it have on the upcoming generations? The answer is that there has been a dynamic shift in corrections in the United States. Many states are going away from “punitive” prison or jail sentences; meaning locking people away in their crimes; to reformative sentences meaning they are in favor of probation, education, and rehabilitation. This coincides with Millennials and Generation Z being two of the most highly educated generations of all. These two generations are changing their thinking in the way corrections should be carried out, and therefore automatically using CBI to reduce recidivism.

This is a drastic shift from a by gone era where previously, the “Silent Generation”, as noted by Pew (2010) where “Their dominant work values include honesty, organizational loyalty, conformity and a work ethic that incorporates hard work and moral values”. Today’s correctional system is based on seeing a person’s “worth” Mereness (2023) despite their personal flaws. In general, people tend to be fundamentally good. However, it is important to recognize that there are those who, despite the availability of programs for personal development and rehabilitation, opt not to participate and instead lead lives that can harm society.

There is obviously a benefit to society, as a whole, to educate those who are incarcerated. An illustration of this concept is presented in the movie "Shawshank Redemption". In that movie, one of the main characters, who is highly educated, takes it upon themselves to educate another convict who is uneducated. During that tenure, the educated convict gets placed in segregation for shenanigans but, ultimately, the other convict passes their high school equivalency, which makes the educated convict proud. Unfortunately, we never get to see if the now educated convict gets to do something with themselves and their new education as they are ultimately executed as part of a nefarious plot to keep the educated convict in prison.

The author watched a video about people obtaining their GED, AA, or BA degrees in correctional institutions. The author found this video very interesting in that this opportunity is offered to those in our correctional institutions. The author worked in a local jail facility, and knew GED programs were offered, however did not know AA or BA degrees were offered at no cost to the inmates. In the author's opinion, this seems somewhat unfair. The author understands everyone has a right to education, however the author also feels it is unfair when those who are incarcerated can obtain said education for free. The author also agrees that offenders who receive these educational incentives rarely reoffend. How do we make it so everyone can obtain a higher education in an effort to reduce crime rates? Unfortunately, that question is a difficult one to answer and no one has come up with a solution that will appease everyone.

How does CBI and thought-behavior link play a role? In his dissertation, Lee (2020) posits that there are two sources, the compositional and contextual effect, as to why upcoming generations feel the need for correctional reform. For the compositional effect, Lee states

“Regarding the composition effect, Millennials have demographic characteristics that might be related to more inclusionary attitudes toward correctional populations: (1) diverse composition, (2) higher educational attainment, (3) decreased religiosity, and (4) increasing numbers of Independents and Democrats.” (Lee 2020 pgs 67-68).

In summary, Lee’s (2020) thinking that the world is becoming more diverse and that the centuries of “white” rulers who favored punitive punishment over rehabilitation are ending. Further, more and more people are obtaining higher levels of education, religion does not play the role in people’s thinking that it used to, and more people are leaning towards more open and liberal thinking. What this means for recruiting and retaining upcoming generations in the field of law enforcement is that law enforcement needs to shift its way of functioning as well.

We have seen a much larger number of diverse cultures entering the law enforcement field. Historically, law enforcement was primarily a “white” culture. It was not until the early to mid-1900’s that African Americans began entering the field in larger numbers. It was even later than that that other ethnic groups began entering the “rank and file”. In the last 20 years that the author has been in law enforcement, there have been tremendous changes socially and in the law enforcement field, all of which have required a certain level of thought-behavior change.

As an example, when the author was in high school (private Catholic school), there was no such thing as an LGBTQ community or after school group. Students were expected to conform to societal norms and the teachings of Catholicism. Students openly admitting their sexual orientation (other than heterosexual), thoughts of changing their sexual identity, and

those who embraced and support those changes were often punished, or worse, expelled for being openly against the teachings of Catholicism. Today, that is not the case with the school and even the Catholic church. Women priests are now allowed in Catholic churches, something never allowed until the last few decades.

Like the Catholic Church, law enforcement too needs to expand its thinking and boundaries if it is to survive. In order to survive, law enforcement needs to become attractive again to upcoming generations. Lee (2020) states (specifically towards the correctional field) that “to the contextual effect on Millennials’ attitudes on correctional policies, two factors can be noted: (1) liberal political and social environment and (2) decline in crime rates.” What this means is that people are thinking more liberally about civil rights and, up until recent political events, a significant drop in crime rates since the 1990’s.

In a recent interview in which the author was interviewed by an upcoming student wanting to be in the corrections/law enforcement field, the student asked the author how their career changed from when the author started to the point the author is at now. After diligent thought, the author realized the way things were done back in 2002 is vastly different from 2023. This is a great example of thought-behavior change. Tactics have changed and so has the way things were once done. What used to be done in 2002 is no longer done in 2023 such as taking people to jail for driver license violations.

One of the biggest changes has been regarding what today is being called “Persons in Crisis” or mental health concerns. In 2002, if a person was armed with a knife and threatening to kill themselves, Officers would use all available means at their disposal, even if it meant using

physical force, to prevent this person from harming themselves. In today's world, as long as the person does not present harm to others, Officers will try to help them but if attempts are unsuccessful, law enforcement will simply walk away and let the person do what they are going to do. While this may seem cold or uncaring, the ultimate goal is not to risk the safety of the officers or anyone else by creating the need to use force.

While there has been a recent surge in police chases, carjackings, armed robberies, and other violent crimes, over the past decade crime has been decreasing mostly in part to offenders receiving an education and the use of CBI. What has also been decreasing is the number of applicants into the field because Millennials and Generation Z do not want the work hours associated with the field. A way to curtail this would be to appeal to their way of thinking, in which they can be the agents of change on a frontline basis. This would mean showing Millennials and Generation Z that they can start the change process through positive interactions with the 'dregs' of society. The author does not feel that upcoming generations are afraid to work, it is that they need to see instant results. By allowing them to have a "hands on" approach to societal change and reform, they may change their way of thinking about law enforcement and decide they can be an agent of change.

Chapter 4 – Of Course, There are Legal Issues

In the last few years, it has become increasingly difficult for law enforcement agencies to not only hire new employees, but also retain the employees they already have. Over the last two years, law enforcement agencies across the country have seen record numbers of officers leaving for a variety of reasons. Some of these reasons have been personal, they've reached

retirement age, departmental issues, political reasons, or just better pay and benefits at another agency.

Some of the losses of personnel were to be expected. With the “baby boomer” and “Generation X” generations reaching or beginning to reach retirement age, it seemed only fitting that they were being phased out and that it was up to the next generations to pick up where they left off. The unfortunate facts are that those generations are not doing that. Fewer and fewer millennials and members of “Gen Z” are seeking careers in the law enforcement field for various reasons. Some of those reasons include pay, benefits, retirement and political atmosphere.

For those reasons, recruiting people into the field of law enforcement is becoming more and more difficult. In fact, according to an interview conducted with Chief Steve Hansen (2022) earlier this year, Chief Hansen (who sits on a state discussion board to address this very topic) stated current serious discussions are being held at the State Capital on how to keep seasoned veterans on duty, more to come on that later.

Over the past decade, there has been a steady increase in officers quietly retiring or leaving the profession from stressors that cause Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD has become a silent leader in premature departure from service over the last decade as more and more agencies and officers are realizing the physical and emotional stress and toll this profession takes on an individual. More and more, your author is seeing sad stories of young officers who have tragically lost their lives to suicide due to the stressors of this profession and the stigma surrounding getting mental help. Even those young people who want to come into

this profession are unfortunately unprepared for what they are going to encounter and how to deal with those issues effectively.

Another problem agencies face is millennials and Gen Z populations do not have the same loyalty or commitment to employers' previous generations had. Baby boomers and Generation X were brought up to remain loyal to an employer, even if they could have gotten a better deal elsewhere. That is not the case with these two generations. The moment a better deal comes along millennials and Gen Z employees will leap at the opportunity to have better pay, a better schedule, better equipment, or any combination of these. How does an agency combat this? What are some of the legal implications?

To control the losses, some departments have resorted to offering large hiring bonuses, front loading vacation and sick pay (or Paid Time Off {PTO} if the department combines the two), starting new employees at top pay, allowing longevity or seniority from another department over less experienced officers who have more time with the department, and guaranteeing certain shifts or workdays. Many agencies are also in current contract negotiations to bring their salary limits up to be more competitive with other careers outside law enforcement. And the worst result from the lack of a qualified candidate pool is that many smaller agencies are forced to dissolve. This is not because they are not authorized to have a department anymore, or did anything wrong, they simply do not have the bodies to staff their departments and serve their communities.

It is hiring bonuses and issues like those noted above that could result in future potential litigation. At the time of this paper, the author was not able to locate any litigation pertaining

directly to law enforcement and the bonuses that are currently being offered. While offering things like hiring bonuses, starting at higher pay or increasing pay steps sooner, front loading vacation, adjusting schedules to allow for time off, and giving recruits preferred or desired shifts are not illegal, there are potential litigation issues that could be brought forth in future contract or separation negotiations. Some of these include current employees wanting a straight and set amount retention bonus based on years of service, bonuses based on proactive work, extra pay for duties other officers do not perform such as being evidence room technician, instructor pay, Field Teaching Officer (FTO) pay, and even life-long insurance benefits.

However, the author was able to locate several cases pertaining to age discrimination, specifically older employees being discriminated against strictly because of their age. While that line of discrimination is not specifically what the author's thesis is about, it does play part of a role in this paper as it is a possibility that older or veteran officers could file a complaint or lawsuit against a city that is giving bonuses to new and younger officers, bonuses that were not afforded to the veteran officers when they first started or given to them to retain their services. It has been rumored that because of these bonuses, several officers have left their current departments to go to other departments offering these bonuses.

Over the years, there have been numerous lawsuits filed alleging discrimination, and for the purpose of this paper, the author will briefly focus on age discrimination. Age discrimination, according to the website bloomberglaw.com, is defined as a person being disadvantaged or treated unfairly because of their age. As also noted by Bloomberg, age discrimination happens to both the young and the old. For the author's research topic, age discrimination does not factor in but is expected to be a future issue as older, more veteran

officers begin to file complaints and lawsuits against agencies because they are not being afforded the same bonuses being offered to recruit new officers.

However, an agency could easily argue that the bonuses, pay rates and vacation time already accrued by the elder officers far outweigh what the recruits would be receiving. As pointed out by Bloomberg (2022), it is actually quite rare that someone wins an age discrimination lawsuit. However, Bloomberg also noted “In a survey conducted by the American Association of Retired Persons in 2018, 61% of workers 45 and older reported seeing or experiencing it. A study by the Urban Institute and ProPublica published that same year found that 56% of workers 50 or older were pushed out of longtime jobs before they chose to retire.” (Bloomberg 2022). While most age discrimination suits rarely succeed, only about a 2% success rate, most cases never reach trial and are usually settled outside of court in the form of severance pay for lost wages to the elder employees (Bloomberg 2022).

To curtail the issue of older officers feeling that they are not being treated the same as potential recruits, an agency can even out the hiring bonuses through contractual negotiations. By giving older employees large market adjustment percentage increases in pay, the employees can actually make far more than the \$5,000-\$10,000 bonuses some departments are offering. For example, the author (hypothetically) makes roughly \$100,000 per year. In their current contract negotiation, the author’s bargaining unit is asking for a 10% wage increase which equals approximately \$10,000 in the next year as well as consumer usage percentage (CUP) which varies based on the economy. For the terms of this contract, the author’s bargaining unit is requesting no more than 8% but no less than 5%. This means if the predicted CUP is 7.5% for 2024, that is how much the author’s cost of living adjustment (COLA) will be for that year. If the

CUP is higher than 8%, the author gets no more than 8%. If CUP is lower than 5%, the author still gets the minimum 5% COLA. If, based on the above hypothetical numbers and the \$110,000 the author would now make in 2023, the author potentially will make \$118,250 in 2024 and \$124,162+ thus giving the author an almost 24% increase in their wages over the next 3 years.

As pointed out in the interview with Chief Hansen, this is a substantial amount compared to the \$5,000-\$10,000 onetime bonus a new recruit would get, considering starting pay at the authors agency is \$79,000 per year. Coupled with the extensive time off the older officer already receives, and if that time off is front loaded, the older officer still comes out vastly ahead of the new recruit.

Of course, this only pertains to a new recruit fresh out of training. An older officer may have an issue with another seasoned officer that has transferred from another department making close to or the same amount the veteran officer is. To counter this, Chief Hansen (2022) said the transferring officer's pay would be prorated to years of service. It does not make much sense for a seasoned officer to leave their department if the benefits aren't there, so a lot of departments that are willing to allow lateral transfers will usually start those officers with some or all of the benefits they had at their previous agency in exchange for their experience and potential leadership.

This seems equitable if a department wants to survive in this struggling time of employment, however it is not economically feasible to keep taking officers from one department to supplement another. In a summit the author attended this summer, several large departments brought to light that they were slowly losing employees to other agencies because

they could not contend with the pay and benefits other agencies offer, thus leaving their own agencies short staffed. While these larger agencies contended that they had sufficient staff to meet minimum requirements, they were often operating at that, bare minimum. These agencies noted that it was taking a toll on their officers not only in that it was more difficult for their officers to get much needed time off, but also started noting their officers were “burning out” at a significantly higher rate and saw dramatic decreases in productivity. Several of the agencies noted that their overtime budgets were also much higher than they previously had been simply to cover required openings. The author’s agency is no different.

Statistically, employment is down nationwide simply because there are not enough people to do the work anymore. The millennial and Gen Z populations are numerically smaller than the baby boomer and Gen X generations, so it makes sense that the number of people available to actually do the job is not there. Furthermore, it gives these generations the “pick of the liter” on jobs that they want. Historically, when the author first entered the law enforcement field there were 200-300 applicants for one position. When the author received the position they did with their agency, the author was the second candidate out of 152 applicants for two positions with the department. The first candidate and the author are still with the department.

The author’s agency has a newly authorized strength of 11 officers. The agency is currently down 3 officers due to one officer leaving the department for another agency (reasons noted above), another officer out on family medical leave (pregnancy) and creating an additional position to assist with filling gaps in the schedule that would normally be covered by overtime. Thankfully the author’s agency was able to hire 2 recruits without the use of

monetary bonuses, however they were started at a higher pay rate (step 2) and will be front loaded their vacation starting January 1st, 2023. The front loading of vacation was not part of their hiring, but in this instance is being awarded as a special privilege by the Chief of Police as one of the officers had a planned honeymoon prior to employment and the other is an active service member. Both officers need to maintain their full-time status with the department in order to retain health insurance benefits, so for the 2023 year only, their vacation time that would be accrued that year will be front loaded so the officers can go on their honeymoon and attend required military training at no cost to them.

In conclusion, it is difficult to see the fall-out of current incentives being offered by departments. The author does not believe this will have a lasting effect because the practice of using hiring incentives is not financially sustainable and the potential cost associated with retaining current employees, should any of the aforementioned issues go to litigation, would devastate most cities and agencies. Most experienced officers understand the need for hiring incentives and, at the moment, they are willing to accept them so long as they do not become the precedent.

Chapter 5: Putting It All Together

What does this all mean for the current Criminal Justice practitioner? Like every business, leaders in the Criminal Justice profession need to have an infinite mindset when it comes to the Recruitment and Retainment of Millennials and Generation Z. This challenges Criminal Justice leaders to think outside the box and think long term instead of a “quick fix”.

As previously stated, the days of law enforcement agencies following a strict paramilitary structure are over. Millennials and Generation Z are willing to, and actually want to, work hard for the communities they live in. But these generations also want to be respected and have their thoughts and feelings heard on the situations they are facing. They also want to know that they are being taken care of. To them, being taken care of is no longer a good pension and health insurance benefits.

First off, Millennials and Generation Z want to know that they are being taken care of their entire career, with a large emphasis being placed on their mental health. For a Criminal Justice leader to succeed in hiring and retaining in today's competitive job market, they have to show new recruits that the recruit is the priority, in the beginning. Once the recruit is satisfied that their needs are being met, then they will start applying themselves to the overall goal of the agency.

Second, Millennials and Generation Z want opportunities. They want the opportunity to be able to show what they can do as quickly and frequently as possible. Do not be surprised if a young recruit puts in for an assignment or position that has historically gone to a more seasoned veteran. Also, do not discount the young employee's ability to handle the position or task. Many Millennials and members of Generation Z are eager to prove themselves and are willing to work extremely hard to show it. While they may not go about solving the task or providing a solution in the traditional manner, allowing them to use their talents and skills can often be the catalyst for change an agency needs to attract new recruits.

And lastly, don't be afraid of technology. Millennials and Generation Z are used to technology. The Baby Boomers and Generation X leaders of yesteryear were raised in an era where technology was just beginning. Millennials and Generation Z are the first generations to be raised without knowing what life was like before cell phones and the internet. They know far more about these things than we ever will, so let them use it to your advantage! They should be the ones controlling your social media footprint, managing hiring strategies and recruiting, and promoting your agency.

Lessons Yet to Be Learned

There is still a lot of research that needs to be conducted on this topic. While it will take several years for the true effects of events such as the George Floyd riots, Covid-19, and the simple loss of population to be fully understood, it is obvious there will be implications to the Criminal Justice field.

In our current time, there are not the numbers of people looking to get into the Criminal Justice field based primarily on the current social climate. A very vocal minority is spinning an agenda that is no different than the Marxist agenda that was pushed in the late 1960' and early 1970's. The pendulum swung to the far left for a period of time, much like it has today. But our government, our society, and our lives are based on balance. While that balance is currently off, it will come back to even at some point. That is where we will see our greatest return to this profession.

While that is still several years away, there are enough entering the Criminal Justice profession to keep order and they are the ones that will reap the benefits in the future. Those

entering the field in today's world are the pioneers for change in the future. They will be the ones that reinvent the Criminal Justice system.

Conclusion

The Criminal Justice system is not receiving the number of candidates it did 15, 10, or even 5 years ago. Where there once were hundreds of candidates applying for one position, there are now seemingly hundreds of positions for one candidate. Finding the right candidate for the position is no longer an issue, it is the candidate finding the right position for them. If a Criminal Justice entity wants to ensure they are doing what they can to recruit the best candidate, and hold on to them, they have to be transparent and show what they have to offer.

Millennials and Generation Z want growth, opportunities, mental and physical well-being, and to know they are valued and heard. Trust them with tasks they may not have been trained to do yet and be prepared to be surprised, because they will likely exceed your expectations.

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