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## Latino Police Officers: Negotiating the Police Role

Dawn M. Irlbeck  
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**LATINO POLICE OFFICERS:  
NEGOTIATING THE POLICE ROLE**

**A Thesis**

**Presented to the**

**Department of Sociology/Anthropology**

**and the**

**Faculty of the Graduate College**

**University of Nebraska**

**In Partial Fulfillment**

**of the Requirements for the Degree**

**Master of Arts**

**University of Nebraska at Omaha**

**by**

**Dawn M. Irlbeck**

**July 2000**

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Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College,  
University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree Master of Arts  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Committee

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Date *July 10, 2000*

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# LATINO POLICE OFFICERS: NEGOTIATING THE POLICE ROLE

Dawn M. Irlbeck, MA

University of Nebraska, 2000

Advisor: Dr. Lourdes Gouveia

Tension and mistrust have characterized relations between the police and Latino communities. Civil rights leaders and community groups argue that increased employment of Latino police officers will improve the quality of police services, based on the assumption that Latino officers will be better able to relate to Latino community members and will not engage in discriminatory behavior. This assumption presupposes that Latinos are a relatively homogenous group, readily encompassed by clear ethnic boundaries and a shared sense of ethnic identity. In addition to presupposing a unidimensional “Latino” identity, it also presumes that Latino police officers share a common vision of their police role in the Latino community stemming from this shared sense of ethnic identity.

This may, however, be far from a straightforward relationship. The growing Latino population is much more heterogeneous than in past decades. Latino police officers, who are primarily second and third generation middle-class citizens are now policing a Latino population that is increasingly diversified by country of origin, social class background, length of residence in the United States, educational and language skill levels, and other social and human capital variables. This study of Latino police officers examines public policy assumptions that Latinos are a homogenous ethnic group, and the

related assumption that Latino police officers share a common vision of their role in the Latino community, one that is more supportive of and better qualified to meet the needs of the Latino community.

Through systematic, in-depth interviews with the complete population (100%) of sworn Latino officers in Omaha, NE (N=34), I investigate the officers' attitudes regarding their ethnic identification and their experiences policing in a diverse Latino community. By illustrating various degrees of identification with the ethnic minority group as well as various degrees of identification with the Anglo majority, I delineate three general ethnic identity patterns expressed by the officers. I also examine socio-demographic factors relevant to identity formation and assess their explanatory value. Second, I investigate whether officers who identify with the Latino community do have, as policy predicts, more empathic and supportive attitudes. Two general approaches to policing in the Latino community are profiled. Implications are discussed.

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## Chapter I

### **Analytical and Methodological Issues: Understanding Latino Police Officers**

#### **Introduction**

Relations between the police and Latino communities have been characterized by tension and mistrust. Studies with community members reveal strong perceptions of police prejudice, harassment, and inappropriate use of force (Bayley and Mendelsohn 1969; Mirandé 1981; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1970). In support of community perceptions, official statistics also suggest unjust treatment of Latinos with respect to misdemeanor charges (Muñoz , Lopez, and Stewart 1998) and arrest decisions (Morales 1972; Petersilia 1983; Siedschlaw, Kelley, and Muñoz 1995).

Many civil rights leaders and community groups argue that increased employment of minority officers will improve the quality of police services, based on the assumption that minority officers will be better able to relate to minority citizens and will not engage in discriminatory behavior (Walker 1999). This assumption presupposes that Latinos are a relatively homogenous group, readily encompassed by clear ethnic boundaries and a shared sense of ethnic identity. Furthermore, it presumes that Latino officers share a common vision of their police role in the Latino community stemming from this shared sense of ethnic identity.

This may, however, be far from a straightforward relationship. The growing Latino population is much more heterogeneous than in past decades. Latino police

officers, who are primarily second and third generation middle-class citizens are now policing a Latino population that is much more diversified by factors such as country of origin, social class background, length of residence in the United States, educational and language skill levels, and other social and human capital variables.

This study of Latino police officers examines public policy assumptions that Latinos are a homogenous ethnic group, and that a Latino police force is more supportive of and better qualified to meet the needs of the Latino community. Through systematic, in-depth interviews with the complete population (100%) of sworn Latino officers in Omaha, NE (N=34) with at least one year of active duty, I investigate the officers' attitudes regarding their ethnic identification and their experiences policing in a diverse Latino community. By illustrating the various degrees of identification with the ethnic minority group as well as various degrees of identification with the Anglo majority, in the following chapter I delineate three general ethnic identity patterns expressed by the officers. In chapter three, I investigate whether officers who identify with the Latino community do have, as policy predicts, more empathic and supportive attitudes. Two general approaches to policing in the Latino community are profiled. In chapter four, the major findings and their implications are discussed.

It must be noted that since this study is based on in-depth interview data, it does not systematically or empirically investigate police community interactions or relations, nor does it directly measure the officers' style of policing. While these issues are important and warrant systematic investigation, they are beyond the scope of this study.

The study of Latino police officers and intra-ethnic policing is especially relevant for at least four reasons. First, while a few studies have been done with African American officers (Alex 1969; Dulaney 1984, 1996; Leinen 1984) and Tribal police (Hagan 1980) regarding intra-ethnic policing, issues of assimilation have not been as central an issue as they are with established, incorporated Latinos policing newly arrived immigrants. The paradoxical processes of assimilation influence individual, as well as group ethnic identity, which in turn can reinforce or change patterns of behavior. As the findings of Fernandez-Kelly (1998) indicate, at both the individual and group level, ethnic identification is a strategy choice that can be manipulated as circumstances demand.

High levels of discretion characterize the circumstances surrounding police work (Black 1980; Davis 1975; Walker 1993; Wilson 1968). Police officers' ethnic identity can be conceptualized as an independent variable that may effect police discretion. All police must find a personal style that solves certain work-related problems; fear and anger, gaining citizen compliance, and relating to peers and supervisors. In addition, minority officers must cope with discrimination, and must negotiate an occupational identity that responds to the stereotype into which they are cast by both their peers and the communities they serve (Martin 1994). This marginal status can cause minority officers to feel like an "outsider" both within the station house (Martin 1994) and the community (Alex 1969). An exploration of the role that issues of assimilation and identity negotiation play in the interplay between newly arrived immigrants and established minority officers who are incorporated into the existing

power structure can add a critical and timely dimension to what is known about the intra-ethnic police/community relationship.

Second, it has been argued that increasing the number of minority officers will help alter the traditional police occupational subculture (Walker 1999). Martin (1994) found that, as “outsiders within”, African-American female officers’ perspectives on policing challenge the prevailing, taken-for-granted notions about the police role and allow for alternative visions of policing. It is important to understand the ways in which Latino officers impact the traditional police subculture and to consider the impact on police/community relations.

Third, very few studies have been done with Latino police officers. Those in existence were carried out in the 1980s in cities whose demographic composition was primarily Latino, and changing demographics was not an issue (Carter 1986; Ross, Snortum, and Beyers 1982; Winters 1990). An opportunity to document the socio-demographic profiles of each Latino officer allows for a meaningful comparison between the socio-demographic profile of police officers and the community they police. Furthermore, analyzing the socio-demographic factors associated with each ethnic identity pattern allows for an assessment of their explanatory value for this cohort.

Finally, as Latinos are predicted to become the country’s largest racial or ethnic minority group by 2004, outnumbering African Americans (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1999a), they are an increasingly important population, both within the police ranks and in the community.

## **Background and Context**

With the progress of civil rights and changes in equal opportunity laws racial and ethnic minority group members have made considerable strides in terms of increasing their numbers hired among the ranks of the police (Stokes 1997; Sullivan 1989). Their numbers are growing and so is the number of minority citizens policed by minority officers. African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans are all becoming increasingly visible within the ranks, although the increase is slow and often modest (Walker and Turner 1992).

The United States Commission on Civil Rights (1981) notes that the under utilization of minorities in law enforcement agencies hampers the ability of police departments to function effectively in, and earn the respect of, predominantly minority neighborhoods, thereby increasing the probability of tension and violence. In Omaha, NE, through lawsuits and the threat of lawsuits, African Americans, Latinos, and the U.S. Justice Department have ensured that the city hires and promotes minority police officers in proportion with the Omaha population.

According to the terms of a consent decree entered into by the Latino Peace Officers Association, the city of Omaha, and the U.S. Justice Department in 1989, Latinos should make up 5.3 percent of each rank on the Omaha police force. In 1999 the 5.3 percent figure was raised by the city from the 3.6 percent required in 1998 in order to reflect the area's growing Latino population (Eiserer 1999). Besides acting as a corrective for past discrimination, one assumption implicit within this proportional representation mandate, as well as the above statements by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, is that



a Latino police force is more supportive of and better qualified to meet the needs of a growing and diverse Latino community.

This may, however, be far from a straightforward relationship. Studies show that relationships between first and subsequent generations of Latino immigrants can be characterized by tension as often as they are by empathy and solidarity. For historical and ecological reasons, first- and later-generations of Latino descendants live in social contexts unique enough that their social identities differ markedly.

Hurtado, Gurin, and Peng (1994), for instance, found that first-generation Mexican immigrants are primarily affiliated with the social groups from their country of origin and have yet to transfer their identification to groups in the United States. This, as opposed to later-generation immigrants, who, because of their greater competence in English, greater geographical dispersion, and greater occupational distribution, are located in more varied social structures. These diverse social connections contribute to identities based on their ethnic group's history, but also by their current connection to structures in the United States. The social identities of later-generation immigrants, therefore, are shaped in distinctively American ways, and are more closely tied to their cultural adaptations than are the social identities of newly arrived immigrants.

A 1992 national political survey of American-born Latinos, for example, found that 65 percent believed that there were currently too many immigrants coming to the United States. Furthermore, a majority of Puerto Ricans and Mexican-Americans believed that U.S. citizens should be hired over non-citizens (de la Garza, Desipio, Garcia, Garcia and Falcon 1992).

As Fernandez-Kelly and Schaufliker (1996) note, while the fate of immigrants and their subsequent generations largely depends on their unique socially and physically situated contexts of reception, collective identity also varies with the recasting of collective self-definitions. The marginalized immigrant condition can lead individuals to “engage in purposeful acts to signify their intended character and the way that character differs from, or converges with that of other groups...Some identities protect immigrants, others weaken them by transforming them into disadvantaged minorities” (P.31). With a growing immigrant Latino population, and a correspondent growth in anti-immigrant sentiments (Sánchez 1997), American-born Latino police officers may, or may not choose to act in ways that signify an identification with foreign-born Latino immigrants.

### **The Setting**

While the Southwest has historically been the destination for most Latino immigrants, growth of the Latino population in the Midwest is rising rapidly and is primarily immigrant driven (Aponte 1997). The Midwest has seen a dramatic increase in its Latino population during the last decade, rising from approximately 1.4 million in 1988 to nearly 2.3 million in 1997 (Gouveia and Saenz 1999). As a result of expanding U.S. global power and American military, political, economic, and cultural involvement in sending countries, linkages have been formed opening a variety of legal and illegal immigration paths for the Latino population currently residing in the United States (Rumbaut 1996a.). These foreign-born Latinos are primarily from Mexico but are increasingly diversified by country of origin. Significant streams of foreign-born Latinos

from Cuba, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and El Salvador have been documented by the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1997).

An important implication of this demographic shift is that the contemporary wave of Latino immigrants is largely comprised of prime working-age laborers, many of whom are sojourners, labor migrants who construct their migration strategies around a series of relatively short-term stays in the U.S. aimed at accumulating capital to invest back home (Massey 1998; Portes and Bach 1985). The largest proportion of foreign-born Latino workers hold blue-collar jobs and earns less than \$10,000 annually (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1998). Consistent with their sojourner status, of the total Latino foreign-born population to have arrived since 1990, an estimated 94.5 percent were not naturalized citizens (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1998). Not surprisingly, many of the newly arrived speak only Spanish or have low levels of English proficiency.

Nebraska has been a major recipient of Latinos immigrating to the Midwest. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1999a), between April 1, 1990 and July 1, 1998 Nebraska's Latino population increased by 96.2 percent, with an estimated 72,519 Latinos residing in the state. Latinos are now the largest minority group in Nebraska, outnumbering African Americans.

The city of Omaha's Latino population has also grown dramatically within the last decade. One strong indicator is that the Latino population in Douglas County, which is primarily encompassed by Omaha, more than doubled (102.3 percent increase) between April 1, 1990 and July 1, 1998, with an estimated Latino population of over 23,000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1999b).

In addition to Omaha's growing foreign-born Latino population, there is also a preexisting, well-established Latino population in Omaha that differs from the new arrivals along various socioeconomic and demographic variables. Despite historical continuities, there are important differences by occupation, class, and country of origin, due to the fact that most established Latinos were born in the United States, on average are older, primarily of Mexican descent, and largely monolingual (good English, poor Spanish). Furthermore, Omaha is a growing urban metropolitan city. This factor, according to Lopez (1998), who has studied Mexican immigrants in Omaha, NE, allows immigrants and their descendents more opportunities to improve their labor market skills the longer they reside in the U.S. These social and human capital factors, in combination with particular opportunity structures, have enabled many of the "older" Omaha Latinos to become assimilated into the occupational structure of the dominant Anglo society. Employment with the Omaha Police Department is one example.

By mandate of Nebraska State Statute all applicants for Omaha police officer must be citizens of the United States, and they must pass oral and written exams in English. For these reasons alone, the Latino police officers in Omaha are primarily second or third generation descendents of Latino immigrants. In other words, they are members of the "older, more assimilated" Latino population in Omaha.

The processes of assimilation for Latino officers have generated important social distances between Latino police officers and the Latino population they serve in Omaha, NE. Assimilation theory has made significant theoretical and conceptual contributions to understanding the process of immigrant incorporation and offers a starting point from

which to begin to deconstruct the complex processes of immigrant incorporation and adaptation.

### **Assimilation Theory**

Assimilation theory has dominated sociological studies on the incorporation of immigrant populations into U.S. society. In 1921, Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, of the Chicago School, provided an early definition of assimilation as:

...a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life (1969:735).

Park later described assimilation as the endpoint of racial and cultural conflict that begins with “contact”, and proceeds to “competition, accommodation, and eventual assimilation,” in a sequence that was viewed as “apparently progressive and irreversible” (1950:281).

The underlying assumption implicit in Park and Burgess’s discussions of assimilation is one of consensus. Shared experiences and history are expected to result in a shared common understanding of one another’s experiences. From this assimilationist perspective, removing differences allows for a more functional society. According to Park and Burgess, if the dominant Anglo social structural conditions allowed for the inclusion of immigrants and their offspring, assimilation would essentially occur through Anglo conformity. Assimilation was equated with upward mobility, so not only was there a strong belief in the inevitability of assimilation, but of the benefits it would afford the assimilated.

During the 1960's these functionalist assumptions of society came into question. Milton Gordon (1961, 1964) provided a multidimensional formulation of the concept of assimilation that helped to dissect and clarify the complex subprocesses of assimilation. He outlined four main subprocesses: structural (integration), cultural (acculturation), psychological (identification), and biological (amalgamation) assimilation.

Gordon's account of the assimilation process, unlike that of Park, allows for the possibility of acculturation without the other forms of assimilation necessarily following. For Gordon, though, structural assimilation, rather than acculturation, is seen as the lynchpin to completing the process of assimilation, which he, like Park and Burgess, still alludes to as a linear, irreversible process.

The most crucial distinction is one often ignored--the distinction between what I have elsewhere called 'behavioral assimilation' and 'structural assimilation'. The first refers to the absorption of the cultural behavior patterns of the 'host' society. (At the same time, there is frequently some modification of the cultural patterns of the immigrant-receiving country, as well.) There is a special term for this process of cultural modification or 'behavioral assimilation'--namely, 'acculturation'. 'Structural assimilation', on the other hand, refers to the entrance of the immigrants and their descendants into social cliques, organizations, institutional activities, and general civic life of the receiving society (including) those activities of the general civic life which involve earning a living (and) carrying out political responsibilities. (Gordon, 1961: 254-55).

According to Gordon (1964)

Like a row of tenpins bowled over in rapid succession by a well placed strike...*Once structural assimilation has occurred, either simultaneously with or subsequent to acculturation, all of the other types of assimilation will naturally follow...*The price of assimilation, however, is the disappearance of the ethnic groups as a separate entity and the evaporation of its distinctive values [emphasis in the original] (P. 80-1).

This straight-line process of assimilation may well have been the adaptation and incorporation process for the children of European immigrants of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Over the past thirty-five years, however, the origin, size and composition of the legal and illegal immigration stream into the United States has changed dramatically, largely as a consequence of the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965 and more recent amendments to it (Johnson, Jr., Farrell, and Guinn 1997). Participants in the “new” post-1965 immigration are phenotypically and culturally distinct from the immigrants arriving in the pre-1965 era, who more closely resembled Anglo-Americans in terms of their physical characteristics and cultural patterns (Johnson and Oliver 1989).

Contemporary assimilation research indicates that there are several reasons to question that straight-line assimilation has been (or will be) the course followed by non-European immigrants and their offspring in the latter half of the twentieth century. Among immigration researchers a debate exists between those who argue for the evidence of assimilation over time, and those who note that ethnic identification and expression can and do increase over time, particularly in light of perceived injustice toward that minority group. In fact, empirical evidence highlighting the paradoxes of assimilation--evidence that contradicts traditional expectations--shows that the assimilation process is both dynamic and unpredictable, rather than linear and inevitable, as traditional assimilation theory implies.

While the Latino officers in this study are structurally incorporated, due to their occupational status, for various reasons, they may or may not be assimilating along the traditional trajectory. First, the continuation of transnational activities among first

generation immigrants can offer their offspring a continuing connection to the homeland (Portes 1997). This is particularly true for Mexican immigrants for whom return to the homeland is relatively easy and frequent (Yinger 1985). Furthermore, it seems unlikely that there will be a break in the contemporary Latino immigration stream as there was with migration trends in the past (Alba and Nee 1997). With the continued presence of newly arrived Latinos, third-generation Mexican-Americans could experience a phenomenon of “resurgent ethnicity” which may accomplish the task of bridging the gap between Latino officers and the immigrant Latino community they serve.

de los Angeles Torres (1998), for instance, found that third-generation Mexican-Americans in Chicago have been instrumental in founding one of the country’s most vibrant neighborhood museums. The impetus for the persistence and resurgence of ethnicity in this case was attributed to the desire on the part of the later generations to reconnect with their ancestral homeland.

Ethnographic research in Southeast Los Angeles (Rocco 1997) reveals that continued Latino immigration into the area has allowed for Latino communities to flourish, ensuring a continuity between the culture of origin and the flourishing ethnic communities established in the United States. This cultural resurgence has impacted the immigrants, as well as the older generation of Latinos in two important ways. First, it has served to connect older generation Latinos with Latino immigrants through a shared community of culture. Yet, it has also served to connect them in their shared experiences of discrimination and marginalization.



These findings illustrate the point that generational status alone is not deterministic and unilinear regarding acculturation and the presumed positive outcomes for the assimilated. For instance, speaking the language of the dominant culture is seen as a key indicator that the process of acculturation has ensued, particularly when accompanied by a loss of the original language. Traditionally, a loss of the mother tongue, generally by the third generation, has been viewed as an important step toward upward mobility in the United States. However, current evidence shows that acculturation modes are not that clear cut. In one of the only systematic three-generation analyses of language maintenance and shift, Lopez (1982) found that while generation was the strongest causal effect on the loss of Spanish and subsequent shift to English, Spanish maintenance appeared to have some positive occupational advantages. In a similar second study Lopez (1982) reconfirmed these findings.

More recently, Oboler (1995) found that while Latino immigrants emphasized the importance of learning English, they simultaneously struggled to maintain their own language and customs, regardless of their social class, viewing bilingualism as valuable in people's lives.

Residential integration into more affluent predominantly Anglo neighborhoods is also a traditional indicator of structural assimilation. Lieberman and Waters (1987) found initial support for the assimilation hypothesis, as their findings illustrated a negative correlation between time spent in the country and co-ethnic spatial concentration. The same study, however, found that specific nationalities, such as Mexicans, continue to arrive in large numbers and choose to locate in the places in which their co-ethnics

resided half a century ago. Portes and Rumbaut (1996) argue that this residential pattern is likely a prudent incorporation strategy that allows for individuals to gain the social and cultural support that makes for psychological well-being as well as for economic gain.

Conventional assimilation theory also asserts that an income on par with that of an Anglo occupational reference group indicates a level of structural assimilation, which will in turn, lead to assimilation along other dimensions. Economic success however, can help immigrants to retain their ethnic identity, since successful immigrants have the means they can and do utilize their capital to bridge the gap between their ancestral lands and the United States (Portes and Rumbaut 1996). Flores (1997), for instance, found that while in the United States, many economically successful Latino immigrants and Chicanos have mobilized their resources to expand and defend the rights of undocumented co-ethnics, eroding borders between citizen and non-citizen, between documented and undocumented, and strengthening a sense of shared ethnicity.

The traditional assimilation model submits that, regarding immigrant populations, the higher one's education, the more favorable the attitudes toward American society, the less common the perceptions of discrimination, and the greater the willingness to surrender aspects of one's ethnic culture and to adopt that of the majority. Portes and Bach (1985), however, propose that conflict theory, associated with the ethnic-resilience perspective, predicts that as the education level of immigrant populations increases so will their awareness of discrimination. The more common perceptions of discrimination result in a consequent rising ethnic consciousness and the resilience of ethnic culture, acting as important instruments of resistance by ethnic minority groups. In fact, findings

from Portes and Bach's (1985) study of over 430 Mexican immigrants support the predictions of the conflict theoretical path regarding education and ethnic resilience.

Contrary to the predictions of straight-line assimilation theory, research on contemporary immigrant adaptation shows that retaining one's ethnic identity while incorporating into Anglo dominated social structures can have numerous positive payoffs. For instance, ethnic group solidarity and ethnic networks can be an important source of social capital. Ethnic or racial minorities can respond to the disadvantages imposed by the larger society by using a common ethnicity as a basis for cooperation to overcome structural disadvantages (Zhou 1997). Ethnic communities can offer several benefits that immigrants raised in predominantly Anglo communities do not have access to (Portes and Bach 1985).

For later-generation immigrants, social networks beyond the ethnic community increase the likelihood of intermarriage with an Anglo spouse, which is another traditional indicator of assimilation. While intermarriage is often used as the best measure of the extent of integration between two groups, rates of intermarriage, however, are not necessarily adequate guides to the extent of ethnic identity (Yinger 1994; Alba and Nee 1997). Intermarriage rates can be particularly misleading indicators of assimilation for Mexican descent Hispanics since intermarriage with Anglos is higher for Mexicans than for other groups, perhaps due to shared religious traditions as well as their long period of residence in the United States (Hutchison 1988). For example, Durand Desmos (1998) found that the increasing rate of ethnically mixed marriages does not indicate a unilinear process of integration into American society. Rather, his findings

indicate that ethnically mixed marriages allow for an extension of social networks and a renegotiation of cultural identities in even wider and more complex ways, but where retaining one's ethnic culture is still possible.

As Fernandez-Kelly (1998) points out, the capacity to choose among alternative identities and to use them to negotiate power in various contexts is clearly the indelible mark of human agency that straight-line assimilation theory virtually ignores. Research shows that immigrants, such as Latinos, who are phenotypically and culturally distinct from the pre-1965 European immigrants who more closely resembled Anglo-Americans, are less inclined than the European immigrants to blend fully into American society. Instead, most prefer to retain important aspects of their Latino cultural heritages and identities as they incorporate into the dominant Anglo society (Johnson, Oliver and Roseman 1989).

Immigrants and their descendants were much more likely to follow the traditional straight-line assimilation trajectory when immigrant populations were comprised of Europeans, as they were in the earlier part of this century. In a race-conscious society, the context of reception for non-white immigrants and their descendants is not as friendly as it was for European immigrants. The option of assimilation is less available to the second and later generations of most new immigrant groups because their non-European origins mean that they are more phenotypically distinctive (Alba and Nee 1997; Portes 1997). For instance, Torres and Ngin (1997) in their study of Latinos in California, found that racialized attacks on Latinos lead to an increased political consciousness as a minority group within a dominant society. A further contributor to this process of

resurgent ethnicity is the fact that Latino immigrants' perception of discrimination has been shown to increase with their length of residence in the United States (Portes and Bach 1985).

A perceived lack of opportunity and rejection at the hands of Anglo nativists can spur what has been referred to as a "reactive ethnic identity" (Portes 1997; Alba and Nee 1997). For example, Rodriguez (1996) notes how the anti-immigrant content of Proposition 187 in California led to "reverse assimilation," hastening further "Latinization of California" due to the resurgence of ethnic identity, and its political expression among California's immigrant and non-immigrant Latinos. Sánchez (1997) asserts that immigrant citizens and American-born ethnics who heighten their own political involvement on behalf of the rights of immigrants, do so as a strategy that acknowledges that their own ethnic identity and liberties are at stake. On the other hand, as an alternate strategy, American-born co-ethnics may align themselves more closely with the dominant Anglo norms and policies in order to distance themselves from an immigrant identity, and respond accordingly, depending upon the situation.

By illustrating Latino police officers' various degrees of identification with the ethnic minority group as well as various degrees of identification with the Anglo majority, I delineate various strategies of Latino ethnic identity negotiation. In addition, by exploring the relationship between Latino police officers and Latino community members, I show that assimilation themes and counter-themes are played out in a variety of complex and paradoxical ways.

### **Intra-ethnic Police-Community Relationships**

Minority police have historically been more effective at controlling their own ethnic group than Anglo officers, partly because they achieve greater legitimacy among those being policed (Barlow 1994; Hagan 1980). In his study of African American police officers, Alex (1969) found that minority officers could make claims to police status in direct proportion to their access to information in the African American community. Since the African American officers were better able to understand cultural symbols and their meanings they could therefore deal with African American community members more effectively. In fact, Alex found that sometimes those officers treated African American community members more harshly than did Anglo officers. He hypothesized that this was in part due to the fact that African American officers were working within, and constrained by an employment structure, within which they were assimilated, yet still had to prove themselves.

Within the sociology of occupations this is referred to as “the straw boss phenomenon”. It is said to occur when

...a native is given supervision over native workers...The notion is that such a person will know the peculiar ways of the workers, and will deal with them accordingly. He is a liaison man, a go-between. And wherever there are workers of some kind extremely alien to industry and to the managers of industry someone is given this function. He documents, in effect, the gap between the higher positions and the lower; and symbolizes the fact that there is no easy ladder of mobility from the lower position to the higher. He may be literally bilingual, transmitting the orders given in the European tongue into some vernacular; he is also bilingual in a broader figurative sense. He understands the language--the symbols and meanings--of the industrial world, and translates it into symbols which have meaning to people from another culture, who live in a different set of life-chances...He himself is mobile and ambitious. But the nature of his job rests on the lack of mobility of the masses. (Hughes 1962:564)

Bittner (1970) points out that a distinguishing characteristic of police work is that it is discriminatory in that it focuses primarily on the crimes of the lower classes. For example, white collar crimes, including acts that result in occupational death and disease, clearly cost society much more in terms of dollars and quality of life, yet non-violent street crimes are the prime target of our criminal justice system (Reiman 1995). To the extent, therefore, that certain minority groups, or certain segments of minority groups, are disproportionately concentrated in the lower classes, they will be disproportionately observed, stopped, searched, investigated, arrested, and even killed by police (Barlow 1994). Increasing the numbers of minority officers cannot change the fact that the police function as agents of social control, primarily enforcing laws protecting the interests of the upper classes who dominate the political process (Quinney 1974). While increasing the proportion of minority officers can have a significant impact on responsiveness to minority communities at the level of individual acts, no amount of cultural diversity will change the power relations that maintain certain segments of the population within the lower classes (Barlow 1994).

An additional function police officers serve is to educate new-comers as to the laws of the land and therefore also act as agents of assimilation (Taft 1991). It is important to understand the relationship that more assimilated Latino officers have with Latino community members who are assimilated to different degrees themselves (newly arrived foreign-born versus long time U.S. residents). Among second and third generation Italian-American police officers, for instance, DeLucia and Balkin (1989)

(1989) found that Italian officers' identification with the ethnic minority community had significantly declined by the second-generation, and among the third-generation cohort, was described as "mild." DeLucia and Balkin interpreted these results as support for the straight-line theory of assimilation. In this study, I also investigate ethnic identification among second and third-generation police officers, however, for reasons outlined earlier in this chapter, the modes of assimilation for Latinos, as descendants of non-European immigrants, are likely to be significantly different from those of Europeans immigrating early in this century.

### **Methods**

In this study, I utilize systematic, semi-structured interviews with the total population (100%) of sworn Latino police officers in Omaha, NE (N=34) with at least one year active duty. As a supplement to the primary data from officer interviews, I also conducted a preliminary study of a selected group of Latino community leaders. Systematic, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the community leader group (N=7), in order to identify, from their perspective, the major issues that have emerged in their direct or indirect encounters with Latino police officers in Omaha, NE. Finally, the examination of public records served as additional supplemental evidence, as well as serving as a cross-check on direct-response data.

#### ***Identifying the Latino Police Officer Cohort***

I initially contacted the president of the Latino Peace Officers' Association



(LPOA), a voluntary fraternal association. He<sup>1</sup> offered a letter in support of the project and agreed to contact all twenty-five members of the LPOA and invite them to participate in the study on a purely voluntary basis. I was given members' names and contacted them in order to confirm their desire to participate and to set up an interview. While some expressed initial hesitation due to sensitive political issues being raised at the time, all LPOA members ultimately agreed to participate. From the interviews with LPOA members, I continued with the snowball sampling technique by asking each officer at the conclusion of each interview if they knew of any other Latino officer not belonging to the LPOA. Via this technique I obtained the names of eleven more Latino officers, two of whom were new recruits. New recruits were not included in the study due to their lack of experience as police officers. Only officers<sup>2</sup> with at least one year of sworn, active duty on the force were included<sup>3</sup>. I contacted the remaining nine officers and invited them to participate in the study. As with the LPOA member group, some expressed initial hesitation, though ultimately all nine agreed to be interviewed raising the study population to thirty-four (100%).

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<sup>1</sup> In order to protect the anonymity of the small number of female officers in this study, all respondents will be referred to as "he." While responses suggest that at times, gender may even overtake ethnicity as a master status, the small number of female officers in this study precludes me from addressing issues related to officer gender without risking their anonymity. Clearly, issues related to officer gender are important and need to be explored further. For the most comprehensive work in this area see Susan Ehrlich Martin's (1980) "Breaking and Entering: Policewomen on Patrol," and more recently, Susan Ehrlich Martin's (1994) "Outsider Within the Station House: The Impact of Race and Gender on Black women Police," *Social Problems*, 41(3):383-400.

<sup>2</sup> While some of the study participants are at the rank of sergeant, the number is small enough that to identify them by rank would be to jeopardize their anonymity, therefore, all respondents will be referred to as "officer."

<sup>3</sup> Officers' years on the force range from one to thirty-three years, with a mean of eight and one half years of service and a median of seven. Officers' ages range from twenty-four to fifty-seven years of age, with a mean of thirty-four and a median of thirty-three.

In order to verify the comprehensiveness of the study population, I contacted the city personnel office to inquire as to the number of active, sworn, Latino officers. According to their records there are thirty-three active, sworn, Latino officers with at least one year on the force. I did not reveal to the personnel office the number of officers on my list, however, my contact in the personnel office was certain that the number of officers on my list would be greater than their official count. This is because the personnel office assumes that there are Latino officers on the force who do not acknowledge their Latino ancestry, even though they are strongly encouraged to do so.

As city employees, all officers are required to apply for employment with the police department via the city personnel office. As part of the application process, all applicants are asked to complete a form entitled “required equal opportunity/affirmative action information.” This form necessitates the marking of only one of five “ethnic background” options: (1) “White/Caucasian (not of Hispanic origin)”; (2) “Black (not of Hispanic origin)”; (3) “Hispanic: All persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race”; (4) “Asian or Pacific Islander: All persons having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands”; or (5) “Native American: All persons having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintain cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.” The application form also states, however, that “refusing to provide this information WILL NOT affect your opportunity for employment” [emphasis in original]. The applicant, therefore, may choose not to reveal information about their ethnic background. This

would be particularly easy for Hispanic applicants who do not exhibit traditional ethnic markers such as dark eyes and hair, and brown skin, in other words, those “passing” as white. Consequently, it is possible that there are officers on the force that could claim Latino ethnicity but have chosen not to for various reasons, possibly including the fact that they don’t self-identify. These officers would not be identified as Latino by the personnel department or by other Latino officers.

In addition, according to the Director of City Personnel, if an applicant does choose to indicate their ethnicity at time of application for employment, that information is considered personal, and consequently cannot be made public. The city, therefore, is prohibited from providing a comprehensive list of active, sworn Latino officers. In lieu of such a list I developed an exhaustive list of Latino officers via the snowball sampling technique described above.

Since I approached officers on the list and informed them that I was interested in interviewing Latino police officers, all of the officers that I interviewed, when contacted, confirmed that they are indeed considered a “Latino” police officer. Therefore, all officers interviewed acknowledge Latino ancestry to a certain extent by virtue of their participation in this study.

### ***Identifying the Latino Community Leader Group***

For the purpose of this study, Latino community leaders are defined as those persons involved in advocacy and other activities in the Latino community and for which they have gained public recognition as revealed by press articles and other media.

### ***Instruments and Data Collection***

***Instruments.*** Consistent with the descriptive aim of the study, the semi-structured interview instruments were designed to be exploratory and descriptive. Descriptive surveys seek to describe the distribution of certain characteristics, attitudes, or experiences within a certain population (Singleton, Jr., Straits, and Straits 1993).

Partially structured, informal interviews were conducted, where objectives were specific, and key questions were developed in advance, yet I was allowed the freedom to “adapt the interview to capitalize on the special knowledge, experience, or insights of respondents” (Singleton, Jr., Straits, and Straits 1993:249). I, therefore, take a “grounded theory” approach where participants’ responses were coded and analyzed for patterns by the constant comparison method, allowing conceptual categories to be informed by the empirical reality of the data, rather than imposing pre-constructed ideological categories (Glaser and Strauss 1965, 1967; Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990).

***Latino Officer Interviews.*** Interviews took place at the location preferred by the officer. Most interviews were conducted while the officer was on-duty, either in an interview room at the station house, or during a ride-along. Some officers, however, chose to be interviewed during off-duty hours. Those interviews primarily took place at restaurants or similar public establishments where the officer felt comfortable. Interviews took anywhere from two to eight hours. Time length was determined solely by the extent to which respondents chose to expand upon their answers.

***Latino Community Leader Interviews.*** Interviews took place at the location preferred by the community leader. Most were conducted either at the respondent’s place of

employment, their home, or at a restaurant. Interviews took anywhere from one to four hours. Time length was determined solely by the extent to which respondents chose to expand upon their answers.

***Examination of Public Records.*** Examination of public records such as institutional data available from the Omaha Police Department, and the City Personnel Office, organizational records from the Latino Peace Officers Association, such as copies of the consent decree entered into with the city and the Justice Department, and newspaper accounts (from both the city newspaper and the bilingual newspaper which thrives in the Latino community) serve as an enhancement to the interview data.

### ***Limitations***

Since this study is based on interview data, it does not systematically or empirically investigate police community interactions or relations, or individual policing styles. Furthermore, since this is an exploratory case study, validity and reliability are limited. Caution must be taken in extrapolating the results of this study to police in other departments, communities, or other metropolitan areas. Police settings vary by the composition of the force, and community politics and dynamics. The ways in which ethnic identity is negotiated in different contexts can be mediated by a multiplicity of factors. While this study takes an initial step toward questioning the process of ethnic identity negotiation for Latino police officers and its implications for police/Latino community relations, further study is needed regarding this complex process in various settings.

## Chapter II

### **Latino<sup>1</sup> Police Officers: Negotiating Ethnic Minority Identity**

The United States Commission on Civil Rights (1981) states that the utilization of minorities in law enforcement improves the ability of police departments to function effectively in, and earn the respect of, predominantly minority neighborhoods. Through lawsuits and the threat of lawsuits, the Latino Peace officers' Association, the U.S. Justice Department, and the city of Omaha, NE have entered into a consent decree, ensuring that the city hires and promotes Latino police officers in proportion with Omaha's growing Latino population. Besides acting as a corrective for past discrimination, one assumption implicit within this proportional representation mandate, as well as the above statements by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, is that Latino police officers are more supportive of and better qualified to meet the needs of the Latino community.

This assumption presupposes that Latino police officers are a relatively homogenous group readily encompassed by clearly defined and static ethnic boundaries. In addition to presupposing a unidimensional "Latino" identity, it also presumes that this shared ethnic identity will be infused into interactions between Latino officers and Latino community members in strictly positive ways.

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate, and ultimately refute, the widely held

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<sup>1</sup> The terms "Latino" and "Hispanic" will be used interchangeably as these terms were almost always used interchangeably by respondents, even when they initially indicated a preference for either Latino, Hispanic, a national-origin identity (such as Mexican or Spanish), or a hyphenated identity (such as "Mexican-American").

assumption of a “one size fits all” Latino identity by allowing the officers’ own words to illustrate the varied and complex ways in which they negotiate ethnic categorization. By illustrating various degrees of identification with the ethnic minority group as well as various degrees of identification with the Anglo majority, three generalized identity patterns are delineated: salient Hispanic/Latino, ambivalent Hispanic/Latino, and white/Anglo. Finally, I will examine socio-demographic factors relevant to identity formation and assess their explanatory value for this cohort.

Whereas this chapter focuses on divergent patterns of ethnic identity in order to refute the assumption of a uniform Latino identity, the following chapter focuses on ways in which Latino officers negotiate identities while fulfilling their instrumental role as police officers policing in the Hispanic community.

### **Ethnicity: A Negotiated Minority Status**

Although ethnic categories operate as if they were objective, even primordial markers of cultural identity, the crucial aspect of ethnic categories is that the characteristics that distinguish them are socially constructed and defined (Yetman 1991). Ethnicity, as such, is fundamentally an ascribed, yet negotiated social identity. Ascription refers to “the definition of group identities and the assigning of individuals to particular groups by outside agents, particularly political and economic elites in the larger, host society” (Kivisto 1992:8). To different extents in various contexts, however, individual actors have the capacity to negotiate ascribed social identities. Latino ethnic identity, therefore, as constructed by society, and negotiated by Latinos, is not an immutable given that is necessarily accepted by those who are placed in that category.

Shibutani and Kwan (1965) proposed an authoritative definition of ethnicity and ethnic groups suggesting that an ethnic group consists of people who see themselves as being alike by virtue of their common ancestry, real or symbolic, and who are so regarded by others. The primary advantage of this definition is that it focuses on the ascriptive element of ethnicity rather than exclusively on the cultural content.

Importantly, it also recognizes the fact that, while an affirmed sense of group identity or kinship may be the result of an ascribed ethnic identity for some individuals, it may not for others. As Hutnik (1999:19) notes, members of “minority groups in a subordinate position may develop a self-consciousness of a kind only because the dominant group perceives them as ‘somehow different’ and therefore erects barriers against complete assimilation.” Individual actors will negotiate and renegotiate both ascribed ethnic identities and their associated barriers in various ways. As Shibutani and Kwan’s definition highlights, both social structure and human agency contribute to the dynamic nature of ethnicity through the dialectical process of shaping ethnic definitions and boundaries.

A second advantage to Shibutani and Kwan’s definition of ethnicity is that by focusing on the subjective aspects of ethnic identification, their conceptualization of ethnicity is more appropriate for use with the second and third generation Hispanics whose overt displays of identity may appear indistinguishable from the dominant group but who may yet maintain varying degrees of identification with the ethnic group (Hutnik 1991).



### **Dimensions of Ethnic Minority Identity**

Scholars of ethnic identity and cultural adaptation have noted that ethnic minority identity is most clearly conceptualized along two main dimensions: one relating to the degree of identification with the ethnic minority group, and the second relating to the degree of identification with the majority group (Hutnik 1991; Waters 1999).

As stated by Hutnik (1991):

For the ethnic minority individual, multiple categories are readily available. Much depends upon the dynamic of the experiences of the individual with members of the ethnic minority group and members of the majority group...they will then place themselves at a self-chosen distance from the ethnic minority group and the majority group. In other words, the individual consciously articulates a stance towards each group and thus develops a strategy of self-categorization. (P. 152).

In fact, differences in the character and salience of ethnicity have been observed within the same ethnic group, the same ethnic neighborhood, and even the same family (Rumbaut 1996b).

The structure of ethnic identities is particularly complex for American-born post-1966 Mexican descendents, such as the members of this study cohort. Since members of the post-1966 generation are the most economically stable, affluent and educated group of Mexican descendents, the social identities from which they may choose are not only more numerous, but influenced in uniquely American ways (Hurtado, Gurin, and Peng 1997).

As previously stated, by virtue of their participation in this study, each of the officers interviewed acknowledges Latino/Hispanic ancestry to some degree. However, during the course of the interviews for this study, when reporting ways in which the

officers negotiated their ascribed ethnic identity, three general but divergent ideal type patterns emerged. Since the interview questions were largely open-ended, categorization of officers is based on a complex composite of answers that nonetheless reveal a number of consistent themes.

Before describing the identity patterns, it must first be noted that while this study delineates bounded categories for a rather fluid phenomenon, namely identity construction, these are not discrete categories but merely serve as a heuristic device. The categories used in this study are best conceptualized as tools for describing regions along an identity continuum that may even overlap (see figure 2.1, p.33). Since these are ideal type patterns no such ideal types are possible in “real life” due the incredibly complex nature of human interaction, and the power of human agency. In fact, early on during the interview process, it became readily apparent that there are conflicts surrounding ethnic identity, both within and between the officer groups, and even within individual officers. Therefore, although I am delineating generalized patterns and categories which emphasize similarities among officers within those categories, even within those categories there are clear individual differences.

Second, it must also be noted that I aim to avoid any implication of certainty about the role ethnicity plays in areas of the officers’ lives beyond what was addressed during the interviews. The interview questions query exclusively about ways in which ethnicity impacts their experiences as police officers, therefore, no conclusions can be drawn related to the role ethnicity plays in other aspects of their lives, such as relationships with family and friends. It is well established that the police role is

essentially a constant obligation due to the continual fear of danger (Westley 1970; Skolnick 1975) and the fact that police officers are legally bound to take action in the presence of a felony offense, even off-duty (Van Maanen 1995). However, there still may be important differences between on-duty and off-duty interactions, particularly between co-ethnics where cultural expectations can be adhered to off-duty without conflicting with the expectations of the police role. For instance, Matt<sup>2</sup> describes how he negotiates a balance between co-ethnic cultural expectations and police role demands, “*on-duty, Mexicans expect me to treat them with the same respect and customs as I would off-duty. They expect me to know. If you don't, you will be disrespectful, more so than just a white officer.*”

Finally, the three categories employed here are purely descriptive in nature and should not be read as either positive or negative evaluations or individuals’ chosen identity.

#### **Patterns of Ethnic Identity among the Cohort: Salient Hispanic/Latino, Ambivalent Hispanic/Latino, or White/Anglo**

This study utilizes the three descriptive categories *salient Hispanic/Latino*, *ambivalent Hispanic/Latino*, and *white/Anglo*, in order to identify recognizable patterns of ethnic identity. Each are operationalized along two dimensions. First, by assessing the degrees to which the officers identify with the Latino ethnic minority group, and second, by assessing the degrees to which they identify with the dominant Anglo group. From this two-dimensional analysis three general patterns become clear: (1) a salient

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<sup>2</sup> Pseudonyms have been assigned to all respondents in order to retain their anonymity. Anglicized and Hispanic pseudonyms were assigned with the same frequency they occurred in the respondent population.

Latino/Hispanic ethnic identity, where respondents identify with the ethnic minority group and distance themselves from identification with the Anglo majority group. A salient Latino/Hispanic identity was exhibited by twenty-five of the thirty-four officers (74 percent); (2) an ambivalent ethnic identity, where respondents express limited identification with the ethnic minority group combined with identification with the dominant Anglo group. An ambivalent Hispanic/Latino identity was exhibited by seven of the thirty-four officers (21 percent); and (3) a white/Anglo identity, where respondents only identify with the ethnic minority group insofar as they acknowledge that they have one parent who is of Latin origin, but who personally identify with the Anglo majority group. A white/Anglo identity was exhibited by two of the thirty-four officers (6 percent).<sup>3</sup>

### Figure 2.1 Ethnic Identity Continuum

←(white/Anglo)(-ambivalent Hispanic/Latino-)(-----salient Hispanic/Latino-----)→

N=2 (6%)                      N=7 (21%)                      N=25 (74%)<sup>4</sup>

#### *Salient Hispanic/Latino Identity: “I am Hispanic/Latino!”*

Responses from officers with a salient Latino/Hispanic identity generated patterns of statements that express a strong identification with the Latino/Hispanic ethnic minority group, combined with patterns of statements distancing themselves from the dominant Anglo group. Of the thirty-four officers in this study, twenty-five (74 percent) expressed a salient Latino/Hispanic identity.

<sup>3</sup> Percentage totals may slightly exceed one-hundred due to rounding.

<sup>4</sup> Percentage totals may slightly exceed one-hundred due to rounding.

***Strong identification with the Latino/Hispanic minority group.*** Officers with a salient Latino/Hispanic identity explicitly identify with the ethnic minority group. For example, when asked the question pair, “did you indicate your ethnic or racial group identification at the time of application for employment with the police department?” and “if so, why/if not, why not?” responses from salient Hispanic/Latino identity officers were as follows:

- *“Oh yeah,”* claimed Herman, *“when I came on the force the form said ‘white’ but I wrote in ‘Mexican’. I wanted them to know what I was. It’s that feeling of pride that the folks taught us, don’t ever be ashamed of what you are.”*
- Walter and Samuel both replied, *“Of course I put it down because I’m proud of what I am.”*
- *“It’s who I am, and I’m proud of that,”* stated Michael.
- Bob replied with a sort of laugh, as if to indicate that the answer was obvious, *“because it’s me. It’s part of me.”*

For salient ethnicity officers a sense of connection with their ancestors’ country of origin often serves as a basis for ethnic group identification. For instance,

- Jeff stated, *“I’m Mexican. All of my ancestry is from Mexico.”*
- Frank replied, *“I’ve always identified myself as Mexican.”*
- *“It’s the way I identify myself, because my name is Mexican,”* said Hector.
- Regarding his ethnic identity, Manuel stated, *“I’m third generation Mexican, but I still have a lot of family in Mexico, but I’m no different, just born here.”*

In addition to expressing a sense of ethnic group identification based on real or symbolic ties to an ancestral homeland, officers with a salient ethnic identity also expressed strong emotional ties to the Latino/Hispanic minority group in the United

States. The following responses are typical of the officers with a salient Latino identity when asked what they liked best about being police officers working with members of the Latino community:

- For Pete, the best part is *“the opportunity to interact with people of my own race. There’s been such a great influx of Mexican-Americans into south ‘O’. On a call you can talk a little and find out they’re from around the same place your family is from.”*
- Hector stated, *“I kind of feel a kinship. I want to see them succeed. I get a little more disappointed when Latinos go bad, so I’m a little more personally involved.”*
- Matt replied, *“I prefer working in the Latino community because I can contribute more to my heritage.”*
- *“It’s nice to be around your people,”* said Charlie. *“I feel comfortable being around a large group of Latinos, whereas in a large Black crowd, I feel uncomfortable. In the Latino community, I can be a role model, especially for kids.”*
- Manuel, who described himself as Mexican-American and works in the Latino community stated, *“I like to work here because it’s my community.”*
- Bob stated that he likes to work in the Latino community because, *“they are basically my people.”*

When asked what they saw as the most significant changes in the Latino community, several salient Latino identity officers referred to the growth of the Latino community, describing how it has contributed to the persistence of ethnic minority group identification and enhanced ethnic solidarity through shared memories and a resurgence in ethnic pride.

- *“The numbers are increasing,”* said Martin. *“The Latino community is making progress, economically, etc. There is an increased sense of pride in who we are.”*

- Herman said, *“I enjoy the stories the newcomers have. It brings back memories of my folks telling me similar stories.”*
- *“The most significant change is the increase in the Latino population,”* said Jacob. *“The culture is very visible. It's a lot stronger because of the population increase, restaurants, and churches. Outside on hot days, there are families, not just guys. Mandan Park, on Sundays, Latino families gather there, not gang bangers or drunks, but families. Workers gather but there are no problems. Some may be illegal, but they want to stay away from the police. They may drink, but they keep it to themselves. The family institution is on the rise there, strong. Highland Park on 25th and "C", it's all Hispanic, Spring Lake Park, too. I wish I was younger, starting all over, and to be there.”*

***Distancing from identification with the Anglo majority group.*** In addition to explicitly identifying with the ethnic minority group, salient Latino/Hispanic identity officers made statements aimed at distancing themselves from identification with the dominant Anglo group.

- Manuel expressed dissatisfaction with his perception that, *“sometimes Mexican officers get kind of lumped with the police officers, as if you were a Caucasian.”*
- Samuel concurred, *“because you’re a police officer, Anglos think you’re one of them, not Latino, just a police officer.”*
- According to Tom, *“Sometimes I’m treated as a white officer, but I’m not white.”*

***Ambivalent Hispanic/Latino Identity: “Yes, I am Latino/Hispanic, but...”***

Whereas responses from officers with a salient ethnic identity generated patterns of explicit identification with the ethnic minority group and distancing from identification with the dominant Anglo group, responses from officers with an ambivalent ethnic identity were characterized by a qualified identification with both groups to varying degrees. Note that the term “ambivalent” is not meant to imply that they don’t identify themselves as “Latino.” According to Neufeldt and Guralnik (1997) ambivalence is

described as “simultaneous conflicting feelings toward a person or a thing” (p:43).

Officers with an ambivalent Hispanic/Latino identity expressed conflicting feelings about identifying with the minority Latino/Hispanic group and also identifying with dominant Anglo group to varying degrees. In a race/ethnic conscious society such as the United States identifying with both groups simultaneously is bound to create feelings and expressions of ambivalence. Of the thirty-four officers in this study seven (21% percent) exhibited an ambivalent Hispanic/Latino identity.

***Limited identification with the Latino/Hispanic minority group combined with identification with the dominant Anglo group.*** None of the ambivalent ethnic identity officers expressed a strong identification or sense of kinship with the Latino/Hispanic minority group. In contrast to officers with a salient Hispanic identity who explicitly embrace a Latino/Hispanic identity, the ambivalent Hispanic/Latino identity officers acknowledged a degree of identification with the ethnic minority group, but only to a point, attempting to distance themselves from a strong identification. For instance, When asked whether or not they indicated their ethnic or racial group identification on their application for employment with the police department, and why, the responses from the ambivalent Hispanic/Latino identity officers often included qualifiers, such as:

- *“Yes, I marked it, but it was a forced box. It wasn't like it said "white" or "Other", and I penciled in "Hispanic," said Alex.*
- *Lee explained that, “When it came application time I looked at the form and I knew that I wasn't African American, I knew I wasn't Asian, I'm not really Caucasian. I'm more Hispanic.”*

Notice how Lee states “I’m not *really* Caucasian. I’m *more* Hispanic.” Lee identifies with both groups simultaneously. His statements illustrate well the



simultaneous conflicting feelings that characterize an ambivalent ethnic identity as it is used in this study.

Bill, another officer who expressed ambivalence about his ethnic identity suggested that while he could have identified himself as “white/Caucasian” when applying for employment with the city, implying that he identifies as white/Caucasian to some degree, he chose not to because he felt he was not *really* Caucasian.

- *“I felt it was honest. When I looked at that application form and thought, Well, I’m not really Caucasian,”* said Bill.

While separating themselves from identification with the dominant Anglo group was an important way in which the salient Latino/Hispanic officers asserted their strong identification with the ethnic minority group, the ambivalent Hispanic identity officers, on the other hand, expressed degrees of identification with Anglos.

- For example, when asked about his interactions with white community members, Randy replied, *“I don’t know. I don’t consider them white and me something different.”*
- Regarding his experiences policing in the Anglo community, Lee summed it up, *“That’s where I grew up. They’re who my friends are. I fit right in.”*
- When asked about being a Latino officer in the white community, Bill said, *“I can go either way. I can be white or I can be Hispanic, whatever helps me in a particular situation.”*

Some ambivalent Latino identity officers predict that they would have a stronger sense of identification with the ethnic minority group and a lesser degree of identification with the dominant Anglo group if they had experienced discrimination by Anglos.

- When asked, “with which ethnic or racial group do you identify?” Ben stated, *“I’m full-blooded Mexican, but except for my family, I’ve always been around Anglos. I’ve never really had any trouble because of the fact that I’m Mexican, though. Maybe if I had I’d think of myself more that way.”*
- When asked, “with which ethnic or racial group do you identify?” Larry replied, *“Mexican, full-blooded, if you’re asking that, but I haven’t had any problems because I’m Hispanic. In fact, I don’t even think of myself that way.”* Yet he also related that, *“I’ve always been around Anglos, my friends have always been Anglos. When I was in high school my friends would make jokes about Mexicans but it didn’t bother me at all. I’d join in and laugh. Heck, ”* said Larry, *I’d even tell those Mexican jokes myself!”*

Clearly, though, Larry realizes the bias inherent in the “Mexican jokes” or he would not have pointed out the irony involved in his telling of the same jokes, since he identifies himself as a “full-blooded Mexican.” Due to his lesser degree of identification with the ethnic minority group, and his identification with the Anglo majority group, however, Larry chooses not to interpret the discriminatory remarks as personally insulting.

For other officers, an identification with both the minority ethnic group and the dominant Anglo group is a result of having one Latino/Hispanic parent and one Anglo parent.

- Hank said, *“I’m Mexican-American, but hopefully, we can all just become a melting pot. I’m a melting pot. Hopefully we can all just merge into one group, American.”*

Ambivalent ethnic identity officers also made statements attempting to bridge the gap of perceived difference between themselves and Anglos by reacting against assumptions that they have ethnic markers, such as bilingualism.

- For instance, Dennis, when asked by his Anglo Captain, *“Do you speak Spanish?”* pointedly replied, *“Not any more than you or anybody else.”*

***White Identity: “I am not Hispanic/Latino, I’m white/Anglo.”***

Officers with a white/Anglo identity explicitly stated that they see themselves as “white.” Although they state that they have one parent that is of Latin origin, they reported to me, very clearly, that they did not consider themselves to be Latino/Hispanic. Responses from officers with a white identity generated patterns of responses distancing themselves from an ascribed identification with the minority ethnic group, combined with statements indicating a strong identification with the dominant Anglo group. Two of the thirty-four officers in this study (6 percent) exhibited a white identity.

***Strong identification with the Anglo/white Majority group.*** When asked “with which ethnic or racial group do you identify?”

- Vince stated, *“I’m white. That’s how I’ve always thought of myself.”*
- Christopher replied with an unqualified, *“white.”*

***No personal identification with the ethnic minority group.*** While they both acknowledge that they have a parent that is Latino/Hispanic, neither Vince nor Christopher identifies himself as Hispanic/Latino. They both explained that they have a parent that is Hispanic/Latino, but that they, themselves, were white. At the time of application for employment with the police department, they both marked the box indicating that they are “White/Caucasian (not of Hispanic origin).” Vince explained that due to a much stronger identification with his Anglo parent, he chooses to identify himself as “white.”

- When asked the question “Why did you not indicate your ethnic or racial group identification at the time of application for employment with the police department?” Vince replied, *“I have one parent that’s Mexican, but I don’t think of myself that way. I’m white.”*

- In response to the same question Christopher replied, *“When I applied for the position of police officer, I never considered myself Hispanic/Latino. I did not know the relevance/impact of it.”*

Unfortunately, Christopher chose not to explain what he meant by not understanding the significance of marking the box identifying himself as “Hispanic” when he applied for employment with the city. Most likely, representatives from the city personnel office discovered his Latino/Hispanic ancestry, either by word of mouth, or during the rigorous background check all police officer applicants must go through. They probably informed him of the proportional representation requirements set forth by the consent decree, and the “significance” of him being counted as a Latino/Hispanic in meeting those requirements.

#### **Factors Relevant to Identity Negotiation (see chart 2.1)**

Although human agency plays a critical role in identity negotiation, ethnic identities are not created in a vacuum. In addition to individual choice, there are many contextual factors influencing identity. According to Hurtado, Gurin, and Peng (1997:243), particular social forces most likely influence modes of adaptation when “they heighten or lessen social categorization and the salience of group boundaries because they increase or decrease opportunities for intragroup and intergroup contact, communication, competition, cooperation, and social comparison.” For instance, generational status, having been raised in an ethnic Latino community, currently residing in the Latino/Hispanic community, Spanish language ability, parents’ ethnicity, choice of marriage partners, and even education can each influence negotiating styles.

Chart 2.1  
 Latino Police Officers: Factors Relevant to Ethnic Identity

OFFICER #	ETHNIC SELF-IDENTITY	GENERATION	GREW UP IN LATINO COMM.	RESIDES IN THE LATINO COMM.	SPEAKS SPANISH	1 or 2 LATINO PARENTS	ETHNICITY OF SPOUSE/S.O.	EDUCATION
#1	Salient	3	Y	Y	Y	2	HISPANIC	13
#2	Salient	3	Y	no	Y	2	ANGLO	18
#3	Salient	3	Y	Y	Y	2	ANGLO	16
#4	Salient	3	Y	no	Y	2	HISPANIC	17
#5	Salient	3	Y	no	Y	2	ANGLO	16
#6	Salient	3	Y	no	no	2	ANGLO	16
#7	Salient	3	Y	no	Y	2	ANGLO	16
#9	Salient	2	Y	no	Y	1	ANGLO	14
#10	Salient	2	Y	no	no	2	ANGLO	13
#13	Salient	2	Y	Y	Y	2	ANGLO	16
#15	Salient	2	Y	no	no	1	ANGLO	13
#18	Salient	3	Y	no	Y	1	N/A	16
#23	Salient	2	Y	no	Y	2	ANGLO	14
#24	Salient	3	Y	no	no	1	N/A	17
#27	Salient	3	Y	no	no	1	HISPANIC	12
#30	Salient	3	no	no	Y	2	ANGLO	16
#33	Salient	3	no	no	no	2	ANGLO	16
#11	Salient	3	Y	no	no	1	N/A	16
#14	Salient	3	no	no	no	1	ANGLO	14
#16	Salient	4	Y	no	no	2	ANGLO	14
#19	Salient	4	no	no	no	1	ANGLO	16
#20	Salient	2	Y	Y	Y	2	HISPANIC	16
#21	Salient	3	Y	no	no	1	ANGLO	12
#25	Salient	4	Y	Y	no	1	N/A	13
#34	Salient	3	no	no	Y	1	ANGLO	16
	(N=25)	2=6, 3=16, 4=3	Y=20, no=5	Y=5, no=20	Y=13, no=12	2=14, 1=11	H=4, A=17, N/A=4	avg=15.04, med=16
#8	Ambivalent	2	no	no	Y	1	ANGLO	16
#12	Ambivalent	3	Y	no	no	1	ANGLO	14
#17	Ambivalent	2	no	no	Y	1	ANGLO	16
#22	Ambivalent	4	no	no	no	1	ANGLO	14
#26	Ambivalent	3	no	no	no	2	ANGLO	16
#28	Ambivalent	4	no	no	no	1	ANGLO	13
#29	Ambivalent	4	no	no	no	2	ANGLO	13
	(N=7)	2=2, 3=2, 4=3	Y=1, no=6	Y=0, no=7	Y=2, no=5	2=2, 1=5	H=0, A=7	avg=14.57, med=14
#31	"White"	3	no	no	no	1	ANGLO	12
#32	"White"	2	no	no	Y	1	ANGLO	16
	(N=2)	2=1, 3=1	Y=0, no=2	Y=0, no=2	Y=1, no=1	2=0, 1=2	H=0, A=2	avg=14.00, med=14

***Ethnic self-identification: strategies of self-categorization***

Rumbaut's (1996b) comprehensive study of children of Latino immigrants revealed four main types of ethnic self-categorization: (1) an ancestral or national-origin identity (for example, Mexican); (2) an additive or hyphenated identity (for example, Mexican-American); (3) an assimilative or American national identity (for example, American); or (4) a dissimilative racial or panethnic identity (for example, Hispanic or Latino). Rumbaut interprets these as relational *vis a vis* the ethnic minority group and the Anglo majority group with the first two types explicitly identifying with the immigrant experience and the ancestral homeland, while the last two are identities exclusively "made in the U.S.A." Furthermore, the panethnic identities of Hispanic and Latino are said to reflect "a denationalized identification with racial-ethnic minority groups and self-conscious differences from the white Anglo majority population" (1996: 134).

In response to the question "with which ethnic or racial group do you identify?" of the thirty-four officers in this study, twelve officers (35 percent) replied *Hispanic*; eight officers (24 percent) replied *Mexican-American*; seven officers (21 percent) replied *Mexican*; three officers (9 percent) replied *Latino*; one officer (3 percent) replied *American/Hispanic/Caucasian*; one officer (3 percent) replied *Spanish*; and two officers (6 percent) replied *white*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Percentage totals may slightly exceed one-hundred due to rounding.

Surprisingly, in this study there was limited correlation between the choice of ethnic labels and the degree of ethnic identification. Clearly, there was a complete correlation regarding the “white” officers, however, between the salient Hispanic/Latino identity and ambivalent Hispanic/Latino identity groups there was virtually no difference. Some ambivalent ethnic identity officers referred to themselves as “full-blooded Mexican,” while some salient Latino/Hispanic officers described themselves as “Mexican-American”, “American”, and even “Caucasian,” although they emphasized that they were *not* Anglo. This finding illustrates the importance of a multidimensional conception of ethnic identities beyond mere national identification, as has been demonstrated in prior research (Hurtado, Gurin, and Peng 1997).

**Table 2.1 Ethnic Self-identification of Latino Police Officers by Percentage**

<u>Hispanic</u>	<u>Mexican-American</u>	<u>Mexican</u>	<u>Latino</u>
N=12 (35%)	N=8 (24%)	N=7 (21%)	N=3 (9%)
<u>American/Hispanic/Caucasian</u>		<u>Spanish</u>	<u>white/Anglo</u>
N=1 (3%)		N=1 (3%)	N=2 (6%) <sup>6</sup>

### ***Generation***

The assimilationist view of immigrant identity indicates that generation is an important determinant of ethnic identity and behavior, predicting that with succeeding

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<sup>6</sup> Percentage totals may slightly exceed one-hundred due to rounding.

generations ethnic identity will be less and less salient (Gans 1992). Studies of post-1965, non-white immigrant incorporation, however, show that generational status alone is not deterministic and unilinear. Rather, there is often a heightened sense of ethnic awareness revealed in the third generation and beyond (Alba and Nee 1997; Portes 1997).

In this study a traditional schema for defining generational status is utilized where first generation refers to foreign-born immigrants, second generation refers to native-born children of at least one immigrant parent, third generation refers to native-born children of native-born parents who have at least one immigrant parent, and fourth generation refers to native-born children of native-born parents and grandparents, but who have at least one immigrant great-grandparent.

Of the thirty-four officers in this study, one is of Spanish descent, one is of Puerto Rican descent, and the remaining thirty-two officers are of Mexican descent.

Nine of the thirty-four officers in this study (26 percent) are second generation Latinos. Nineteen of the thirty-four officers (56 percent) are third generation Latinos, and six (18 percent) are fourth generation Latinos. There were no first generation immigrants, nor were there any officers who were fifth generation or beyond.

With regard to generational status, the straight-line predictions of traditional assimilation theory are not supported by my findings. Of the twenty-five salient ethnic identity officers, six (24 percent) are second generation, sixteen (64 percent) are third generation, and three (12 percent) are fourth generation.

Of the group of seven ambivalent ethnic identity officers, two (29 percent) are



second generation, two (29 percent) are third generation, and three (43 percent) are fourth generation.<sup>7</sup>

Of the two white/Anglo ethnic identity officers, one (50 percent) is second generation, and one (50 percent) is third generation.

**Table 2.2 Percent Generational Status of Latino Police Officers by Pattern of Ethnic Identification**

	<u>Second generation</u>	<u>Third generation</u>	<u>Fourth generation</u>	
Salient Hispanic identity (N=25)	6 (24%)	16 (64%)	3 (12%)	= 100%
Ambivalent Hispanic identity (N=7)	2 (29%)	2 (29%)	3 (43%)	= 100% <sup>8</sup>
White/Anglo identity (N=2)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	---	= 100%

### ***Growing up in an ethnic Latino community<sup>9</sup>***

Nelson and Tienda (1985:71) define ethnic communities as manifestations of Ethnicity that “are structurally produced by their concentrations in minority labor markets and by the continued influx of immigrants who help to renew cultural traditions and subsequently elaborate them as a basis for social solidarity.” Portes and Rumbaut

<sup>7</sup> Percentage totals may slightly exceed one-hundred due to rounding.

<sup>8</sup> Percentage totals may slightly exceed one-hundred due to rounding.

<sup>9</sup>It is tempting to use the term ethnic enclave since the ethnic community in this study comes close to what Portes (1985) and others have described. The ethnic community in this study, however, lacks the defining feature of a true ethnic enclave, namely diversified socioeconomic groups with enough capital to literally construct an isolated economic community. As Meléndez (1998) notes, true ethnic enclaves are unique to the Cuban experience, with nothing comparable among Mexicans or Puerto Ricans (the two largest Latino groups in the United States).

(1996) suggest that “such communities cushion the impact of cultural change and protect immigrants against outside prejudice and initial economic difficulties.” According to the research of Lopez (1998), “in Nebraska, such an ethnic community exists in South Omaha,” the ethnic community in this study and the locale of Lopez’s research.

Of the thirty-four officers in this study, twenty-one (62 percent) grew up in an ethnic Latino community. Of those twenty-one officers, eighteen (86 percent) grew up in South Omaha’s Latino community, three (14 percent) grew up in ethnic Latino communities in Texas or California. Thirteen of the thirty-four officers in this study (38 percent) did not grow up in an ethnic Latino community.

Having been raised in an ethnic community is highly correlated with a salient ethnic identity. Of the twenty-one officers who grew up in an ethnic Latino community, twenty (95 percent) had a salient Latino/Hispanic identity.

Of the twenty-five officers in the study with a salient ethnic identity, twenty (80 percent) grew up in an ethnic Latino/Hispanic community, as compared to only five (20 percent) who did not.

Of the seven ambivalent ethnic identity officers, one (14% percent) did grow up in an ethnic Latino/Hispanic community, as compared to six (86 percent) who did not. Neither of the two white identity officers grew up in a Latino community.

**Table 2.3 Percent Latino Officers who Grew Up versus Did Not Grow Up in an Ethnic Latino Community by Pattern of Ethnic Identification**

	<u>Grew up in a Latino community</u>	<u>Did not grow up in a Latino community</u>	
Salient ethnicity officers (N=25)	20 (80%)	5 (20%)	= 100%
Ambivalent ethnicity officers (N=7)	1 (14%)	6 (86%)	= 100%
“White” officers (N=2)	--	2 (100%)	= 100%

***Currently residing in the ethnic Latino community***

The dispersion of minority group members into predominantly Anglo neighborhoods has been referred to as “spatial assimilation” (Massey 1985). Spatial or residential assimilation is viewed as a reflection of human capital (personal skills and abilities) and is seen as a key stage in the assimilation process. According to Massey, as minority group members acculturate and establish themselves in segments of the labor market with better opportunities for career advancement, they convert their occupational mobility into residential gain and social mobility by purchasing residences in areas with higher property values and greater amenities.

Lieberson and Waters (1987) found initial support for the residential assimilation hypothesis. Their findings illustrate a negative correlation between time spent in the country and co-ethnic spatial concentration. However, the same study found that specific nationalities, such as Mexicans, who continue to arrive in large numbers, choose to locate

in the places in which their co-ethnics resided half a century ago. For those residing in an ethnic Latino community, this residential pattern is likely a prudent incorporation strategy that allows for individuals to gain the social and cultural support that makes for psychological well-being as well as for economic gain (Portes and Rumbaut 1996). For Mexican descent Latinos born in the United States, remaining in the ethnic community provides opportunities for a revitalized sense of ethnic culture and identity.

Of the twenty-one officers in this study who grew up in a Latino community, seventeen (74 percent) have moved away from the Latino community and now reside in predominantly Anglo communities. Five of the twenty-one who grew up in a Latino community (24 percent) still reside there, and all five express a salient ethnic identity. None of the officers who grew up outside of the Latino community currently reside there.

**Table 2.4 Percent Latino Officers Currently Residing in a Predominantly Latino/Hispanic Community versus a Predominantly Anglo Community by Pattern of Ethnic Identification**

	<u>Currently resides in the Latino community</u>	<u>Currently resides in an Anglo community</u>	
Salient ethnicity officers (N=25)	5 (20%)	20 (80%)	= 100%
Ambivalent ethnicity officers (N=7)	---	7 (100%)	= 100%
White identity officers (N=2)	---	2 (100%)	= 100%

### ***Language***

Speaking the language of the dominant culture is seen as a key indicator that assimilation is occurring, particularly when accompanied by a loss of the native language, generally by the third generation (Lopez 1982). In their study with nearly five thousand self-identified Hispanic origin respondents, Esbach and Gomez (1998) found English monolingualism to be strongly associated with inconsistent expressions of Hispanic identity. Among Spanish-origin minorities in the United States, however, a unique loyalty to Spanish language maintenance has been noted among Mexican-Americans, presumably attributable to the effect of high immigration from the country of origin (Lopez 1982). This hypothesis is supported by the work of Oboler (1995) who found that while Latino immigrants emphasize the importance of learning English, they simultaneously struggle to maintain their own language and customs, regardless of their social class, viewing Spanish language maintenance as a valuable part of their lives.

In this study, all respondents answered the question, “are you fluent/proficient in any language other than English?” Of the thirty-four officers in the study sixteen (47 percent) indicated that they were at least proficient in Spanish. Of those sixteen officers who were proficient in Spanish, thirteen (81 percent) were salient Latino identity officers, two (13 percent) were ambivalent ethnic identity officers, and one (6 percent) identified as “white.”

Of the twenty-five officers exhibiting a salient Hispanic/Latino identity, thirteen (52 percent) were proficient in Spanish. Of the seven officers with an ambivalent ethnic

identity two (29 percent) indicated that they were proficient in Spanish. Of the two white identity officers, one (50 percent) was proficient in Spanish.

**Table 2.5 Percent Latino Officers Proficient in Spanish versus English Only by Pattern of Ethnic Identification**

	<u>Proficient in Spanish</u>	<u>English only</u>	
Salient Hispanic identity (N=25)	13 (52%)	12 (48%)	= 100%
Ambivalent Hispanic identity (N=7)	2 (29%)	5 (71%)	= 100%
White identity (N=2)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	= 100%

***Parents' ethnicity: 1 or 2 Latino parents***

In his study of ethnic identity among children of immigrants, Rumbaut (1996b) found that parents' ethnicity had a fundamental influence on the ethnic identity of the child. Having two Latino parents significantly increased the likelihood of the child identifying with the parents' nationality rather than a more American-centered identity. Rumbaut concluded that identificational assimilation is mitigated by parental ethnic socialization. Furthermore, Phinney and Chavira (1995) found that Mexican-American parents emphasize assimilating to the dominant culture less than do parents of other ethnic backgrounds.

Of the thirty-four officers in this study, eighteen (53 percent) have one parent that

is Latino and one that is Anglo. Sixteen officers (47 percent) indicate that both of their parents are Latino.

For the officers in this study, having both Latino parents is associated with a salient ethnic identity. Of the sixteen officers whose parents are both Latino, fourteen (88 percent) exhibit a salient ethnic identity, as opposed to only two (13 percent)<sup>10</sup> who exhibit an ambivalent ethnic identity. Of the seven officers in this study exhibiting an ambivalent ethnic identity, five (71 percent) have only one parent who is Latino. Neither of the white ethnic identity officers have two Latino parents.

**Table 2.6 Percent Latino Officers with One versus Two Latino Parents by Pattern of Ethnic Identification**

	Salient Hispanic (N=25)	Ambivalent Hispanic (N=7)	White (N=2)	
2 Hispanic parents (N=16)	14 (88%)	2 (13%)	---	= 100% <sup>11</sup>
1 Hispanic parent (N=18)	11(61%)	5 (28%)	2 (11%)	= 100%

***Ethnicity of spouse/significant other***

Intermarriage with an Anglo spouse is a traditional indicator of assimilation, and often used as the best measure of the extent of integration between two groups, however, rates of intermarriage are not necessarily adequate guides to the extent of ethnic identity (Yinger 1994; Alba and Nee 1997). Intermarriage rates can be particularly misleading

<sup>10</sup> Percentage totals may slightly exceed one-hundred due to rounding.

<sup>11</sup> Percentage totals may slightly exceed one-hundred due to rounding

indicators of assimilation for Mexican descent Hispanics since intermarriage with Anglos is higher for Mexicans than for other groups, perhaps due to shared religious traditions as well as their long period of residence in the United States (Hutchison 1988).

Durand Desmos (1998), for example, through an ethnosurvey of one Mexican community with a long U.S. migration history, found that the increasing rate of mixed-ethnic marriages over the last decade did not indicate a unilinear process of integration into American society. Rather, his findings indicate that mixed-ethnic marriages allow for an extension of social networks and a renegotiation of cultural identities in even wider and more complex ways.

Finally, the demographic of this study cohort fits the profile of respondents whom Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan (1995) found to be most likely to practice interethnic dating: young, educated, Latino males.

Of the thirty-four officers in this study, thirty had a spouse or significant other. Of the thirty who did have a partner, four (13 percent) had a Hispanic spouse or significant other. All four of the officers who had Hispanic partners exhibited a salient Latino identity. No officers in the ambivalent Latino identity or the white identity categories had partners who are Hispanic.



**Table 2.7 Percent Latino Officers with a Latino/Hispanic versus Anglo Spouse/Significant Other by Pattern of Ethnic Identification**

	Salient Hispanic (N=25)	Ambivalent Hispanic (N=7)	White (N=2)	
Hispanic spouse/S.O. (N=4)	4 (100%)	---	---	= 100%
Anglo spouse/S.O. (N=26)	17 (71%)	7 (27%)	2 (8%)	= 100%
N/A (N=4)	4 (100%)	---	---	= 100%

### ***Education***

Assimilation theory suggests that, regarding immigrant populations, the higher the education the more favorable the attitudes toward American society, the less common the perceptions of discrimination, and the greater the willingness to surrender aspects of one's ethnic culture and to adopt that of the majority. Portes and Bach (1985), however, propose that conflict theory, associated with the ethnic-resilience perspective, predicts that as the education level of immigrant populations increases so will their awareness of discrimination. The more common perceptions of discrimination result in a consequent rising ethnic consciousness and the resilience of ethnic culture, acting as important instruments of resistance by ethnic minority groups. In fact, findings from Portes and Bach's (1985) study of over 430 Mexican immigrants support the predictions of the conflict theoretical path regarding education and ethnic resilience.

The results of this study also appear to be in line with those of Portes and Bach regarding the relationship between education and a heightened sense of ethnic identity.

Although not dramatic, there is a linear, corollary relationship in which increase in educational attainment is associated with a stronger degree of ethnic identity.

Officers with a salient ethnic identity had a mean education of 15.04 years, with a median of sixteen years. Ambivalent ethnic identity officers had a mean education of 14.57 years, with a median of fourteen years. Officers reporting a white identity had a mean education of 14.0 years, with a median of fourteen years.

**Table 2.8 Mean and Median Years of Education of Latino Police Officers by Pattern of Ethnic Identification**

	Salient Hispanic (N=25)	Ambivalent Hispanic (N=7)	White (N=2)
Mean years	15.04	14.57	14.0
Median years	16.0	14.0	14.0

### Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to critically examine and ultimately refute the assumption that Latino police officers are a homogenous group who readily assume a unidimensional “Latino” identity. By illustrating various degrees of identification with the ethnic minority group as well as various degrees of identification with the Anglo majority, I delineated the varied and complex ways in which Latino police officers negotiate ethnic categorization, revealing three generalized identity patterns: salient Hispanic/Latino, ambivalent Hispanic/Latino, and white.

Finally, I examined various socio-demographic factors relevant to identity formation showing it to be a dynamic dialectical process involving both human agency

and the influence of contexts of socialization beyond control of the individual. Bilingualism, for instance, was shown to be an important factor, in addition to Parents' ethnicity, which was also strongly influential in identity formation. Whether or not respondents were raised in an ethnic community, however, was shown to be the most influential socio-demographic variable.

Whereas this chapter focused on the heterogeneity of ethnic identities, the following chapter focuses on how officers negotiate these complex identities while fulfilling their instrumental role as police officers policing in the Hispanic community. In addition, I explore the assumption that ethnic identity will necessarily be infused into interactions between Hispanic officers and Hispanic community members in more empathetic and supportive ways.

### Chapter III

#### **Latino Police Officers: Negotiating the Police Occupational Role**

We are currently in the midst of what some observers have referred to as the “third era” in the history of American policing, the era of “community policing” (Kelling and Moore 1988). The community policing philosophy emphasizes a police-community partnership, with expectations of more positive citizen attitudes toward police, and more positive police attitudes toward citizens (Wilson and Kelling 1982). At the same time, we are also in the midst of what some have called the “ethnic era” (Yinger 1994), wherein a heightened awareness of ethnic identities influences both public policy and social interaction. The convergence of these two eras has particular significance for ethnic minority police officers. Kivisto (1992) notes that,

As George Simmel (1955) contended, the individual in the contemporary world is enmeshed in what he referred to as a “web of group affiliations,” each making various demands of allegiance and imposing markers of identity that serve to either constrain or enable various kinds of social interaction. Among the most important webs are those predicated on ethnicity and occupational status. (P. 5)

Anya Peterson Royce (1982:1) writes about ethnicity that, “it is developed, displayed, manipulated, or ignored in accordance with the demands of particular situations. [Ethnicity] can interact in complex ways with other aspects of identity, at times in a mutually reinforcing manner.” Kivisto (1992:6), however, points out that at other times ethnicity “competes with these other models of identity in terms of the relative importance or saliency attached to them.”

Ethnicity and occupational status, thus, can be seen as competing identities, which in turn influence attitudes and behaviors within particular contexts. Ethnicity, as a social status, can conflict with traditional police norms. This conflict can necessitate that ethnic minority officers negotiate both their ethnic and occupational identities in a manner that enables them to carry out the goals of the occupation, yet reduces the degree of discrepancy between their beliefs and their behavior (Skolnick 1975).

The purpose of this chapter is to explore ways in which officers, with varying degrees of Latino/Hispanic ethnic identification, negotiate ethnic and police occupational identities while fulfilling their instrumental role as police officers serving the Hispanic community. I explore the assumption that ethnic identity will necessarily be infused into interactions between Hispanic officers and Hispanic community members in more empathetic and supportive ways. As in the previous chapter, I allow the officers' own words to illustrate their attitudes and self-described actions when interacting with Hispanic/Latino community members and the indicated motivations behind those attitudes and actions.

### **Police Officer Discretion**

As police agencies embrace the goals of the community policing model, and police administrators encourage individual officers to incorporate those goals into their policing objectives, the potential benefits for the Latino community are significant given the history of tense relations between the police and minority communities. Research has shown, however, that ultimately, it is the officer on the street, not police administrators, who determine enforcement policy (Lipsky 1968; Davis 1975).

One of the defining features of policing is that the lowest-ranking employees, patrol officers, exercise the greatest amount of discretion. James Q. Wilson (1968) notes that, unlike other occupations, in policing, “discretion increases as one moves down the organizational hierarchy.” In criminal justice, discretion has been defined as, “an official action, by a criminal justice official, based on that individual’s judgement about the best course of action” (Walker 1999:190). Another critical aspect of police discretion is the choice *not* to take an official action (Davis 1975).

Black (1980), for instance, in his seminal research on the social organization of arrest, found that officers made arrests in 58 percent of suspected felonies and only 44 percent of suspected misdemeanors. In other words, the police only make arrests in about half of all cases where arrest would be considered justifiable. Noteworthy, is Black’s finding that a suspect’s demeanor is a key variable in the decision to make an arrest, frequently even more important than the seriousness of the crime. If a suspect is perceived as being disrespectful toward the police officer, their chance of being arrested dramatically increases. In fact, Black found that the police are more likely to arrest a disrespectful misdemeanant than a respectful felon, leading Black to conclude that the police use their discretion to enforce their occupational authority more diligently than they enforce the law.

Walker (1999) notes, however, that police discretion is not limited to one point, such as whether or not to arrest, but that discretionary decisions cover a wide range of actions including: 1) patrol tactics decisions such as whether to stop, question, or frisk a suspect; whether to patrol an area more intensively than normal; or whether or not to

write a crime report; 2) order maintenance decisions such as whether to mediate a dispute, or whether to refer a person to a social service agency such as alcohol abuse treatment; 3) investigative decisions such as whether to drop a case or investigate it further; whether to seek a warrant for a search; whether to conduct a stakeout; or whether to seek authorization for a wire tap; and 4) law enforcement priorities such as whether to give high priority to traffic law violations; or whether to ignore minor drug offenses such as possession of small amounts of marijuana.

Goldstein (1967) notes that it is very difficult to control the discretion of officers through administrative means since fixed aspects of the police work environment contribute to officers' exercise of discretion. First, most police/community member interactions occur in private places without the presence of observers who could possibly testify in the event of inappropriate officer behavior. Second, since officers generally work alone or in pairs (Reiss 1971) they are removed from the direct observation of their supervisors (Walker 1999).

Cognizance that discretion pervades police work gives rise to two questions. First, if officers don't strictly rely on police administrative policy to guide their exercise of discretion, where do they learn the norms of the occupation? It is well established in the literature that police officers are exposed to, and become socialized into, the norms of the occupation on the streets, through the powerful influence of the police subculture (Westley 1970; Skolnick 1975). The second question then becomes, does the ethnicity of an officer mitigate the effect of the traditional police subculture?

### **The Police Occupational Subculture**

People in the same occupation develop distinctive ways and means by which they manage certain structural strains, contradictions and anomalies of their prescribed role and task (VanMaanen 1995). The overarching problem of an occupation concerns questions regarding how to carry out the ends of the occupation, and at the same time maintain the worker's self-worth. The solutions to this problem constitute its occupational norms (Westley 1970). Those who share a common system of norms and values related to work can thus be said to constitute an occupational subculture (Desroches 1992).

Elements of the police milieu, namely, danger and authority amidst organizational pressures for efficiency, contribute to police solidarity and combine to generate distinctive cognitive and behavioral responses in police officers. Skolnick characterizes these responses as a distinct "working personality" (Skolnick 1975). The elements of danger and authority isolate the police officer from the community and foster strong bonds of solidarity among the police, which in turn, contribute to ties of interdependence, resulting in informally enforced but potent work norms (Martin 1980).

According to Westley (1970), the following norms govern the police role. First is secrecy, which is "the glue of solidarity." Second is the goal of apprehending felons, "real criminals", which is a critical source of favorable publicity and prestige for police. Third is a demand for respect. Fourth, is the norm of discerning various definitions of the public, with an overriding sense that each of the various segments of the public are



hostile toward the police, resulting in a strong sense of “us versus them.” Last, is holding a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence and coercion.

To assure adherence to occupational norms and the maintenance of group solidarity, traditionally, the police have adopted organizational filters that select a homogeneous group of people likely to fit into the existing group. Kappeler, Sluder, and Alpert (1995) assert that,

A consequence of the traditional police personnel system is that it selects officers who are unable to identify with many of the marginal groups in society. Therefore, the police process people and events in the world through cognitive filters that overly value conformity in ideology, appearance, and conduct. This conformist view of the world, based on a shared background, provides police a measuring rod by which to make judgements concerning who is deviant and in need of state control (Matza 1969) and what is “suspicious” (Skolnick 1966) and in need of police attention. (P. 244)

Kappeler, et. Al. further assert that,

The real and exaggerated sense of danger inherent in police work indisputably forms a great part of the police picture of the world. This allows police to see citizens as potential sources of violence or as enemies. Citizens become “symbolic assailants” to the police officer on the street (Skolnick 1966). The symbolic assailant is further refined in appearance by taking on the characteristics of marginal segments of society (Harris 1973; Piliavin and Briar 1964). The image of the symbolic assailant takes on the characteristics of the populations police are directed to control. (P. 246-7)

Homogeneity, therefore, is desirable and can even be interpreted as contributing to efficiency since the unpredictable nature of the work makes trustworthy coworkers imperative. Trust involves speaking the same language and sharing values so that miscommunication and misunderstanding are reduced and discretionary actions remain more predictable (Martin 1980).

Changes in employment patterns within the last thirty years, however, have altered the racial, ethnic, and gender composition of police departments. The broader inclusion of black policemen (Alex 1969; Leinen 1984, Dulaney 1996); policewomen (Martin 1980); black policewomen (Martin 1994); Southeast Asian officers (National Crime Prevention Council 1995); as well as Latino officers (Carter 1986) has effected the previously homogeneous subculture with respect to race, ethnicity, and gender. Consequently, these changes have challenged the prevailing norms, weakened solidarity among officers, and have begun to allow for alternative occupational identities (Martin 1980).

Harr (1997) argues, and her findings suggest, that these alternative identities

...favor the claim that officers will alter their behavior and adjust their actions and interactions in accordance with their reading of social and political situations, their personal interests, and their varying experiences in the organization. In other words, individual officers remain the mediators of socializing influences; they make their own adaptations and construct their own organizational reality. (P.53)

Gender, race, [and ethnicity] therefore, have been proposed as mediating variables in the occupational socialization process (Harr 1997).

Other findings support Harr's claim regarding the influence of minority officers on the police subculture. For instance, the findings of Buzawa 1981; Leinen 1984; Multinovich 1977; and Weaver 1975 suggest that black male police officers' perceptions of community members, and their attitudes toward their work and their colleagues differed from those of white male officers. Similarly, Carter (1986) found that Hispanic officers believed that the department discriminated against Hispanic officers in promotions, that Hispanic citizens were the recipients of intentional discrimination, that

most Anglo officers “didn’t like Mexicans,” and would stop Hispanics based primarily on their ethnicity as long as there was some “crime-related suspicion,” and that Anglo officers were more suspicious of Hispanic citizens based upon their language, dress, and the like, than on substantive facts.

In a study of police officers in nine cities, Dulaney (1984) found that, even though officers discounted race as a factor in policing, their responses substantiated the claim of many minorities that police officers of different races bring a different set of values to the job. Dulaney found that black officers had values that were more progressive and community-oriented while the white officers had values that were more conservative and police-oriented, and that the white officers’ values reflected the “we against them” attitude.

The evidence suggests, therefore, that minority officers bring to the job different visions of their police role, since police officers carry out their duties within contexts that they interpret in culturally defined ways. This has important implications for Hispanic communities served by Hispanic officers since Hispanics living in an ethnic neighborhood are much more likely than white Americans to have a face-to-face interaction with a police officer (Holmes 1998; National Minority Advisory Council on Criminal Justice 1982; Walker, Spohn, and DeLone 1999). In fact, a recent national survey on police-public contacts revealed that Hispanics are the recipients of police-initiated contact more often than are whites or African Americans (Greenfeld, Langan, Smith, and Kaminski 1997).

It has been suggested that positive images of the police are necessary in order for the police to function effectively and efficiently (Murty, Roebuck, and Smith 1990). Carter (1985), however, found that, for Hispanic community members, their image of the police decreases as the frequency of their interactions with the police increases. This is partially due to the fact that respondents believed that officers had a bad attitude toward the public, and that the police with whom they interacted actually made the situation worse. Carter inferred that these problems are indicative of cultural conflict, in that police and Hispanics both have, as a product of socialization, predefined behavioral patterns with which they expect the other to conform. Carter and Radalet (1999) propose that part of the problem appears to be that most officers neither speak Spanish, nor understand the Hispanic culture, which can result in a mismatch between the type of policing a community desires and needs, and the police approach that is taken.

#### **The Ethnic Community Context: A Factor in the Exercise of Discretion**

Community policing researchers have observed that even within individual agencies, police officers behave differently in different neighborhood contexts and that particularistic police responses are a necessary adaptive component of the police role (Reiss and Bordua 1967; Sherman 1986; Smith 1986). This is true with regard to Hispanic/Latino ethnic communities as well as for African American and Anglo neighborhoods (Dunham and Alpert 1988; Herbst and Walker 2000; Walker 2000).

Brown's (1981) study of officers working the street found that police officers enlist a coherent set of beliefs to guide their actions. These beliefs structure their perception of events and their definition of the situation, providing the norms and

standards that influence the exercise of their police discretion. Brown identifies the major influences of police behavior as 1) knowledge of the community; and 2) the officers' interpretation of the community's expectations of how the police should act.

Banton (1964) also observes that the community context influences police behavior. He speculates that one explanation can be found in the degree to which police participate in the life of the community they patrol. He also hypothesizes that the less social distance between police and the public, the greater the likelihood that police will adopt a helping orientation in their interactions with community members.

The influence of the Latino community context on Latino police behavior suggests two things. First, that Latino officers who understand community expectations and values toward police practices will be more effective in meeting community needs. Second, that Latino officers with a salient ethnic identity are more likely to have a vision of the police role in the Latino community that is informed by a cultural frame of reference more in line with that of Latino community members. As an extension of that shared cultural frame of reference, I would expect salient ethnic identity officers to be more community oriented and less likely to take a "we/they" approach to the exercise of their police discretion. It must be noted, however, as findings from the last chapter reveal, not all Hispanic/Latino officers have a salient ethnic identity. Officers in this study displayed varying degrees of identification with the ethnic minority group. I would expect that officers with varying degrees of ethnic identification will also have differing visions of their police role in the Hispanic/Latino community context.

The next section of this chapter examines these different approaches to policing in the Hispanic/Latino community.

### **Approaches to Policing in the Latino Community: Integrative Service and Traditional Enforcement**

In the previous chapter three general patterns of ethnic identification were delineated by analyzing the degree to which Latino officers identified with and/or distanced themselves from both the minority ethnic group and the dominant Anglo group. The following section of this chapter describes ways in which the officers in this study negotiate ethnic and police identities while fulfilling their instrumental role within the context of policing in the Hispanic/Latino community. I allow the officers' own words to illustrate two general, "ideal type" approaches to policing in the Latino community.

The interview schedule contained 22 open-ended questions regarding the officers' experiences policing in the Latino community. Responses to all of those 22 questions were categorized according to patterned themes and then analyzed to ascertain whether or not their attitudes and self-reported behaviors while policing the Latino community appeared to be primarily motivated by their ethnic identity or their occupational identity.

There are two components to the analysis. First, I examine responses to the general survey questions about policing in the Hispanic/Latino community and outline various patterns. Second, I examine responses to three specific question categories that were used as proxy measures. The first category addressed issues relating to language barriers. Responses were used as proxy measures of an officer's awareness of, and motivation to meet the unique needs of the Spanish-speaking community, which is a

significant proportion of the Latino community in this study. The second and third response categories addressed whether officers believed there was a connection between immigrants and crime, and whether they foresaw any problems related to the increasing role that police officers are being expected to play in identifying and apprehending undocumented immigrant workers. These two categories were used as proxy measures of an officer's sensitivity, or lack thereof, to the heterogeneity of the ethnic community they are serving, including the culturally distinct definitions of what is or is not considered "criminal" behavior in need of sanctioning.

These forms of analysis revealed two general, ideal type categories of approaches to policing in the Hispanic/Latino community. In this study, the terms "integrative service approach" and "traditional enforcement approach" will be used as heuristic devices that describe general patterns of behavior indicated by individual officers. Both approaches are descriptive of theoretically distinct approaches to the exercise of police discretion within the context of policing in the Hispanic/Latino community. In practice, however, undoubtedly all of the officers in this study display elements of both approaches at various times.

The service approach and the enforcement, or legalistic approach to policing were originally conceptualized by Wilson (1968) in his seminal study of varieties of police behavior in eight communities. Although Wilson applies the terms "service" and "legalistic" to the various approaches of different police departments, experts have recognized that these terms can also be used to describe the approaches of different police officers within one department. They are appropriate, therefore, for use in this study for

describing the general approaches of individual officers. I use Wilson's "service" and "legalistic"/[enforcement] descriptive categories as a foundation, although I expand upon them by adding adjective descriptors to more clearly and accurately describe the approach types indicated by the officers in this study (e.g., *integrative* service, and *traditional* enforcement).

### ***Integrative service approach***

As outlined by Wilson (1968), the overall goal of the service approach is service to the community and positive police-community relations. In pursuit of this goal, the special needs of the community are taken very much into account, and in this respect, an officer's local ties to the community contribute to the service orientation. Service style officers, while they take seriously all requests for law enforcement and order maintenance, intervene frequently, but not always formally. With regard to minor infractions of the law, arrests are not always carried out. Instead, frequent uses of informal, non-arrest sanctions are employed. Primarily concerned about maintaining order, and deterrence rather than strict law enforcement, the service style officer must be alert to clues indicating the likely future behavior of individual community members they encounter in the course of their police work. Therefore, service style officers, with their more intimate knowledge of the community, can make more discriminating judgements in the employ of their discretion.

Felkenes and Unsinger (1992:104) have elaborated on Wilson's conception of the "service style" and its relevance in the contemporary community policing era, referring to it as "community service policing," where the principal requisite skills are



communication, sensitivity to a heterogeneous population, and the ability to develop expanded forms of information and analysis. According to Felkenes and Unsinger, the goals of community service policing include service to the community, community participants as partners with the officers, and enhanced accountability of officers to the community.

The integrative service officers in this study indicate that their attitudes and behaviors are akin to the type of community service policing that Felkenes and Unsinger describe. I, however, chose to refer to the officers in my study as utilizing an integrative service approach, rather than referring to those officers as community service officers, because it is more reflective of the process by which they are negotiating their ethnic and occupational identities. Integrative service officers take their cultural knowledge and sensitivities, what I will term “ethnic skills,” and integrate them into a more or less traditional conception of the police role. By mobilizing their ethnic skills in order to meet the needs of the ethnic community, officers taking the integrative service approach integrate community norms into the exercise of their discretion. They prefer to work in the ethnic community, many stating that they transfer there to “take a break” from the disrespect they endure in other communities.

It must be noted that no officers in this study identified with the ethnic minority group so strongly as to violate the dominant norms of enforcement. Rather, even for the officers who were categorized as having a salient ethnic identity in the previous chapter, identification with their instrumental role as police officers was always a prominent factor in their attitudes and self-reported behaviors while policing in the Latino

community. In fact, both ambivalent and salient ethnic identity officers in the integrative service category indicated that they relinquished ethnic ties to a certain degree when transitioning into the police occupational role. For instance,

- When asked whether he has problems with the expectations of Latino community members, one officer related that, *“sometimes, if they are friends and I have to arrest them. It doesn't bother me, but they bother my family, my brothers. When you become a police officer, you give up certain parts of your social life. In the Mexican culture dances are an important social function. I used to like to go to the dances and stuff, but once you become a police officer, things change”* (interview “Q”).
- Another officer also explained, *“I grew up in South O. My friends, close ones, were Hispanic, Mexican. Their kids have gotten into things they shouldn't. Now those kids don't want me around. Their parents won't say what they used to around me. You lose friends when you become a police officer”* (interview “H”).

The responses of integrative service officers suggest that while they embrace the police role, their exercise of discretion is more prone to be influenced by consideration of the norms of the ethnic community. By utilizing this additive strategy, integrative officers, whether consciously or not, renegotiate, rather than discard, the traditional conception of the police role.

- One officer summed it up, *“The Latino community doesn't see us as just Latino, because we're in a position of authority. We have a dual identity. They look up to us because we're Latino AND police officers. We share a common denominator, especially if you speak Spanish. The only difference is the uniform”* (interview “FF”).
- Another officer stated, *“I became a police officer because the city needed Latin officers, so did the community”* (interview “EE”).

Of the thirty-four officers in this study, the responses of eighteen officers (53 percent) indicate an integrative service approach to policing in the Latino community.

When asked the question, “in your role as a police officer, how would you describe your

experiences relating with members of the Latino community?" the following responses are typical of officers who take the integrative approach. For instance, they express a sense of obligation and accountability to the community.

- In one officer's experience, *"There is an instant connection, but at the same time there is that Uncle Tom stereotype. I've had some of the Latinos only talk to my partner, who is also Latino, or myself. They seek us out. It's a trust issue. It almost seems like it's easier to work with the Latino community for both sides. Coming into a domestic situation I know what the dad's, the mom's role, and the kid's roles are. I think, too, with the Latino community it's like I want to help more. I do this job to help people. I take that more seriously when in the Latino community"* (interview "Q").
- Another officer explained, *"Being Mexican, I'm a buffer between the Latino community and the police department. I like to work in my community, but I'll be the first one to arrest one of 'my own,' but I'll also be the first to help translate, court, etc. I have a vested interest in keeping dope out of South O. You will gain respect if you treat them fair, no matter what, if they're an illegal alien, or what. You have to let them know that you have a job to do, like anybody else. You don't like being called a 'sell out,' being asked, 'why are you doing this to us?' Discretion. You have a lot of discretion; you just need to know how to use it"* (interview "FF").

The following response is typical of several integrative approach officers who felt a responsibility to be a good role model for the ethnic community.

- *"Being around home, where I grew up, that's the best thing about policing in the Latino community. Trying to set an example, because they know I'm not a phony, but they know not to cross me. Being an officer hasn't changed me. I'm still the same, but I still have discretion to use in the right, common sense way"* (interview "Y").

Integrative service officers also indicate knowledge of the community context, and frequently expressed it as a sense of familiarity and comfort. For instance, When asked what they liked best about being a Latino police officer working with members of the Latino community, the following responses were typical of the officer with an integrative service approach.

- *“I feel more comfortable with them. We have a good rapport. It's good to have members of their own ethnic race enforcing the law. It makes for better relations with the department, the city”* (interview “BB”).
- For another officer, the best thing about being a police officer working with members of the Latino community is that, *“you know the culture. You know where to eat! With the large influx of Hispanics in South O, if you speak any Spanish, those people from Mexico; El Salvador, Puerto Rico, Honduras, they know you on a first name basis. You feel more relaxed. You have a better understanding of their needs and they know that. I grew up in South O, so naturally, that's where I like working best. You know people. You know that element that's new to the area. You develop some intelligence; you can get things accomplished better. You can develop intelligence. That's what I like best”* (interview “FF”).

A defining feature of the integrative approach is that officers recognize and service the unique needs of the Latino community. Many integrative officers expressed a willingness to serve those needs. For instance,

- Regarding serving Latino community members one officer said, *“Mainly, if they have problems, in any area of city government, if they can't get help, they can ask me and I can do their talking for them. Like weeds, trash, drug houses, Spanish-speaking officers, we're an untapped source of information, like for neighborhood watch, but it must be the right person, an officer who cares and speaks Spanish”* (interview “V”).
- For another officer, the thing he likes least about being a police officer working with members of the Latino community is, *“when I can't help them, mainly because the folks, my dad always said that when he sought help there was nobody there that could help him. He wanted us all to get an education, then help your people, other Hispanics. He wanted me to pass the word on to youth, “just tell Mom and Dad that they can register and become citizens”* (interview “KK”).
- Another officer stated, *“we need more Hispanic officers in the Hispanic community. They (administration) need to recognize that the Hispanic community exists. We've got resources of all kinds there. They need to utilize them. They need to cultivate a working relationship between Hispanic officers and the Hispanic community”* (interview “V”).

Integrative officers were also eager to express cultural sensitivity and empathy, and the influence they have on their exercise of police discretion.

- One officer stated emphatically, *“empathy, to have that, it's great. It lessens what might be a real harsh response. You can say, ‘I've seen it.’ Should you have Hispanic officers working in the Hispanic area? Hell Yeah, if they want you. That's a positive factor in community policing”* (interview “V”).
- Similarly, describing his relations with the Latino community, another officer stated, *“they're good. They respect you a little more. Hispanics have more respect in general for law enforcement, whether you're white, Black, whatever. Although, being a Latino officer, they have higher regard. There's so much more that they can communicate. We know what they're going through. You know what it's like to be a minority. You know what it's like to be you and ‘the man’”* (interview “V”).
- Another officer revealed, *“I don't like accusations that we're making an arrest or settling a disturbance based on the person's race. Most of the people making that accusation don't understand the power behind that. After talking for a few minutes they know that I'm another minority. That's what's ironic. If anything, it's going to be just the opposite. I'm going to understand what happened before I got there”* (interview “BB”).

### ***Traditional Enforcement approach***

Whereas integrative service officers incorporate their ethnic skills into the traditional police role, renegotiating the traditional police role in the process, officers whose responses indicated a traditional approach to policing in the Latino community were motivated primarily by their identification with the traditional police role. In other words, their police identity was the most salient aspect of their identity when policing in the Latino community.

The manner of policing taken by the traditional approach officer is similar to that of the legalistic style officer described by Wilson (1968). The legalistic officer takes a

law enforcement view of his role, as opposed to primarily order maintenance and service to the community. A distinguishing feature of the legalistic, law enforcement style is that the police will act, on the whole, as if there were a single standard of community conduct, that which the law prescribes. Therefore, law enforcement is the same for all communities, without considering culturally unique standards of conduct. I chose to use the term “traditional enforcement” rather than “legalistic,” however, since it allows for a clearer comparison and contrast with the “integrative approach” concept. It is important to clarify that they both identify with the traditional police role, but that the integrative officer negotiates his ethnic and occupational identities by allowing his ethnic identity and ethnic skills to modify his vision and enactment of the police role in the Latino community.

Of the thirty-four officers in this study, the responses of sixteen officers (47 percent) indicate a traditional approach to policing in the Latino community.

Whereas officers with an integrative approach took into consideration the unique and varied needs of the Latino community, traditional approach officers rarely acknowledged the culturally specific needs of the Latino/Hispanic community. Additionally, unlike integrative officers, officers taking the traditional enforcement approach did not express any type of enhanced accountability, or particular obligation to the Latino community beyond those related to the traditional police role. The following responses are typical of the officers with a traditional enforcement approach.

- As one officer explained, “*it doesn't matter to me what community I work in. The work is all the same, being patrol officers*” (interview “F”).

- *“It's really no different policing in the Latino community,”* stated another officer. *“In all communities you have people that respect you for being a police officer and those who don't”* (interview “M”).
- Another officer explained that, *“my contact with the Latino community has been minimal. I was only there for a little while, but it was business as usual, generally”* (interview “W”).
- When asked how the department’s philosophy regarding community policing effect his interactions with Omaha’s various communities, one officer responded, *“I don't break it down by community. Policing should be consistent across the board. More important is lifestyle, a certain mentality you get tired of as a police officer”* (interview “LL”).
- Another officer stated, *“I don't do community policing. I just go out on the street and do my job, try to treat everybody fair”* (interview “I”).
- When asked whether or not, in his experience, any Latino community members had perceived him as a Latino officer and expected any special treatment because of that, one officer replied, *“I don't really know if Latino community members wanted special treatment or not. I didn't know what they thought. I haven't really had a lot of contact with Latinos. I haven't been around many Mexicans except my family members. I only worked in the Latino community for a short time. It was obvious that I was Mexican, but since I'm not from the community, and I don't speak the language, or really know the culture, you know, people move on. They'd ask, ‘Where'd that officer come from?’ But I'm just me. I'm a person in blue”* (interview “I”).

Some officers choosing the traditional approach expressed a preference for working in the Anglo community based on the dictates of their instrumental role as police officers.

- *“I prefer to work in the white community because they use professional judgements, based on law, common sense”* (interview “W”).
- Another officer responded similarly. *“I prefer to work in the white community because there's less crime, less possibility of getting killed”* (interview “I”).

In the following section I examine responses to three specific question categories that were used as proxy measures of an officer's awareness of, and motivation to meet the unique needs of the Latino community, as outlined above.

### ***Language***

The first proxy category addresses issues related to language barriers. Responses were used as proxy measures of an officer's awareness of, and motivation to meet the unique needs of the Spanish-speaking community, which is a significant proportion of the Latino community in this study.

***Integrative service officers.*** The need for language translation was often recognized and discussed by integrative officers. Most significant, was their willingness to mobilize resources in order to meet the needs of the community, even if they, themselves were not proficient in Spanish.

- One officers felt that the best thing about policing in the Latino community is, *“being able to help, and if I can't help there are resources, members of the Latino community that speak the language, that I know personally, that I can turn to. I'll make a phone call to my mother-in-law, or one of my mother-in-law's employees, and say, “hey, there's somebody here I need you to talk to”* (interview “H”).
- Another officer said, *“sometimes, on the job, I'll have my dad translate for me. Like this one time, this Mexican immigrant was having trouble with his truck. All I was trying to do was to explain to him that if he didn't move his truck it was going to be towed, but we just couldn't understand each other, no matter how hard we tried. Finally I said, “come with me.” He understood that much, but I couldn't fully explain what I was doing, though. My dad lived about two blocks away, so I just had him go with me to my dad's house and my dad explained everything and the problem was solved! Other times, I've just called my dad and had him translate over the phone”* (Interview “T”).



- When asked what he saw as the most significant changes in the Latino community, one officer observed, *“the increasing need for Spanish speaking skills. That is, by far, the most important, and cultural awareness”* (interview “EE”).
- Another officer stated that the population growth is the most significant change in the Latino community, which leads to an increased need to break down communication barriers. *“It is so much bigger. The community has about tripled. When I grew up, you knew everybody, all of the families. You need to address the Latino community differently. The Latino community is quieter than the Black community so their issues haven't been addressed like those in the Black community. I'm refreshing my Spanish. Especially being a Latin officer, it's imperative that you speak Spanish. ‘Survival Spanish’ is not conversational Spanish, but barking out orders. It's not healthy. It's not good”* (interview “BB”).
- Another officer prefers working in the Latino community, *“because I can utilize my skills, language, knowledge of the Latino culture, and of the area.”* He added that the best thing about serving in the Latino community is *“being able to help them. Simply because the majority of the people don't speak English, or very little, when I can speak with them in their language they are much more open”* (interview “AA”).
- Another officer agreed that, *“communication is key. We need to have one Hispanic officer on each shift, even if they're not fluent. It helps build rapport. When a Latino is in need, they could call for him. They [administration] maybe don't think about that. They don't care. Even if Hispanic officers don't speak Spanish, it's not really a problem. Just being Hispanic is enough. Trust and fear, you're another Hispanic, they'll trust you, not fear you. They know if you're an Hispanic officer, and they feel better. Even the young ones can be mouthy, Americanized, but they still have the culture very much in their blood. I don't make arrests for cussing or pushing. I've only used my nightstick three times in all my years, my weapon twice”* (interview “KK”).
- One officer likes the fact that *“working in the Latino community, I can contribute more to my heritage. I can help bridge the communication barrier, which, in turn, enhances the whole community policing thing. My talent is being wasted out here [in the Anglo community]. In South O I could be making such a huge difference, tearing down the communication barrier. Like with Hispanics coming here for the first time in Omaha, when they relate to police officers. We have a lot of Hispanic officers on the force, but a lot of them don't speak Spanish”* (interview “Z”).

- Another officer also relates the importance of bilingual skills for serving the Latino community. *“Hispanic people automatically start speaking Spanish to me. If two non-Spanish speaking officers encounter a Hispanic guy, they come on the scene, they want to speak all in Spanish, even if they know enough English to answer the questions. It's a respect thing. You know Spanish and I know Spanish. Don't make me speak English if I don't have to”* (interview “Z”).
- A different officer stated that, *“in the South O business district, the Latino officers have more of an interest in talking to business owners, church leaders. The community feels more comfortable with someone of their own race. Language has a lot to do with it. Anyone is going to feel more comfortable speaking to someone in authority who speaks their language”* (interview “AA”).
- One officer explains that his experiences relating with members of the Latino community are *“good, but sometimes I feel myself letting them down because I don't speak the language. They expect it because I look more Hispanic than even other Hispanics, and even they say that”* (interview “H”).

This officer’s expression of regret regarding his inability to service the language needs of the Spanish-speaking community was reiterated by most of the integrative officers who do not speak Spanish. Rather than perceive the language barrier as a problem owned by the non-English speaking citizen, integrative officers express regret that they do not have the skill of bilingualism that could enable them to better serve the unique needs, and to meet the expectations of the ethnic community.

***Traditional enforcement officers.*** Whereas officers with an integrative approach were keenly aware of the problems that language barriers presented for community members, officers with a traditional approach only referred to language issues by discussing the “problems” that language barriers created for officers in the process of performing their law enforcement duties. For example, the following responses are typical of traditional

approach officers when asked how the increasing Latino population has effected their own police work.

- *“It’s effected my job as a police officer. It puts limitations because of the language barrier, especially with interviews. It’s difficult to gain their trust, which makes it harder to deceive them. It’s hard enough to do it in English. It’s even more difficult with an interpreter”* (interview “LL”).
- *“The population growth is tougher on all police officers, because of the language barrier”* (interview “F”).
- *“My experiences relating with members of the Latino community are frustrating. Often there is a language barrier and most of them are here illegally. I have to use my Spanish too much, but the best thing about working with members of the Latino community is when suspects don’t realize that I can speak Spanish and they begin talking about what they did”* (interview “C”).

The second and third proxy categories addressed whether officers believed there was a connection between immigrants and crime, and whether they foresaw any problems related to the increasing role that police officers are being expected to play in identifying and apprehending undocumented immigrant workers. These categories were used as proxy measures of an officer’s sensitivity, or lack thereof, to the heterogeneity of the ethnic community they are serving, including the culturally distinct definitions of what is or is not considered “criminal” behavior in need of sanctioning.

### ***Allegations of a causal relationship between immigrants and crime***

Those who have researched the alleged relationship between immigrants and crime report that the available data and anecdotal evidence tend to overstate the involvement of immigrants in crime (Wolf 1988). Despite the awareness that immigrants as a group are not responsible for much serious crime, government officials, however, have tended to echo popular alarm abundant in the media, and ultimately focus crime

reduction efforts on immigrant community members (United States General Accounting Office 1998; Wolf 1988).

Omaha's Latino population has more than doubled in the last ten years (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1999b), with the majority of this population growth attributed to foreign-born Latino immigrants. Immigrant rights have become a local community concern. Recently, a formal coalition, with national ties, but which is based in Omaha's Latino community, was formed with the primary goal of protecting local immigrants' rights (Sherry 1999). The formalization of such an interest group strongly suggests that the goal of upholding immigrant's civil and legal rights is a cultural norm in the Latino community. To assume that immigrants contribute to crime, solely on the basis of their immigration status, can be interpreted as infringing upon the rights of immigrants when police use their discretion to take legal action based on that criteria.

For purposes of this analysis it is assumed that officers who express their belief in a causal connection between immigrants and crime would be more likely to exercise their discretion by taking legal action on the basis of immigration status than those who state that they do not believe that such a causal relationship exists. Officers who state that they do not believe that such a causal relationship exists are taken to be more sensitive to the cultural norms of the Latino community, and as taking an approach to policing that is more consistent with the cultural norms of the community.

***Integrative service officers.*** The following responses are typical of integrative service approach officers when asked "is there a connection between immigrants and crime, and if so, what is it?" Their responses indicate knowledge of the community and

discriminating distinctions between who is and who is not a threat to community safety and order.

- One officer was certain, *“not José Gonzalez. He's working a sixty-hour workweek. He only wants to make a better life for his family. His kids are in public schools here. That's where they get introduced to gangs and crime. We Hispanics, we're proud. We're proud of where we come from. We aren't going to leave where we come from without a great reason. Crime is not a good reason. They could do that from home”* (interview “Z”).
- Another officer agreed, *“they're not related. That's a crazy argument. Absolutely not”* (interview “BB”).
- *“Undocumented people aren't involved in crime,”* replied another officer, *“They come here with families to work”* (interview “JJ”).
- According to another officer, *“there might be an increase in crime, but the incidents you mostly see in the immigrant community are not major, but domestic violence, drinking related altercations, a lot with meatpackers. If you took all the immigrants away inflation would rise, prices would rise. The more the immigrant population rises, the more immigrants there are being exploited. There are a lot of immigrants being taken advantage of, on the job, and by lawyers who are supposed to help them”* (interview “K”).
- Another officer stated. *“I don't agree that undocumented immigrants are committing crime. It's more Mexican-Americans and white gangs. There may be a relationship between undocumented immigrants and distributing narcotic, but it's no different than any other community or race that don't have money. A lot of drug dealers will prey on immigrants with no papers, no money. They know it's tempting. But it's a small percentage of gang members who are undocumented. The majority are here legally from California.”* (interview “FF”).
- A different officer stated that, *“the majority of crimes in Omaha are not committed by illegal immigrants, but gang members from California, Chicago. A lot of them are legal, but Spanish speaking. A lot of Salvadorans are legal. A lot of Mexicans are illegal, but they're mostly workers. A very few are bringing in drugs from Mexico”* (interview “EE”).
- Another officer was convinced. *“No, there's no relationship between immigrants and crime. No, I don't see it”* (interview “H”).

- A different officer was skeptical. *“The statistics in this department are pretty much what we make them. They’ll shuffle them to make them look good, shuffle them to make them look bad depending on what grants they want. So I’m not buying into any of our stats whatsoever. They’re manipulated”* (interview “K”).

**Traditional enforcement officers.** When asked, “is there was a connection between immigrants and crime, and if so, what is the connection?” traditional enforcement officers generally responded in the affirmative. Whereas integrative officers tended to make sure that if they did think there was a connection, it was a very small proportion of immigrants, traditional officers made sweeping statements about the strength of the connection without qualifying it with statements about the law-abiding majority.

- One officer, who describes himself as Mexican, says that in the Latino community, *“race on race violence is a big problem now, wetbacks not getting along with Mexican-Americans, the clash between Mexicans who have been here a while and the wetbacks who come and take their jobs, the generation gap. Mexicans who have just come over have different views, a different culture than those that have been here a while. Mexicans from Mexico, the majority of them are illegal. That leads to a lot of frustration. When we apprehend them for criminal activity, they have phony I.D. ’s; they give you the wrong name. We don’t know their identity. A lot of the undocumented here have a lot of connections back home, so it’s easy for them to come here and then go back to Mexico. Immigration won’t do anything unless they’re a felon. It’s a pain in the ass, the language gap is too”* (interview “X”).
- Another officer explained, *“there’s been a huge increase in non-English speaking Hispanics coming to Omaha for the good job market. With that comes culture clash, the element and the lifestyle we run into, domestic violence, especially. It’s not morally wrong in their culture. Substance abuse is a problem across the board”* (interview “W”).
- Another officer agreed. *“Yes, the link is the transport of narcotics, money. They’ll offer a thousand, two thousand dollars to a poor Mexican to run drugs”* (interview “NN”).

- Another officer says, “yes, I agree there is a connection, especially drug crimes, meth, cocaine” (interview “X”).
- A different officer also believes there is a connection between immigrants and crime. *“Very much so, directly because of their fake I.D.'s. They change identities like underwear. They're not easily identified, like ghosts. The first big influx of Hispanic immigrants was around 1981-1982. It's been increasing since then. There's been a continuous influx. The word gets out in the packinghouses. A big draw here is the packinghouses. Then a base develops. They tell their friends and relatives. A good percentage of them are illegals. They bring things with them. You know, we're not getting the cream of society from Mexico. We're getting the dregs, no moral upbringing and so on, a lot of people that are criminally inclined. They're not Mexican-Americans. They're not the same. They're not established, they don't speak the language, they're not from a culture bound by the norms we have here. There's a rich drug market here. They'll say things like, 'I shit on America. I get caught, I'll just go back to Mexico'”* (interview “NN”).
- Another officer claims that, *“a lot of Mexicans here are trying to support families in Mexico, but they come here and lose their morals, forget about their wife and family back home. There are so many unwed Mexicans here. Moral corruption, it's not the nature of Mexicans. The main reason they come here is a better life, money. But the Mexican people aren't buying, other than drugs. They live in rentals. They're renting versus owning so there's no cohesion in the community. Anywhere you have low-income housing you'll have these people. A big alcohol problem, drunk driving, hit and run, no license. These Mexicans, everybody in the family wants a car, but nobody has a license. There is so much illegal driving going on. Every third or fourth car is in violation. Stats on all crimes are higher among Hispanics, sexual assaults of minors; it's the norm within the Mexican population. Mexicans also brought gangs. They're not all from Mexico, but through California. Homicides, they're doing overtime on Mexican homicides”* (interview “PP”).
- Another officer stated, *“yes, there is a connection. For example, we're developing new violent gangs. Some are made up of illegals. I call them illegals. They're violent, gun toting groups from Mexico, Los Angeles. They come to Omaha with guns and drugs, gangs. A good percentage of them are illegals. Illegals bring in drugs. But when there's an indictment, the individuals don't all have Mexican names. They have the pipeline. The ability to cross the border and knowing people in Mexico, a good portion of cocaine is brought in from Mexico”* (interview “N”).

- One officer contends that, “*community leaders need to rip the cap off the secrecy. I’m talking about the failure to disclose the relationship between Black and white nationalities, racial groups, and crime. For instance, why Blacks and Hispanics are arrested and going to jail more than Anglos. Our law enforcement should not be equated with racism. Blacks are arrested more than other races because they commit more crimes than other races. With Hispanics, it’s the same now. The connection is illegals and money. Illegals don’t have legal documents so they can’t register their vehicles so they have to run from accidents. They don’t have money so they’ll do anything to save money, any type of moneymaking scam, including drugs. They have a more relaxed view of drugs. They like to be self-employed. Insurance scams, checks. Blacks do the same, especially Nigerians, check and credit card fraud*” (interview “PP”).

Also, as opposed to integrative approach officers, some of the traditional officers admitted to relying on hearsay.

- “*I think there is a connection. It’s really grown within the last five, six years. Drugs, crime, I don’t really work in the Latino community, but there’s a lot of hearsay from other officers, in the papers,*” stated one officer (interview “T”).

### ***INS’s enhanced presence in the Hispanic community: Operation Vanguard***

As part of the Immigration and Naturalization Service’s interior enforcement efforts, Operation Vanguard was implemented as a strategy to remove industrial meatpacking magnets that are highly dependent upon immigrant labor. One aspect of that plan involves increasing the role that local police officers will play in identifying and apprehending undocumented workers.

As with allegations of a causal connection between immigrants and crime, Operation Vanguard focuses on one group on the basis of the ethnicity and immigration status, and has even been referred to as a form of “ethnic cleansing” (Gouveia 1999). Latino community leaders and members have publicly voiced concern that the operation threatens the civil liberties of all Latinos (Salazar, 1999). As previously noted, concern



for the rights of immigrants is a Latino community norm. Widespread opposition to Operation Vanguard among Latino community members clearly shows that this concern is extended to undocumented immigrants as well. Via town hall meetings and round table discussions, community leaders and members have urged lawmakers to fight against the continuation of Operation Vanguard (Proskocil 1999). As with the formal mobilization of community forces on behalf of immigrant rights described earlier, the formalization of opposition to Operation Vanguard strongly suggests that the goal of protecting immigrants' civil and legal rights, including undocumented community members, has become a cultural norm in the Latino community.

Operations Vanguard's reliance upon INS enforcement by local police could pressure Latino officers to enact a police role that is in contradiction with their identification as a Latino, as well as being in contradiction with the cultural norms of the heterogeneous Latino community, which is comprised of a substantial number of undocumented immigrants.

For purposes of this analysis it is believed that officers who express opposition to the role they are expected to play in Operation Vanguard are assumed to understand and empathize with the cultural norms of the Latino community, and are categorized as taking an integrative service approach. On the other hand, officers who indicate that they would have no problem participating in Operation Vanguard, are assumed to be more likely to exercise their police discretion by taking legal action on the basis of immigration status and are categorized as taking the traditional enforcement approach.

**Integrative service officers.** When asked whether they foresaw any problems related to the increasing role that police officers are being expected to play in identifying and apprehending undocumented immigrants, as with Operation Vanguard, the following responses are typical of officers taking the integrative service approach. Their responses clearly indicate an awareness of the community norms and a desire not to violate them.

- *“If we support the INS by making arrests, it just creates fear of the police. It negatively effects police-immigrant community relations. That's not the police role”* (interview “HH”).
- *“Yes, I can see problems with it. There have been situations on calls where a few officers have assumed that the people we were dealing with were undocumented. When I was on a call with another officer involving an Hispanic family, the officer said, ‘They're probably illegal.’ They weren't. We're gonna have a lot of white officers accusing a lot of people of being undocumented.. It's a huge insult. It would take us back twenty years, having to ask people, ‘Where's your green card?’ We should leave that to the INS. It'll make us look like the bad guy, La Migra. They won't want to talk to us, give us information. It would be like, ‘You're La Migra [INS}, now”* (interview “Z”).
- *“If it did happen, it would infuriate me,”* said one officer. *“ Being undocumented, that's a trivial complaint”* (“K”).
- *“Immigrants are already scared to call, due to their fear of deportation. If we had the authority to arrest them, it would be like vigilantism,”* explained another officer (interview “BB”).
- Another officer believes that, *“focusing on guys that are trying to work here is not right. They should put more emphasis on identifying and deporting individuals that distribute narcotics or known documented gang members. They should focus attention toward other stuff. If enough Caucasians, African Americans, and women wanted to work in the packinghouses, they could, but it's dangerous, etc. It's political. The government has a hand in it. If whites wanted to work the job it wouldn't even be a fucking issue. The INS should focus on clearing major crimes versus packinghouses. They should not focus on people trying to work here. If there weren't vacancies, they wouldn't come”* (interview “FF”).

**Traditional enforcement officers.** Whereas integrative service officers were opposed to becoming involved with Operation Vanguard, traditional enforcement officers saw no problem with it, or were concerned with ways in which Operation Vanguard might affect the police department, in terms of staffing and manpower issues, rather than how it might affect the community.

- One officer stated, *“if they want our help, and know how they want our help, I wouldn't mind it. I could give them twenty illegals a week. They could come pick them up or I'd deliver them. There's a bus that goes from Park Ave. to the packing plant. It's filled with illegal workers. I hate that politically correct term 'undocumented' ”* (interview “PP”).
- Another officer replied, *“it would be a pain in the ass. It would occupy a lot of time to get those guys in our system and even find out who they are. It's a good idea, though, because then we would have their I.D.'s on file, those who run drugs, kill somebody, then flee to Mexico”* (X”).
- Another officer felt that, *“if it's a specialty unit, it would be okay”* (interview “I”).
- In another officer's opinion, *“We don't have the manpower, although it's a growing problem in Nebraska, but if you don't have more than twenty of them the INS doesn't want to hear from you”* (interview “M”).
- *“It would be a manpower problem,”* stated another officer. *“We don't have enough Spanish-speaking officers to be taken away from other duties”* (interview “G”).
- Another officer stated simply, *“I wouldn't have a problem with it”* (interview “F”).

### **The Relationship between Ethnic Identity and Policing Approaches**

The next step in the analysis is to determine whether there is a relationship between the approach officers take while policing in the Latino/Hispanic community, and their patterns of ethnic identity delineated in the last chapter. This analysis reveals that,

as expected, the majority of officers with a salient ethnic identity (seventeen out of twenty-five, or 68%) take the integrative service approach. Also as expected, both of the white identity officers take the traditional enforcement approach to policing in the Hispanic/Latino community. Interestingly, almost all of the seven ambivalent ethnic identity officers (86 percent) also take the traditional approach. The most intriguing aspect of this analysis, however, is the pattern of responses from the eight out of the twenty-five (32 percent) of officers with a salient ethnic identity who take the traditional police approach when policing the Latino/Hispanic community.

As opposed to officers who take the traditional enforcement approach to policing in the Latino community, but who have ambivalent ethnic and white identities, traditional approach officers with a salient ethnic identity do acknowledge some of the unique needs of the Latino community and are aware of community expectations. However, they pride themselves on dispensing justice evenly and not giving any “breaks” or special treatment on the basis of shared ethnicity. They view servicing the unique needs of the Latino community as special treatment that is antithetical to impartial application of the law, since their interpretation of their occupational role is to adhere to the law. Their responses also suggest that their enforcement orientation is sometimes directed more aggressively against co-ethnics. Paradoxically, then, although they assert that they adhere to strict equal treatment with respect to ethnicity, it appears that the more aggressive of the traditional enforcement officers may actually use ethnicity as a basis for selective enforcement at various times. The following responses are typical of the

more aggressive traditional enforcement officers. It is important to note that some of the officers in this category also expressed some of the most salient ethnic identities.

- One officer replied, *“I do make a difference in the department and the city. My knowledge and experience being Hispanic and a police officer, the interplay, translation. At least suspects can explain themselves to me. Language identifies me as more than just a police officer, but as an Hispanic. Language is everything. When they initially see me they identify me as a police officer. But then they'll say, ‘We're fellow Mexicans. You should be helping us out here.’ They expect us to coddle them, but we're not going to. We're going to treat them just like everybody else. It works well for me to be aggressive with immigrants since I speak Spanish. When it comes to illegals, I've got testicular fortitude. So many people around here have gotten to know me. They know how I am as an Hispanic police officer. I speak Spanish but I don't give many breaks. I take their fake I.D. cards. They don't like that”* (interview “QQ”).
- When asked whether co-ethnics expect special treatment from him, another officer replied, *“some Hispanic community members expect special treatment from Hispanic officers. The Catholic Hispanic Ministry wanted me to do some community service work for them. They wanted me to talk to Mexicans and teach them how to beat the law. I'm not going to do that. I became a police officer because I believe in law enforcement. They think I'm too pro-police, too pro-law enforcement. They didn't want me back. The community leaders, the left-wingers, requested another Hispanic officer who's the community relations officer [an officer with an integrative approach]. This other officer was called a representative of the Latino community”* (interview “PP”).
- Another officer stated, *“I don't think illegals should get any special rights. Their rights are just like everybody else's. Illegals have no business being here. Why should I give Hispanics a break just because I'm Hispanic?”* (interview “OO”).
- According to another officer, *“there is a big difference in the Latino community now. People that have been here a while are more informed about what they can and can't get away with. Illegals come in, they have no idea about rules, insurance, the consequences of driving without a driver's license, they don't know that they can go to jail. They get a true education, and the hard way”* (interview “SS”).

- When asked about his experiences policing in the Latino community, one officer replied, *“in most cases, my relationship with the Latino community is very good. At times, when working South ‘O’ and making a lot of Latino, Mexican arrests, my partner and I have been targeted by community leaders. We’re perceived as being keyed up on Mexicans. My partner and I are both Mexican. Some years back, community leaders had a meeting with the Chief and investigated us. Our area was dense with Mexicans. On our shift we made a lot of arrests. All of those we arrested were found guilty. The color of my skin means nothing. We were targeting those who were threatening us with deadly force”* (interview “N”).
- Another officer stated, *“overall, my relationship with the Latino community has been somewhat negative because I have had more than my fair share of contacts due to the fact that I get called to translate and I’ve been in working in the Latino community for a long time. I’ve made a lot of arrests, had a lot of activity. Also, because I speak Spanish, criminals can’t get away with ‘no hablo Ingles.’ Other guys on the force who speak Spanish may be a little more lenient than me. I’m Hispanic, they expect me to give them a break, but I don’t. They don’t like that”* (interview “OO”).

### **Socio-demographic factors and policing approaches**

The factors that seem to most strongly influence an officer’s approach to policing in the Hispanic/Latino community are whether or not they grew up in a Latino community, their generational status, whether both of their parents are Latino/Hispanic, and their proficiency in Spanish. My findings suggest that officers who were raised in a Hispanic/Latino community, who have both Latino/Hispanic parents, who are proficient in Spanish, and whose ancestors have most recently immigrated to the United States are much more likely to take the integrative service approach than those officers who did not grow up in a Hispanic/Latino community, who have only one Latino/Hispanic parent, who are not proficient in Spanish, and whose ancestors have resided in the United States longer.

Whereas officers who took the integrative approach to policing in the Latino community had an average generational status of 2.67, officers who took the traditional approach to policing the Latino community had an average generational status of 3.19. The integrative approach officers' ancestors have, on average, a little over half a generation less in the United States.

The ethnicity of an officer's parents also appears to influence the approach taken while policing the Latino/Hispanic community. Of officers taking the integrative approach, 67 percent had both Latino/Hispanic parents, as opposed to 25 percent of officers taking the traditional approach.

Bilingualism also seems to strongly influence the approach an officer takes to policing in the Latino community. Whereas 67 percent of officers taking the integrative service approach indicate that they are proficient in Spanish, only 25 percent of officers taking the traditional enforcement approach are bilingual.

Having been raised in a Latino/Hispanic community appears to be the most influential factor. Of the officers taking the integrative service approach, 88 percent grew up in a Latino community, versus 38 percent of those taking the traditional enforcement approach. It is important to note that the officer did not necessarily have to have grown up in Omaha's Latino community. This suggests that sensitivity to Latino community needs, as characterized by integrative service officers, goes beyond mere familiarity with the specific locale of the community, but rather, is informed by an understanding of the cultural context. This cultural awareness appears to allow the integrative officers to discern, and take into account, the special needs of the ethnic community.

### Latino Community Leaders

As a supplement to police officer interviews, I also conducted a preliminary study of a selected group of Latino community leaders (N=7), via systematic, semi-structured interviews. For the purpose of this study, Latino community leaders are defined as those persons involved in advocacy and other activities in the Latino community and for which they have gained public recognition as revealed by press articles and other media. These interviews allowed me to identify, from their perspective, the major issues that have emerged in their direct or indirect encounters with Latino police officers in Omaha, and their perception of the needs of the Latino community regarding police services.

When asked “what are the needs of the Latino community regarding policing in Omaha?” every Latino community leader responded similarly, identifying two particular needs. First, they expressed the need for Spanish-speaking officers, but qualified their answers by stating that what the Latino community really needs are Spanish-speaking officers “*who have a real knowledge of the culture*” beyond what is taught in cultural diversity training. For instance, one community leader stated that,

- *“Courtesy and respect are values that are deeply entrenched in the Latino culture. That’s largely why cultural competence is what’s needed, and not just diversity training. I attended a diversity training seminar that Omaha police officers attend and it was really bad. They allowed participants to sit there and read the newspaper during the session on the Hispanic culture. It was very disrespectful. It’s like the Hispanic voice isn’t even heard.”*

While some community leaders acknowledge that Anglo officers could also speak Spanish and acquire knowledge concerning the Latino community and culture, community leaders regularly expressed a preference for having Latino officers serve in the Latino community, as well as hopes for their increased employment and promotion



into the upper command ranks. They consistently stated that, in their experience, Latino community members feel more comfortable dealing with Latino officers, even if they don't speak Spanish.

