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THE EFFECTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Public Administration



by
Harrison Tolbert
September 2004

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ABSTRACT

The police departments around the United States today are facing many changes. Society is changing in many ways. The number of minorities and the educational level of society is increasing yearly. There is a big push to professionalize policing.

When policing is compared with other professional jobs, policing is the one that requires the least amount of education. Many departments still accept a high school degree as the minimum education required to join the police force.

However, there is much research showing that higher education for police officers is beneficial. They are better at critical thinking, writing, and dealing with people. They are taught about the policing over a two year period, instead of a five to six month period in academies. New York City and Utah have shown the benefits of higher education within their departments.

Some do not agree with higher education for police officers. They do not believe that it is beneficial for minorities and women. They believe having an educational requirement will limit the amount of officers on the street. The numbers of minorities are increasing in the United States, and many do not have college educations. A

college requirement would make it harder to find officers, which could affect many small departments.

It does seem that the departments that have the ability to be picky are the ones who are making higher education a requirement. The departments who are small in numbers and size are not in a place today to make that a reality. The future holds the answer if making higher education a requirement will actually occur in all departments in the United States.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE ROOTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

Statement of the Problem

The job of police officers has changed over the past century. When police officers first took to the streets, they were seen as the watchmen of society. As we are making our way through the twenty-first century, the role of police officers has changed. Now the job is starting to be viewed as professional peace-keepers.

Professional peace-keepers involve having the latest knowledge available to help them on the job. In order to do this, many police officers are heading back to colleges and universities. Police administration is also becoming more educated. The field is realizing that education can make a difference.

A partial explanation for this change is due to society. The people expect more from their local police officers than before. They want officers to uphold the law and treat the citizens with respect and integrity. Police departments around the United States are now being watched and held accountable by the citizens. This is one reason why the need for higher education is needed.

Some critics argue that higher education improves the professionalism of police officers. Higher education provides officers with skills that they can only get by going to a college or a university. They improve their communication skills by taking classes from Humanities. This also teaches them tolerance to deal with people of all races, backgrounds, and ethnicities. If they study or take classes in the field of criminal justice, they learn about the new police techniques of community policing, which has been found to work better by officers who have a higher education.

Others do not believe higher education is beneficial for police officers. They argue that it makes them more likely to become dissatisfied with their job because it is the same day in and day out. These critics also believe that higher education leads to increased discrimination in the hiring of minorities and women. They believe that requiring higher education, eliminates many otherwise qualified candidates, with particular adverse effects on minorities, who will eventually become the majority of the United States.

The overall problem is who is right in the area of higher education, and where does law enforcement need to go in the future to be successful for the citizens of the

United States. Both positive and negative sides will be closely examined with examples of what some states are doing today in their departments. The focuses of what police departments are doing today and what they need to do to get ready for tomorrow will also be given consideration.

History of Higher Education in Law Enforcement

The term "police" is derived from the Latin word "politeia," a term relating the administration of government, including public health, morals, safety, and general welfare.¹

The role of police officers has changed over the preceding two hundred years from watchman to professional peace-keeper. Experts attribute this change to increases in societal awareness of crime, the implementation of civil service protection, and educational advances.²

In the early 1900's August Vollmer, a professor at the University of California at Berkeley and former Police Chief at the Berkeley Police Department, was the first to put an emphasis on professional training and education for

¹ Marty Totzke, *The Influence of Education on the Professionalization of Policing*, <http://www.unomaha.edu/~wwwpa/project/totzke.html>, 2.

police in the United States. The university began offering law enforcement courses in 1916 due to Vollmer.³ Today, Vollmer is thought of as being the father of Modern American Policing. His motto for recruitment came from one of the *Maxims of Confucius*, "The successful administration of any government depends entirely upon the selection of proper men."⁴

In 1931, President Herbert Hoover created the Wickesham Commission to study the status of municipal police departments. The Commission found that there was "no intensive effort made to educate, train, or discipline police officers."⁵

In 1935, The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) opened the National FBI Academy because it saw the need for advanced police training. The Academy's goal "was to create a national scientific and educational center so

² Totzke, p. 2.

³ Jeremy Travis, 1995, *Education in Law Enforcement: Beyond the College Degree*. National Institute of Justice. February 10, 1995, 2.

⁴ Totzke, p. 5.

⁵ Patrick Anderson, ed., 1996. *Introduction to Criminal Justice*. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 1996), 125.

that the local police could better serve their communities."⁶

The 1960's in the United States was a time when most of the changes in police professionalism occurred due to massive social changes. Law enforcers found themselves in the middle of this turbulent time with widespread drug use and civil disobedience. A study conducted in 1967 by the President's Commission on Law Enforcement stated:

Law Enforcement's task is as great or greater than that of any other profession, and that the performance of this task requires more than physical prowess and common sense. Law enforcement officers engage in this difficult, important complex business of helping to regulate human behavior, and their intellectual armament and ethical standards must be no less their physical prowess. Also the quality of police service will not be significantly improve until higher education requirements are established for its personnel.⁷

The Commission also expressed the belief that a college education would "provide substantive knowledge and interpersonal skills that would significantly enhance an officer's ability to provide high quality, as well as

⁶ Totzke, 5.

⁷ Model Minimum State Standards. (International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training, April 2000), 1.

equitable and efficient, service to the public."⁸ It also recommended that the ultimate goal for all police officers is a bachelor's degree as a minimum standard for hiring. In general the various national commissions recommended that: 1.) Some years of college be required for appointment, 2.) Requirements be set for promotion, 3.) Education programs be matter of formal policing, and 4.) Higher education should be viewed as an occupational necessity.⁹

Events surrounding the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago supported the need for police officers to receive higher education. The brutality that police officers used towards citizens that day showed administrators that there was a need for exposure to the humanities and liberal arts that could only come from colleges and universities.

In 1967, only 209 colleges offered degree programs in law enforcement. By 1977, there were 1,245 college level programs. This change was due to the formation of the U.S. Law Enforcement Assistance Administration and the Law

⁸ David L. Carter, "College Education and Policing: Coming of Age." FBI Publications-Law Enforcement Bulletin. (January, 1992), 1.

⁹ David L. Carter, "The State of Police Education: Police Direction for the 21st Century." Police Executive Research Forum. (Washington, D.C., 1989), 54.

Enforcement Education Program. These programs provided money to improve police agencies. Both attempted to encourage educational attainment by giving grants to colleges to start criminal justice programs and by giving loans and grants directly to students and police officers to attend college.¹⁰ "LEEP was a program to stimulate criminal justice personnel to attend college...the belief was that better educated law enforcement officers would provide more responsive, more comprehensive, and more insightful police service. In the long term, as college educated officers rose into police leadership positions, they would explore new approaches, with more creativity and better planning."¹¹

¹⁰ Roy Roberg, Police Organization and Management: Behavior, Theory, and Processes. (Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1990), 327.

¹¹ Carter, p. 1.

CHAPTER TWO

THE POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS OF HIGHER
EDUCATION IN POLICE WORK

Higher Education Made Readily Available

Having a higher education in policing has many positive aspects. This section of the paper will look at these aspects and the critics that are in favor of highly educated police officers. Case studies on New York City and Utah will be included to show how higher education is affecting their police officers and citizens.

Today, higher education for police officers has become a well-discussed topic among departments throughout the United States. For a long time police leaders and practitioners had a very small role in defining their professional educational core. In 1967, the average educational level for police officers was 12.3 years. Today the average level is 13.6, almost the end of the sophomore year of college.¹² "Today's increasing awareness of the relationship between higher education and police performance, coupled with the advances made in police recruit training and the opportunities afforded by distance-learning technologies, offer a powerful recipe to

rectify this professional shortcoming."¹³ There are many small towns in the United States that do not have a college nearby. It used to be very difficult for officers in those departments to get an education. Now, with on-line classes and distance-learning technologies, more officers are able to get an education. Many departments require higher education of their chiefs, sheriffs, lieutenants, and sergeants. Modern technology brings education to them to fulfill their job requirements.

Critics In Favor of Highly Educated Officers

Citizens today expect police officers to provide more services, which sometimes parallel the job of a social worker. "Most police officers will admit that the better educated, the better suited the individual officer is to serve the community."¹⁴ Research has indicated that college educated police have provided the following advantages: 1.) fewer citizen complaints of excessive force and complaints in general, 2.) fewer disciplinary actions, 3.) increased flexibility in dealing with

¹² Carter, p. 4.

¹³ Michelson, ed, "The Missing Link to Police Professionalism," Law Enforcement News. (John Jay College of Criminal Justice, October 31, 1999), p. 1.

¹⁴ Totzke, p. 6.

difficult situations and diverse cultures, 4.) increased ability to communicate in both the written and verbal mediums, and 5.) increased flexibility in implementing and accepting change.¹⁵

Community policing is partially the product of citizens of wanting more services from their police departments. It has taken on very quickly in the last decade. "Under community policing, line-level police officers are given broader responsibilities and are charged with performing their jobs in more creative and innovative ways. