

The Impact of a College-Educated Police Force: A review of the literature

Summary Points

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A review of the existing literature on college education and policing finds the following positive impactsⁱ:

College-educated police officers:

- Have better communication skills
- Write better reports
- Are more tolerant with citizens
- Display clearer thinking
- Better understanding of policing and the criminal justice system
- Better comprehension of civil rights issues from multiple perspectives

College-educated police officers also:

- Adapt better to organizational change
- Are more professional
- Have fewer administrative and personnel problems
- Are better able to utilize innovative techniques
- Receive fewer citizen complaints
- Receive fewer disciplinary actions
- Have fewer preventable accidents
- Took less sick time away from work
- Perform better in police training
- Are less likely to use deadly force
- Are less cynical
- Are more open-minded
- Place a higher value on ethical conduct

College-educated Officers report that they:

- Are better able to utilize employee contacts
- Have a greater knowledge of the law
- Are better prepared for court
- Have a higher quality of performance on the job
- Have a higher level of problem-solving abilities
- Communicate better and have better interpersonal working relationships
- Are better at resolving conflicts
- Are more equipped to deal with criticism, change, workload, and stress
- Make better discretionary decisions

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The Impact of a College-Educated Police Force: A review of the literature

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This paper was written in hopes that it will have some impact on retaining the necessary budgetary resources to maintain the state and local appropriations for the Police Career Incentive Pay Program in Massachusetts. It contains excerpts from my dissertation (written in 2003) as well as an updated review of the literature on police reform and higher education and highlights the historical and modern day importance of higher education in law enforcement. I remain today as passionate about the importance of a college educated police force as I did when I began writing my dissertation. I hope that upon reading this paper, you too will feel the same passion about this issue.

Introduction:

Reform movements in law enforcement, such as the professionalization and community policing movements and more specifically, those reforms containing elements focused on education and training, were not advanced in isolation. Broader reform movements in public administration and the criminal justice system in general had (and continue to have) enormous impacts upon both the structure and organization of law enforcement agencies nationwide. One theme that has remained throughout all of the reform movements is the importance of education in creating a better prepared and more tolerant police officer.

Recommendations for a better educated police force did not originate with community policing, or professionalization and accreditation. Endorsements for higher levels of education have appeared in several reform movements in policing, and have been present since the very beginnings of policing as a profession. Key activists such as Sir Robert Peel in England in the 1800s, and August Vollmer in America in the 1900s, were instrumental in implementing major changes in policing that are still evident today. Peel “established quasi-military features that have dominated modern police administration to the present” (Walker 1998:53), and Vollmer’s ideas regarding police education and training have made their way into numerous recommendations by commissions on law enforcement. While Vollmer did not explicitly argue for college level education for police officers, his ideas and reforms were instrumental in placing college education on the agenda of several law enforcement commissions for years to come. Vollmer commented that:

Obviously, the officer on the beat need not be specially skilled in either the mental, biological or social sciences, nor should it be necessary for him to be intimately acquainted with every phase of the humanities. But none of these can be overlooked in the training of police officers if they are to have a broad, cultural, scientific, and technical background requisite for the performance of the modern officer’s duties. (Douthit 1983:100)

Reforms beginning with Vollmer and later during the Progressive Era attempted to professionalize law enforcement and included elements such as standards of hiring, training, and redefining the appropriate role and function of the police. Prior to the progressive era, “becoming a police officer was having the right political connections” (Walker 1998:55). Training for new officers did not exist. Corruption and avoidance of work had quickly become the reality of policing and enforcement of the law was dependent upon which political machine was in power, not upon justice and equality of the law.

During the political era, law enforcement was synonymous with corruption. Little more than the enforcement arm of political machines, police officers did not hold the public's trust or confidence. The hiring of police officers was based on "bribes, nepotism and political appointments" (Pelfrey 2000:81) rather than skills and qualifications. Police officers used their immense discretion for personal and political benefit. This discretion, for the most part, went unchecked. The corrupt, unorganized, and sometimes brutal condition of the police set the stage for serious reform.

The reformers during the "progressive" era sought to remove politics from law enforcement by implementing a series of reforms designed to "professionalize" the police. These reforms produced changes in hiring practices, discretion and the structure of police. Hiring practices became merit-based rather than politically controlled. Line-level discretion was reduced or restricted as much as possible through hierarchy, specified rules, policies, and procedures, and the division of labor. Police, during this era, became the "paramilitary" structure that is still evident in modern day.

While the reform or progressive era did well to standardize and professionalize police, several problems with professionalization surfaced: First, in the efforts to separate politics from policing reformers discounted the need and usefulness of line-level discretion. In addition, the highly centralized structure of law enforcement widened the gap between administration and line officers and further isolated the police from the public whom they served. Furthermore, as the police role became broader and more complex, traditional legal-based solutions were no longer effective or appropriate in many situations with which line officers were faced with. Problems such as these created the need for more community involvement and better police-citizen relationships. Lastly, line-level discretion could no longer be discounted as something that could

be eliminated. Thus, ideas about how to improve the wiser use of line-level discretion were in demand.

The community-policing era (which still operates today) was precipitated by a combination of factors: First, anomalous research challenged “sacred-cow” procedures and the most basic assumptions of policing. Pelfrey observed that the findings from the Kansas City experiment on preventive patrol (Kelling et al., 1974) and a similar Kansas City report on police response times and case investigations debunked the long held belief that police presence made a difference in preventing and solving crime. These two major studies, among other anomalous research, had major impacts upon methods of policing, thereby producing a crisis in policing. Police were not as effective as they had once believed in accomplishing their major objective—fighting crime.

A number of important Supreme Court rulings in the 1960s and 1970s also helped pave the way for a paradigm shift in policing. Key cases changed the very methods police had always had at their disposal for solving crime. Drastic changes in evidence gathering, search and seizure tactics, and interrogation strategies were made during this time period. These changes forced police to approach crime fighting in a whole new manner.

In addition to major Supreme Court rulings on a range of methods and tactics of policing, problems with the individual use of police discretion, especially surrounding the issue of deadly force, also began to surface in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Cases profiling the often inappropriate and sometimes lethal decisions made by individual officers illuminated nationwide problems concerning with police discretion.

The police response to social unrest also created crises with the “paramilitary” structure of policing. The social distance created between citizens and police by earlier reforms became

quite apparent with events such as the Watts riots (in 1965) and student riots in Ohio (1970). For the first time, citizens viewed televised acts of brutality perpetuated by the police at a number of civil rights and anti-Vietnam demonstrations. The cold, militarized response to social unrest amplified the distrust and contempt the public was already feeling towards law enforcement.

In response to corruption and police tactics in dealing with the public, several commissions—the Knapp Commission, the 1967 President’s Crime Commission, and the Kerner commission—were created. The rise in officer education may have also come from recommendations of these and other numerous commissions. Together, investigations by these commissions produced a variety of recommendations for police including suggested policies and procedures for eliminating corruption among police and dealing with/ tolerating persons from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Some of the highlighted suggestions called for more community involvement in law enforcement, standardization of various police procedures and policies, and a better educated police force. “It is reasonable to conclude that the Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP) and the national commissions have been significant influences in police education growth.” (Carter, Sapp & Stephens 1989:73) The Wickersham Commission in 1931 (The National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement) recommended that all police officers should have college degrees. The 1967 President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice also suggested that all police officers have baccalaureate degrees (Baro & Burlingame 1999). In addition, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (1968), the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (1969), the American Bar Association on Standards for Criminal Justice (1972), the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals (1973), and

the Police Foundation's Advisory Commission on Higher Education for Police Officers (1978), all communicated the need for higher levels of education for law enforcement officers.

Reflecting on the national level, the Wickersham Commission (1931 National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement) was the first to recognize the need for "professionalism" in policing, and recommend that this be achieved by raising the bar on entrance standards, and developing ongoing training for current and future police officers.

Frederick Mosher (1968:136) described professionalization as a necessary step in the development of a career civil service, wherein "high level occupational specialists develop standards, coalesce, and become recognized—that is, professionalize." Baro and Burlingame (1999) suggest that under the new progressive reforms of this era, the emphasis on professionalization combined with insulation from political influence produced a narrow focus on crime-fighting, and in turn promised that the use of technology and principles of scientific management would be the most efficient means for police to control crime. Changes in policing that implemented these principles termed "police science" were centered around organizational structure and stressed centralization, placed authority at the executive level, and emphasized administrative control over street-level discretion.

These and other reforms did well to standardize and professionalize what had once been little more than the enforcement arm of political machines, but they also created a geographical and social distance between the police and the public they served (Peak, 1993). There was little lateral movement between departments and training took a back seat to "tradition" (the passing down of "war stories" from veterans to new rookies). These pitfalls, combined with highly publicized and tragic confrontations between the police and civilians involving civil rights issues

and America's position in Vietnam, portrayed the police as brutal and created an "us" vs "them" mentality. In addition, because police departments' effectiveness was primarily measured by their ability to control crime, sky-rocketing crime rates produced a crises of legitimacy that resulted in a severe drop in the public's trust and faith in law enforcement.

Both the isolation from and the poor relations with the public spawned a new reform movement that is still operating in modern times, even in a post 9/11 era. Community-oriented policing was touted as a solution to the problems that professionalization produced. The role and function of police were broadened to include the need for positive working relationships with the community rather than simply focusing on crime control and responding to calls for service. Working with citizens to find viable solutions to community problems was seen as an appropriate measure of success. This reinforced earlier ideas about the need for more highly educated police officers. Because lower-level ranks were given more autonomy in decision-making, and were encouraged to find solutions to problems within their own beats, officers were now thought to *need* higher education. "In sum, reform movements on a variety of fronts made an extensive effort to alter traditional police street policies and practices." (Sykes 1988:137).

Recent analyses of law enforcement education levels show that the proportion of law enforcement officers with some level of college education has increased in recent decades. In 1992, Carter and Sapp noted that 13.6 years was the average level of education among police officers—just under a two-year degree. In 1994, Walker asserted that 11.2% of law enforcement agencies across the nation required at least some college as a hiring standard. More recently, Polk and Armstrong (2001) contend that "well over half of the officers in the United States now have some college-level education." (78) Nationally, The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2000) reports that in 1997, 14% of local police departments required at least some college for newly

hired recruits. 8% of local police departments required a 2-year college degree and 1% required a 4-year college degree. For Sheriff's offices, the percentages are slightly lower with 11% requiring at least some college for new recruits in 1997, 7% requiring a 2-year college degree and 1% requiring a 4-year degree. More recent figures suggest some increase in the percentage of local police departments requiring college education as a condition for employment. In 2000, the bureau of Justice Statistics reported that the percentage of officers employed by a department that required at least some college education was approximately 32%. (Hickman and Reeves 2003). Research suggests that approximately 23-28% of police officers have college degrees and that approximately 65% of police officers have completed at least one year of college. (Carter et al., 1989; 1990; Sanders et al., 1995) Polk and Armstrong (2001), more recently estimated that more than 50% of police officers in the United States have at least some college education.

In summary, a better educated police force has been a primary component of every reform movement since key activists such as Sir Robert Peel in England in the 1800s, and August Vollmer in America in the 1900s began studying and writing about law enforcement. Having college educated officers has also been a strong recommendation of nearly every national commission and is of such importance, many agencies nationwide offer a variety of incentives to its officers to pursue higher education. The empirical evidence, as will be discussed shortly, argues that a college education, does indeed, improve several important behavioral and attitudinal measures of policing.

Law Enforcement and Higher Education in Massachusetts

The "Quinn" Bill, passed in 1970, established the Police Career Incentive Pay Program (PCIPP). It was in response to a report written in 1967 by the Massachusetts Committee in Law Enforcement that indicated Massachusetts police officers were "some of the least educated in the

country.” (Southerland et al. 2007:96) Colleges across New England responded by creating criminal justice programs in fold.

“In November 2000, the Massachusetts Board of higher Education (MBHE) approved an unprecedented statewide review of criminal justice degree programs.” (Southerland et al. 2007: 96) In total, 55 New England institutions were eligible for this review, and in total had awarded: “14,487 degrees in criminal justice: 4,128 associate degrees, 7,417 bachelor’s degrees, and 2,942 master’s degrees, approximately 1,900 of which were awarded by two institutions.” (97) The Review Committee, upon review of the participating programs, provided a number of recommendations to improve the quality of all PCIPP certified programs. The MBHE, in response to the Committee’s report appointed an Academic Program Advisory Committee.

Essentially, certified PCIPP programs cannot:

- Grant credits for life experience.
- Grant credits for courses taught by instructors without appropriate educational degrees.
- Grant credits for courses that lack a concentration on academic and scholarly research.

The existing PCIPP approved programs are subject to extensive annual reporting system as well as site visits for ACJS Reviewers every five years to maintain their certification.

“The bar has been raised for criminal justice education and the discipline has benefited from the adoption of standards. The MBHE experience in using a compliance review process has contributed greatly to restoring the confidence in criminal justice programs in that state.”

(Southerland et al., 2007: 101, citing Greenberg 2006).

That said, there can be no doubt that the existing colleges with PCIPP certification are of high quality and provide police officers and other criminal justice students with the academic

rigor necessary to “make a better cop.” The following section examines the empirical research to date conducted on the impact of higher education on law enforcement.

Empirical Studies Examining Education and Policing:

Essentially, empirical studies examining education levels of police officers to date can be divided into two broad categories: behavioral measures (arrest rates, complaints, commendations, etc.), and attitudinal measures (job satisfaction, receptivity to innovation, etc.). Overall, education has been identified as a positive force in the advancement of policing. For example, research suggests that college educated police officers have better oral and written communications skills, are more tolerant and flexible in their dealings with citizens, adapt better to organizational change, are generally more “professional,” and have fewer administrative and/or personnel problems. However, research within each of these categories has yielded inconsistent and often conflicting results. For example, when examining education and police management, Withal (1985) argued that “[f]ormal schooling and varied experience offer police chiefs no guarantee of effectiveness.” (pg.6) However, Krimmell and Lindenmouth (2001), in contrast to Withal, found that not only was education an important factor in predicting leadership success and failure, but that there were significant differences between police chiefs with a background that included some college and those police chiefs who only possessed a high school diploma on 35 different performance and leadership indicators.

Hayeslip (1989) in his review of the literature argued that officers with higher education have higher motivation, are better able to utilize innovative techniques, display clearer thinking, have a better understanding of the world of policing, and the necessity of education given the role of police. Kenney and Cordner (1996) suggest that the evidence on the impact of a college education on an officer is lacking. However, Penegor and Peak (1992) suggest that

inconsistencies in research linking education and job performance are most likely due to variance in how variables are measured. In a meta-analysis of 5 empirical studies (which had findings of various significance) conducted by Hunter, Schmidt and Jackson (1982), conclusions suggest that all five studies had significant findings consistently in the positive direction between education and police performance, and that the variance between them was much smaller than reported. "It has been shown in this study that by cumulating across studies we can find consistent agreement that education and police performance are moderately related." (57). The authors argue that inconsistent findings in this case and possibly in the general literature on police education are possibly due to artifactual errors in the data.

Behaviors:

Job Performance. Assumptions of several management reforms suggest that increased education of the police will effect job performance in several ways. Under community- and problem-oriented policing, higher education is assumed to improve problem-solving skills and provide police with a wider range of solutions outside legal sanctions. Under models of accreditation, higher education, (alongside training), is assumed to improve actual skills involved in the daily activities of policing such as communication with the public, diffusing potentially dangerous situations, and skills necessary to effectively solve crimes or prevent them from happening.

In sum, it is argued that a college-educated officer has a broader comprehension of civil rights issues from legal, social, historical, and political perspectives. Moreover, these officers have a broader view of policing tasks and a greater professional ethos, thus their actions and decisions tend to be driven by conscience and values, consequently lessening the chance of erroneous decisions. If these arguments are valid, the logical conclusion is that the college-educated officer would be less likely to place the department in a liability situation. (Carter & Sapp, 1989:162).

Typical performance measures in empirical studies have included: arrests, tenure, citizen evaluations, and composite performance measures. (Hayeslip 1989) Several studies have concluded that police officers with higher education have higher corresponding arrest rates (Bozza 1973; Glasgow, Green & Knowles 1973). In the era of community policing reform, higher numbers of arrests may not necessarily appear to be a positive advancement. However, Cohen and Chaiken (1973) found that police officers with higher education received fewer complaints and subsequent disciplinary actions.

Wilson (1975) suggests that the relationship between education and police performance is curvilinear in that college education beyond two years may place a law enforcement officer at a disadvantage. He suggests that police officers possessing college beyond two years are more reluctant to perform certain tasks, are more resistant to authority, and are less likely to protect themselves in dangerous situations than are police officers with less than two years of college. Other studies completed by Smith (1978a) and Sherman and Blomberg (1981) refute these claims. Cascio (1977) found that higher educated officers had fewer preventable accidents and took less sick time away from work, and Lester (1979) concluded that officers with more education performed better in police training.

Several studies have identified strong positive relationships between education and specific police performance measures (Baehr, Furcon, & Froemel 1968; Cohen & Chaiken 1972; Finnegan 1976; Sanderson 1978; Saunders 1970). Others have only reported moderate relationships between education and aggregate performance ratings (Cascio 1977; Roberg 1978; Spencer and Nichols 1971; Weirman 1978;), or weak (Hayeslip 1989) to no relationship at all (Griffin 1980; Kedia 1985; Marsh 1962; Worden 1990).

Krimmel, (1996) in his self-report study, found that “in a number of categories, the college-educated police officers (those possessing a bachelor’s degree) rated themselves higher on a self-report performance instrument than did police officers without bachelor’s degrees.” (85) These categories included the ability to utilize employee contacts, knowledge of the law, preparedness for court, quality of work assignments, level of problem-solving ability, level of arrest analysis, level of confidence with supervisors, quality of written work, quality of oral presentations, self-image, arrest report quality, investigative report quality, and interpersonal relationships.

Kakar (1998) echoed these results in a study of patrol officers in Dade County, Florida. Kakar concluded that “the police officers with college education rated themselves significantly higher on several performance categories as compared to the officers without any college education and officers with a college degree rated themselves higher than the other two groups” (640). These categories included attitudes and behaviors regarding change, stressful situations, extra work and criticism. Overall, more highly educated officers rated themselves higher in their ability to deal with criticism, change, workload, and stress. In addition, college educated officers rated themselves higher on knowledge of the law, use of mediation and conflict resolution, investigation and report-writing skills, leadership, responsibility, and problem-solving skills. However, it is interesting to note that Kakar found no significant differences in an officer’s attitude towards their job, office or department. Kakar also found that those officers with higher levels of education reported themselves lower on scores of job satisfaction and fulfillment and indicated more overall frustration. The reasons for this are yet to be fully tested.

Communication Skills. Education is assumed to improved police officers’ communication in two distinct ways. First, under reforms of community-oriented policing, police officers are

encouraged to keep open lines of communication between themselves and the community they patrol. Because community problems are not always dealing with law violations, police officers must have a greater knowledge base from which they draw available solutions. Second, it assumed that the process of a college education strengthens written and oral skills necessary to improve police officers' report writing, and communication with a variety of different people throughout the day.

Empirical research suggests overall that education does indeed have a positive impact on communication. Vodicka (1994) concluded that police officers with more education had better communication skills and had a greater openness to change. Both Vodicka, and Carter and Sapp (1992) found that college educated police candidates, for the most part, have better verbal and written communication skills, make better discretionary decisions, and more empathy and tolerance for people with different attitudes and lifestyles. Worden (1990) concluded that according to citizen reports, police officers who were college graduates were overall better problem-solvers, but were less courteous than their less educated counterparts. In addition, Worden found that there was no relationship between education and citizen evaluations of officer performance in police-citizen encounters. Hooper's (1988) research a few years earlier suggests that college graduates were also better at report writing and received fewer citizen complaints. Other studies have made similar conclusions regarding lower levels of citizen complaints and higher levels of education (Carter & Sapp 1989; Kappeler, Sapp, & Carter 1992; Shernock 1992; Tyre & Braunstein 1992) and fewer disciplinary problems and college education (Carter & Sapp 1989). A Florida study in 2002 found that although approximately 50% of police officers only had a high school diploma, they accounted for almost 75% of all the state issued disciplinary

actions. Terrill and Mastrofski (2002) found that less educated officers were more likely to use deadly force.

Attitudes/Demeanor:

The demeanor in which a police officer conducts his/her job duties and the attitudes he/she holds about policing is important in understanding both job performance and citizen encounters. Because police officers work with a variety of people who differ in their attitudes, culture, and lifestyles, it is important for police officers to have a more tolerant and understanding demeanor, especially in community-oriented policing. Bayley (1986) asserts that “for disturbances, the manner in which contact was initiated had consequences for both processing and exit.” (379) He continues by stating that the demeanor of police has “substantial” explanatory usefulness for both disturbances and traffic stops—routine occurrences during daily patrol. Research examining police demeanor and attitudes has also found that college-educated officers are less dogmatic (Parker et al 1976; Roberg 1978, 1980); less authoritarian, less conservative, and less rigid (Dally 1975; Smith, Locke & Walker 1967; Smith, Locke & Fenster 1970; Taylor 1983); less legalistic, and less likely to invoke the criminal justice process (Finckenauer 1975); less cynical (Niederhoffer 1967); more open-minded (Barry 1978; Parker et al 1976; Powell 1980; Roberg 1978); have a broader conception of the police role and have more positive attitudes towards legal restrictions on police powers (Worden 1990); have a more holistic attitude towards police work (Trojanowicz & Nicholson 1976); place a higher value on ethical conduct (Carter & Sapp 1989; Lynch 1976; Shernock 1992); are more creative (Wycoff 1987); and are more tolerant of people of different life-styles, race and ethnicity (Smith et al 1970).

Other studies suggest that there is no relationship between higher education and attitudes, specifically cynicism (Lotz and Regoli 1977; Regoli 1976; Weiner 1976; Wycoff and Susmilch 1979). Smith (1978a), and Sherman and Blumberg (1981) in their respective reviews of the relevant literature suggest that overall, findings on the relationship between education and attitude are mixed.

Carlan (2007) found in his study of Alabama police departments that college-educated police officers (with criminal justice degrees) “regard the criminal justice degree as more than mere occupational training.” (p. 608) The officers in study indicated that the criminal justice degree greatly enhanced their understanding of the law and the criminal justice system. In addition, a significant number of officers indicated that their education provided them at least some improvement in communication skills, critical thinking skills, administration skills, human relations skills, and patrol and investigation procedures. Furthermore, the higher the college degree, the more value the officer placed on his/her education and its ability to improve these skills.

Test-Taking Skills and Job Satisfaction: The link between higher education and test-taking is more important when one also looks at the relationship between education and job satisfaction and promotion. Patterson (1991) identified a specific relationship between test-taking and oral interviewing skills and higher levels of education.

If reforms giving more autonomy in decision-making and making problem-solving an important job function coincide with increased levels of education, it can be hypothesized that job satisfaction will also increase. Dantzker (1998) found the relationship between education and job satisfaction are not positively related and that the relationship is dependent upon the

amount of education the officer has. Cascio (1977) produced findings inconsistent with Dantzker in that he found higher educated officers to be more highly job motivated.

In separate studies completed in Oakland and Detroit, Buzawa (1984), and Buzawa, Austin, and Bannon (1994) found mixed results.

The role of education as a predictor of higher levels of job satisfaction was not clearly demonstrated in the earlier study. Higher levels of education were found to be predictive of increased job satisfaction in one department—Oakland, California. On the other hand, education had virtually no effect on job satisfaction among Detroit officers. (1994:53)

Charles Sherwood (2000) argued that the level of education did not make a significant difference on officer's feelings about job characteristics. In his study, what was more important was the notion of job enrichment. Zhao, Thurman and He (1999) in their survey of the Spokane, Washington Police Department found that "skill variety, task identity, and autonomy contribute most to the variation in officers' work satisfaction." (163) Autonomy was especially important.

Promotion. The notion of job satisfaction has been linked not only to police officers overall satisfaction with their job functions but also to whether or not higher education is a predictive factor in promotion. The literature suggests that higher education is not necessarily a straight shot to job promotion. Carter, Sapp and Stephens (1989) suggest that education may be a consideration in some promotions but there are few guarantees.

Penegor and Peak (1992) in their study of hiring practices of police chiefs concluded that education may be more of a predictive factor when outside hiring is conducted, but not when chiefs are hired from within their own department. Buckley, McGinnis and Petrunik (1992) found that education was more related to the *perception* of promotion practices in that officers with higher education placed a higher value on education as a promotional factor. In addition, those with university degrees *expected* to retire at a higher rank than those without degrees.

Furthermore, they found that the primary motivation for taking college courses was for promotion.

Truxillo et al (1998) found statistical relationships between college education and promotion, and college education and supervisory ratings of job knowledge. They suggest that education and promotion could be related in several possible ways. First, the individual “motivation for educational achievement may be the same as for promotions” (275). Second, skills such as studying and test-taking may be more finely-tuned in officers with a college background. These skills are certainly necessary in the process of promotion. Third, the authors argue that “college education instills a higher degree of professionalism and maturity that is needed and valued at higher organizational levels” (275). What is more interesting in their study is that there was very little relationship found between job performance measures and how many college credit were *criminal justice* focused. The authors suggest this may be a result of extensive training given to all police officers mitigates any advantage offered by college-level criminal justice courses, or that due to the broad role and function of law enforcement officers, having a *general* education may be more important than having a criminal justice orientation.

When looking at careers within criminal justice in general, Carlan (1999) found that those holding a Master’s Degree earn significantly more than those with bachelor’s degree. When examining law enforcement specifically, Polk and Armstrong (2001) state that

findings show that higher education reduces time required for movement in rank and assignment to specialized positions and was positively correlated to promotion into supervisory and administrative posts. Implications are that higher education will enhance an officer’s probability of rising to the top regardless of whether the agency requires a college degree as a precondition of employment. (78)

Aside from various attitudinal and behavioral measures related to the functions of law enforcement, there is an inherent need to examine the relationship between college education and

police reform. As discussed earlier, the role and subsequent functions of policing have undergone vast and important changes in recent decades. Reforms of professionalization and community-policing, while aspiring to different goals and means to achieve them have both encourage a better educated police force. The question then becomes whether or not a higher level of education is an important factor in successful implementation of these reforms and, more broadly (perhaps even more importantly), if college education serves to improve policing in general.

While Paoline et al. (2000) focused more on the relationships between police culture and community policing and the changes in police culture that have occurred in part to community policing reforms, they found some interesting relationships regarding police training and education. They propose that:

Educational experiences might result in a greater appreciation of the multiple functions that police perform in modern society, of limitations on police authority, and of the social, economic, and psychological forces that shape the problems and behavior of the people with whom they have contact. Therefore one might expect that college-educated officers would subscribe to broader role orientations than their less-educated colleagues, that they would have more positive attitudes toward citizens, and that they would be less aggressive. College-educated officers also might expect to be more autonomous in exercising discretion, and to accept bureaucratic constraints with less equanimity, than would less highly educated officers, thus we might expect them to be more favorably disposed toward selective enforcement. (585)

In their analysis of data collected for the Project on Policing Neighborhoods (PPN), Paoline et al found that there was indeed a slight difference between officers with some college or a college degree, and those officers with no college. College educated officers in both departments they surveyed (Indianapolis and St. Petersburg) were “less positive toward aggressive patrol and more positive toward selective enforcement” (598). Results suggest that the effect of education on distrust of citizenry, and attitudes toward order maintenance and community policing were not the same for officers with varying levels of education and that regardless of the direction, the

relationship between these variables and college education took, the differences though small, but present.

Recently, Chappell (2008) found that recruits that were more highly educated did better in a community policing curriculum than did recruits with less education. This suggests implications for future research looking at the impact education may have on attitudes and behaviors consistent with community oriented policing. While I did not find in my dissertation research a relationship between education and community oriented policing, I did find empirical evidence that education is clearly important in culture changes within policing—both in professionalizing police and expanding the police role.

David Carter, Allen Sapp, and Darrel Stephens published what is quite possibly the “most comprehensive study of police education to date” (pg. I) in 1989 (this is true now, even in 2009). Their report, entitled *The State of Police Education: Policy Direction for the 21st Century*, reviewed significant findings from previous literature, and discussed findings from their three-phased study of police departments across the country. Table 1 below contains their executive summary synopsis of phase 1 of their study: content analysis of empirical studies in the area of education and policing.

Table 1

Significant Findings from Previous Literature (Carter, Sapp, & Stephens 1989:ix-x)

- College-educated officers perform the tasks of policing better than their non-college counterparts.
- College-educated officers are generally better communicators, whether with a citizen, in court, or as part of a written police report.
- The college-educated officer is more flexible in dealing with difficult situations and in dealing with persons of diverse cultures, life-styles, races, and ethnicity.
- Officers with higher education are more “professional” and more dedicated to policing as a career rather than as a job.
- Educated officers adapt better to organizational change and are more responsive to alternative approaches to policing.
- College-educated officers are more likely to see the broader picture of the criminal

justice system than to view police more provincially as an exclusive group.

- The quality of college education varies significantly; this appears to co-vary with officers' attitudes and the effect of education on police performance.
- Law enforcement agencies have fewer administrative and personnel problems with the college-educated officer compared with the non-college officer.
- Colleges and Universities should institute some form of quality-control mechanism for criminal justice educational programs.
- The "best" philosophical model for police education, the "best" curriculum for policing, and the optimum amount of college needed for policing are largely unknown and subject to conjecture.
- The "true" effects of higher education on policing probably cannot be empirically determined—a qualitative, intuitive approach may be just as accurate.

In a more recent analysis of the research on the impact of higher education on policing, Roberg & Bonn (2004) suggest a strong argument for college-educated police officers. They argue that:

The benefits provided by a higher education, combined with social and technological changes, the threat of terrorism (along with civil rights issues) and the increasingly complexity of police work, suggest that a college degree should be a requirement for initial police employment. (p.13)

A recent article in the August, 2006, issue of the *Police Chief* highlighted the importance of college-educated police officers. At the end of the article, a selected annotated bibliography of police officer performance and college education. It is as follows (Table 2):

Table 2: Annotated Bibliography (2006)

Aamodt, Michael G. *Research in Law Enforcement Selection*. Boca Raton, Florida: Brown Walker Press, 2004.

Summarizes 330 studies investigating the validity of methods used to select law enforcement personnel. Concludes that officers with a college education perform better in the academy, receive higher performance ratings on the job, have fewer disciplinary problems, have less absenteeism, and use force less often than their peers without a college education.

American Bar Association. *The Urban Police Function*. By Herman Goldstein and Sheldon Krantz. Chicago, 1973.

Police need personnel in their ranks who have the characteristics a college education seeks to foster; intellectual curiosity, analytical ability, articulateness, and a capacity to relate the events of the day to the social, political, and historical context in which they occur.

U.S. National Institute of Mental Health. *The Functions of the Police in a Modern Society: A Review of Background Factors, Current Practices, and Possible Role Models*. By Egon Bittner. Rockville, Maryland: 1972.

Recommends a goal of a master's degree for entering officers.

Carter, David L., Darrel W. Stephens, and Al D. Sapp. "Effect of Higher Education on Police Liability: Implications for Police Personnel Policy." *American Journal of Police* 8 (1989): 153–166.

Officers with college degrees are less likely than officers with less education to incur citizen complaints. Higher officer education reduces liability risks for police departments.

Cohen, Bernard, and Jan M. Chaiken. *Police Background Characteristics and Performances: Summary*. New York: Rand, 1972.

Study of 1,600 New York City police officers found that when education is introduced into the regression equation for civilian complaints, it emerged as the most powerful predictor of civilian complaints.

Committee on Integrity. *Report to Mayor Daly*. Chicago, Illinois: 1997.

Recommends bachelor's degrees for officers to reduce corruption. The same recommendation was made for the same reason by the Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service (*Final Report: Volume 1: Corruption*, 1997).

Cunningham, Scott. “Discipline and Educational Levels of Law Enforcement Officers, an Exploratory Report.” Paper presented at the 110th Annual IACP Conference, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2003.

Statewide study in Florida found that officers with only high school diplomas accounted for a disproportionately high number of discipline cases.

Davis v. Dallas, 777 F.2d 205 (5th Cir. 1985).

The need for police officers who are intelligent, articulate, mature, and knowledgeable about social and political conditions is apparent. . . . [A] college education develops and imparts the requisite level of knowledge.

Finckenauer, J. O. “Higher Education and Police Discretion.” *Journal of Police Science and Administration* 3 (December 1975).

A series of vignettes illustrating different police discretionary situations were presented to police recruits, comparing responses from college-educated and non-college-educated recruits. College-educated recruits were more likely to choose approaches not involving an arrest or other official action.

Fullerton, Ernie. “Higher Education as a Prerequisite to Employment as a Law Enforcement Officer.” Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2002.

Summarizes the works of ten researchers from 1967 to 1992 who found important desirable traits for officers that are achieved through college education: less cynicism, less authoritarianism, less attrition, fewer disciplinary problems, more local pride in the police department, fewer sick days, higher academic performance, more awards, higher felony arrests made, higher performance evaluations, better decision making, flexibility in problem solving, greater empathy toward

minorities, less negativity toward legal restrictions, more discretion and less control-oriented, less inclined toward rigid enforcement of the law, and less support for insularity.

Kappaler, V. E., Allen D. Sapp, and David L. Carter. “Police Officer Higher Education, Citizen Complaints, and Departmental Rule Violations.” *American Journal of Police* 11 (February 1992): 35–54.

This is a study of a midsize Midwestern police department for relationship between college graduate officers and complaints. Officers with college degrees had statistically significant fewer complaints than officers without college degrees.

President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice. Task Force Report: The Police. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967.

It is nonsense to state or assume that the enforcement of the law is so simple that it can be done best by those unencumbered by the study of liberal arts. . . . Police agencies need personnel in their ranks who have the characteristics which a college education seeks to foster: . . . a capacity to relate the events of the day to the social, political, and historical context in which they occur.

Sanderson, B. E. “Police Officers: The Relationship of College Education to Job Performance.” *The Police Chief* 44 (August 1977): 62–63.

College education is positively related to numerous performance indicators, including academy performance, discipline, absenteeism, terminations, and career advancement.

Tyre, Mitchell, and Susan Braunstein. “Higher Education and Ethical Policing.” *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* 61 (June 1992): 6–10.

Specific studies indicate that better educated officers choose more ethical actions.

Wilson, Hugh. "Post-secondary Education of the Police Officer and Its Effect on the Frequency of Citizens' Complaints." *Journal of California Law Enforcement* 33 (April 1999).

Study of several California police departments found that officers with bachelor's degrees receive fewer complaints than officers with no degrees.

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