- *“There’s a certain level of comfort and understanding that’s there when community members are dealing with a Latino officer. There’s not all that second-guessing. Even if the officer doesn’t speak Spanish, the brown face increases the comfort level.”*

Although community leaders recognized that not all Latino officers are empathic and better able to serve the needs of the Latino community, they agree that the likelihood is greater with a Latino officer, particularly one *“from the community”* due to the effects of socialization. My study supports this position. Community leaders indicate that the ability to communicate effectively goes beyond language. In their experience, if police officers and community members share a *“community of culture”* it allows for a shared frame of reference that fosters more effective communication and better police/community relations. The following responses are typical:

- *“It’s good to have Latino police officers policing in Latino communities because it helps break down some of the barriers. It gives the impression that you’re dealing with someone you can deal with. It creates a higher comfort level because we feel like they’re more like me. Usually they are, and it makes them a more concerned officer.”*
- *“Latino officers can relate better to the Latino people they’re serving. The communication barrier isn’t there. An understanding of the culture is important to communicating.”*
- *“Some community members think that calling the police is what they want to do, but they are afraid of how the situation will be handled. Many Latino community members tell me that they feel more protected by Latino police officers, though. No doubt about it, Latino community members would be much more likely to call the police if they thought their call would be responded to by a Latino police officer.”*

- *“Anglo officers are not the best advocates for Latino community members. Latino officers, though, especially if they’re from the community, these families know and trust them. They can be role models in a genuine way.”*
- *“Maybe I’m stereotyping, but community, family, extended family, a whole attitude of being a Latino officer in the Latino community, it’s a feeling of being an extension of the community.”*

Community leaders also believe that, for Latino officers from the community, community socialization *“relates directly to their discretion.”* Since an officer’s assessment of the situation influences their discretion, their knowledge of the culture can allow them to make finer distinctions regarding behavior that could be misinterpreted by officers without an appreciation of the ethnic cultural context. Community leaders believe that a common cultural frame of reference, therefore, decreases incidents of ethnic/racial discrimination. For example, community leaders stated:

- *“Anglo officers arrest people for little things here that are considered a normal part of the Latino culture. Something as simple as a traffic stop can escalate because of the language and/or cultural barrier. Latinos end up going to jail for things that an Anglo wouldn’t. Latino community members have a real fear of this. That’s why so many of them leave the scene of an accident. Sometimes, what you perceive as my personality may not be my personality, but my culture.”*
- *“Latino police officers can create a stronger sense of well-being. This guy’s not gonna chew me out because I’m a Mexican, but he probably is going to chew me out for doing the wrong thing I just did.”*
- *“Many Anglo officers are ignorant of the culture. They don’t understand some of the struggles these families are going through. The Latino community needs for police officers to have a better community link, not just community policing, but if they know people in their area, if they are raised in the Latino community, I’ve seen the benefit of that, having community, family relationships that stem from growing up in the community. A law officer who is from the community can really be a support.”*

- *“99% of the Latino officers have been respectful, kept things calm, where it might have escalated if it had not been a Latino cop. Even during arrests, Latino police officers are respectful and have good relations with the community. They have a built in understanding of the community. A Latino officer may not feel as threatened by a neighborhood ruckus.”*

Some community leaders also stated their belief that Latino officers from the community hold themselves more accountable to the community, partly because community residents hold them to a higher professional standard. Latino community leaders believe that having informal social ties to the community acts as a check on the officers' discretionary police behavior.

- *“Hopefully they are from the community. Then they have a connection to the institutions in the community. When Latino cops have relatives, friends in the community, in a sense, their behavior is checked.”*

The insights garnered from community leader interviews illustrate the perceived needs of the Hispanic/Latino community regarding police/community relations. Their statements suggest a strong desire for Spanish-speaking Latino officers who have been socialized to the needs of the ethnic community, preferably by being raised in a Latino community.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter examined ways in which Hispanic/Latino officers, with varying degrees of Latino/Hispanic ethnic identification, negotiate ethnic and occupational identities while fulfilling their instrumental role as police officers serving the Hispanic community. The data were analyzed, revealing two general approaches, the integrative service approach and the traditional enforcement approach, refuting the assumption that

Latino police officers share a common vision of their police role in the Latino community.

In the previous chapter three general patterns of ethnic identity were profiled: salient Hispanic/Latino, ambivalent Hispanic/Latino, and white. When the integrative and traditional policing approaches are analyzed by identity type, as expected, findings show that white identity officers take the traditional police approach. Interestingly, almost all of the ambivalent Hispanic/Latino identity officers also take the traditional enforcement approach.

Another expected finding is that most of the officers with a salient ethnic identity take the integrative service approach to policing in the Latino community, particularly those officers who were raised in an ethnic Latino community. This finding suggests that the effects of community socialization work toward creating a shared cultural frame of reference for Latino police officers and Latino community members that enables Latino officers with a salient ethnic identity to more effectively discern and meet the needs of the Latino community.

In the assessment of community leaders, a shared cultural frame of reference should perhaps be conceptualized as a skill that enhances police performance, similar to a shared language. My finding that having been raised in a Latino/Hispanic community is strongly associated with an officer taking the integrative service approach supports this judgment.

My findings regarding the integrative approach also appear to support the claims of Adrian Garcia (1999), President of the National Latino Peace Officers' Association, who states that,

Essentially, we are the truest form of community oriented policing. Latino officers, utilized effectively, can do so much for criminal justice, and law enforcement in particular. We have skills that the police department doesn't have to spend money on. We don't need sensitivity training. We come as a ready-made package. We're bilingual, culturally competent, we have the ability to interact with the Latino community, even if we don't speak Spanish.

He further states that,

We don't profile. We don't just kick ass and take names. Most of us can say, "I came from a poor Latino neighborhood." Regarding neighborhood, community policing, where there may be limited resources, we utilize the community network. Because we are culturally competent we apply it whether we are conscious of it or not. We are community oriented policing in its live form.

Integrative officers demonstrate how it is possible to transfer ethnic-based skills into both human and social capital. By integrating those attributes into the traditional police role, Latino officers are negotiating their vision of the police role in the Latino community. They are able to mobilize their familiarity, sensitivity, and experience acquired among this social group.

This strategy is similar to those described by Fernandez-Kelly and Shauffler (1996) whereby immigrants and their descendants with the social and human capital resulting from community socialization and support, are often more successful if they mobilize those assets. For example, one Latino police officer, who was voted "Officer of the Year," received praise for his "street skills." The officer's supervisor and nominator

for the award (who is not a Latino officer) noted about the officer in a newspaper interview,

He could get information that the average officer couldn't get. He has been able to get into some areas of the community, especially in south Omaha, that were kind of uncharted.

Furthermore,

[His] ties to the community and ability to speak Spanish proved invaluable in drug investigations...citizens felt comfortable giving [officer] \_\_\_\_\_ tips, some of which led to sizable drug seizures. [I] also nominated \_\_\_\_\_ because of his volunteer work in the community. (Eiserer 2000:15).

While the slight majority of Latino officers in this study indicate that they take the integrative service approach to policing in the Latino community, other Latino officers take different approaches to negotiating the tensions and contradictions between the majority defined occupational role and the needs of the community.

The somewhat surprising finding is that, while most of the officers with a salient Hispanic/Latino identity take the integrative service approach, a small group of them indicate that they take the traditional enforcement approach to policing in the Hispanic/Latino community. This finding challenges the assumption that ethnic identity will necessarily be infused into interactions between Hispanic officers and Hispanic community members in strictly empathic and supportive ways by all Hispanic officers.

Yet, my findings suggest that the employment of Latino officers is having a diversifying impact on the police occupational subculture since over half of the officers in this study integrate their ethnic skills into the traditional conception of the police role,

without abandoning that traditional role. Rather, the integrative approach officers have infused their ethnic identity into their occupational identity in the process of negotiating their police role in the Latino community.

## Chapter IV

### Conclusions

Relations between the police and Latino communities have been characterized by tension and mistrust. Civil rights leaders and community groups argue that increased employment of Latino police officers will improve the quality of police services, based on the assumption that Latino officers will be better able to relate to Latino community members and will not engage in discriminatory behavior. This assumption presupposes that Latinos are a relatively homogenous group, readily encompassed by clear ethnic boundaries and a shared sense of ethnic identity. It also presumes that Latino police officers share a common vision of their police role in the Latino community, stemming from a shared sense of ethnic identity.

The growing Latino population, however, is much more heterogeneous than in past decades. Latino police officers, who are primarily second and third generation middle-class citizens are now policing a Latino population that is much more diversified by factors such as country of origin, social class background, length of residence in the U.S., educational and language skill levels, and other social and human capital variables. This study of Latino police officers questioned the widely held assumption that Latinos are a homogenous ethnic group, and examined the related assumption that Latino police officers share a common vision of their role in the Latino community, one that is more supportive of and better qualified to meet the needs of the Latino community.

Analysis of systematic, in-depth interviews with the complete population (100%) of sworn Latino officers in Omaha, NE with at least one year active duty (N=34), shows



that Latino police officers have varying degrees of ethnic identification. By illustrating their various degrees of identification with the ethnic minority group as well as various degrees of identification with the Anglo majority, I delineated three general ethnic identity patterns expressed by the officers: Salient Hispanic/Latino, Ambivalent Hispanic/Latino, and white/Anglo.

When socio-demographic factors are analyzed, having been raised in an ethnic Hispanic/Latino community is shown to be the strongest predictor of identification with the Latino community. Bilingualism is shown to be an important factor in the maintenance of identification with the ethnic minority group, in addition to parents' ethnicity, which also appears to be strongly influential in maintaining an identification with the Latino community, regardless of generation.

In addition, I investigated ways in which officers, with varying degrees of ethnic identity, negotiate ethnic and police occupational identities while fulfilling their instrumental role as police officers serving the Hispanic/Latino community. As a result of this analysis, two general, but divergent, approaches to policing in the Latino community were profiled. I termed them the integrative service approach, and the traditional enforcement approach. Roughly half of the officers in this study indicate that they take the integrative service approach and about half indicate that they take the traditional enforcement approach, refuting the assumption that Latino police officers share a common vision of their police role in the Latino community.

When the integrative and traditional policing approaches are analyzed by identity type, as expected, findings show that about two-thirds of the officers with a salient ethnic

identity take the integrative service approach to policing in the Latino community. Also as expected, the white/Anglo identity officers take the traditional police approach.

Interestingly, almost all of the ambivalent Hispanic/Latino identity officers also take the traditional approach to policing in the Latino community.

Of the officers who indicate that they take the integrative service approach to policing the Latino community, where the special needs of the community are taken into account, almost all have a salient Hispanic/Latino identity.

The factors that seem to most strongly influence an officer's approach to policing in the Hispanic/Latino community are whether or not they grew up in a Latino community, their generational status, whether both of their parents are Latino/Hispanic, and their proficiency in Spanish. My findings suggest that officers who were raised in a Hispanic/Latino community, who have both Hispanic/Latino parents, who are proficient in Spanish, and whose ancestors have most recently immigrated to the United States are much more likely to take the integrative service approach than those officers who did not grow up in a Hispanic/Latino community, who have only one Latino/Hispanic parent, who are not proficient in Spanish, and whose ancestors have resided in the United States longer.

As a supplement to police officer interviews, I also conducted a preliminary study of a selected group of Latino community leaders (N=7), utilizing systematic, semi-structured interviews. For the purpose of this study, Latino community leaders are defined as those persons involved in advocacy and other activities in the Latino community and for which they have gained public recognition as revealed by press

articles and other media. These interviews allowed me to identify, from their perspective, the major issues that have emerged in their direct or indirect encounters with Latino police officers in Omaha.

Latino community leaders expressed a strong desire for Spanish-speaking, Latino officers who have been socialized to the needs of the ethnic community. In the assessment of community leaders, a shared cultural frame of reference should perhaps be conceptualized as a skill that enhances police performance, similar to a shared language. My finding that having been raised in a Latino/Hispanic community is the factor most strongly associated with an officer taking the integrative service approach supports this judgment.

Mastrofski (1984) argues that formal systems for evaluating officer and agency performance could possibly be expanded to include knowledge of the community geography, and culture. This suggests that these “skills” could possibly be a consideration for district assignment. This is also supported in the literature (Banton 1964; Brown 1981; Dunham and Alpert 1988; Reiss and Bordua; Sherman 1986; Smith 1986). An officer’s desire to work in the ethnic community, however, is imperative. Policies that restrict minority officers to working only in minority areas could be counterproductive. First, it would limit the officers’ opportunity to gain experience in a wide range of settings and could limit their opportunity for special assignments, therefore decreasing their chances for promotion. Second, such a policy might be viewed as regressive since the United States has a long history of restricting minority officers to policing only in minority areas, a policy which was viewed as inequitable treatment of

minority officers and has since been eliminated (Alex 1969; Dulaney 1996; Leinen 1984).

While the slight majority of Latino officers in this study indicate that they take the integrative service approach to policing in the Latino community, other Latino officers take different approaches to negotiating the tensions and contradictions between the majority defined occupational role and the needs of the community. The somewhat surprising finding is that, while most of the officers with a salient Hispanic/Latino identity take the integrative approach, about one third of them take the traditional approach to policing in the Hispanic/Latino community. This finding challenges the assumption that ethnic identity will necessarily be infused into interactions between Hispanic officers and Hispanic community members in strictly empathetic and supportive ways by all Hispanic officers.

Yet, my findings also suggest that the employment of Latino officers is having a diversifying impact on the police occupational subculture, since over half of the officers in this study integrate their ethnic skills into the traditional conception of the police role in the process of negotiating their police role in the Latino community.

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## **Appendix A:**

### **Interview Schedule: Latino police officers**

1. How long have you been a sworn officer on the Omaha police force?
2. What is your rank?
3. What is the ethnic or racial group with which you identify? What do you call yourself?
4. Are you now or have you ever been a member of any specialty unit?
  - a. Which one(s)?
5. In which precincts (or parts of town) have you worked?
6. How does Omaha's philosophy regarding community policing effect your interactions with Omaha's various communities?
  - a. Is it different for particular groups, different age groups, or neighborhoods, for instance?
7. In your role as a police officer, how would you describe your experiences relating with members of the white community?
8. What do you like best about being a police officer working with members of the white community?
9. What do you like least about being a police officer working with members of the white community?
10. Do you experience any problems with the expectations of white community members?
11. Are there some members of the white community who identify you as primarily Latino (vs. police officer) and want some special treatment because you're Latino?
12. Are there some members of the white community who identify you as primarily Latino (vs. police officer) and do not want you around because you're Latino?

13. Are there some members of the white community who see you as primarily a police officer (vs. Latino) and do not want you around because you're a police officer?
14. In your role as a police officer, how would you describe your experiences relating with members of the Black community?
15. What do you like best about being a police officer working with members of the Black community?
16. What do you like least about being a police officer working with members of the Black community?
17. Do you experience any problems with the expectations of Black community members?
18. Are there some members of the Black community who identify you as primarily Latino (vs. police officer) and want some special treatment because you're Latino?
19. Are there some members of the Black community who identify you as primarily Latino (vs. police officer) and do not want you around because you're Latino?
20. Are there some members of the Black community who see you as primarily a police officer (vs. Latino) and do not want you around because you're a police officer?
21. In your role as a police officer, how would you describe your experiences relating with members of the Latino community?
22. What do you like best about being a police officer working with members of the Latino community?
23. What do you like least about being a police officer working with members of the Latino community?
24. Do you experience any problems with the expectations of Latino community members?
25. Are there some members of the Latino community who identify you as primarily Latino (vs. police officer) and want some special treatment because you're Latino?
26. Are there some members of the Latino community who identify you as primarily Latino (vs. police officer) and do not want you around because you're Latino?
27. Are there some members of the Latino community who see you as primarily a police officer (vs. Latino) and do not want you around because you're a police officer?

28. In regard to policing, what do you see as the most significant changes in Omaha's Latino community?
29. How have these changes effected your own police work?
30. Do you notice that expectations of you as a police officer vary by community members of different:
  - a.) Age groups?
  - b.) Languages?
  - c.) National origins?
  - d.) Immigration/Documentation status?
31. Given the choice, in which precinct would you prefer to work?
32. Why?
33. Given the choice, in which racial or ethnic community would you prefer to work?
34. Why?
35. Do you foresee any problems related to the increasing role that police officers are being expected to play in identifying and apprehending undocumented immigrants, such as "Operation Vanguard"? (Operation Vanguard is a federally backed law enforcement strategy focusing specifically on meatpacking plants in Nebraska. The goal of the operation is to clear the packinghouses of undocumented workers. Local police will essentially be given INS powers in order to aid in achieving that goal.)
36. It has been argued that there is a connection between immigrants -especially undocumented immigrants- and a rise in crime in Nebraska. In your experience as a police officer, is there a connection between immigrants and crime, and if so, how are they related?
37. How do view the role of community leaders regarding police/community relations?
  - a. In what ways do community leaders help to improve police/community relations?
  - b. In what ways do community leaders hinder police/community relations?

38. Can you suggest any changes that you feel would improve police/community relations, and/or more effective policing?
39. What is your date of birth?
40. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (measured as the number of years of formal schooling, 12-20).
41. Are you proficient in any language other than English?
  - a. Which language(s)?
  - b. Do you use it on the job?
  - c. How often?
42. Did you indicate your ethnic or racial group identification on your application for employment as an Omaha police officer?
43. Why did you choose to include/not include that information?
44. Why did you become a police officer?
45. Were you recruited?
  - a. By what means?
46. Do you now have, or have you in the past had any family members on the police force?
  - a. Who?
47. Do you have any military experience?
48. Prior to your employment with the Omaha Police Department, did you have any experience as a law enforcement officer?
49. Since your employment with the OPD have you made any attempt(s) at promotion?
  - a. How many?
  - b. Did the attempt(s) result in promotion?
50. How do you feel about OPD's promotion process?

51. Do you maintain any union or association affiliation(s)?
  - a. To which union/association(s) do you belong?
52. Why did you choose to join/not join the union/association(s)?
53. To which precinct are you assigned? (Northeast, Southeast, Northwest, or Southwest)
54. In which precinct district do you live?
55. Which ethnic or racial group would you say is most prevalent in your own neighborhood?
56. In what city, state and country were you born?
57. In what city, state and country were your parents born?
58. In what city, state and country were your grandparents born?
59. Where did you grow up?
60. Did you grow up in a Latino community?
  - a. If so, where was it?
61. What is the race or ethnicity of your mother?
62. What is the race or ethnicity of you father?
63. What is the race or ethnicity of your spouse or significant other?
64. Is there anything you'd like to add, maybe something important that I have forgotten to ask?

## **Appendix B:**

### **Interview Schedule: Latino community leaders**

1. What are the needs of the Latino community regarding policing in Omaha?
2. In terms of supporting the needs of the Latino community, what are the characteristics that an “ideal” police force would have?
3. How well does the Omaha police force meet up to this ideal?
4. What do you see as barriers to the realization of this ideal?
5. How do you view the role of community leaders regarding police/community relations?
6. Can you suggest any changes that you feel would improve police/community relations, and/or more effective policing in the Latino community?
7. Have you had contact with the police or witnessed other Latinos having contact with the police?
8. During each contact what was the race or ethnicity of the officer?
9. What was the nature of the contact (who initiated the contact)?
10. Can you describe the interaction(s)?
11. What issues were handled well?
12. Which issues could have been handled better?
13. What are the advantages of having Latino officers policing Latino communities?
14. What are the disadvantages of having Latino officers policing Latino communities?
15. Are Latino officers more, less, or equally effective policing the Latino community than are their Anglo or Black counterparts?
16. Have community members expressed to you whether they feel more, less, or equally comfortable dealing with Latino police officers than their Anglo or Black counterparts?

17. Have Latino community members ever expressed frustration or disappointment to you because they have had interactions with a Latino officer who could not speak Spanish?
18. Have community members expressed to you whether they feel more, less, or equally protected by Latino police officers than their Anglo or Black counterparts?
19. Have community members related to you any reasons for not wanting to call the police in times of need?
20. What reasons were given?
21. Have community members ever expressed to you that they are afraid of Omaha police officers?
22. If so, did they indicate whether their fear had anything to do with the race/ethnicity of Omaha police officers?
23. Given your experiences, if Latino community members knew that their call would be responded to by a Latino officer would they be more likely to call the police than if an Anglo or Black officer were to respond to the call?
24. Do you know any Latino officers, i.e. friends, family?
25. Is there anything else that you would like to add, maybe something I have forgotten to ask about regarding police services and the Latino community?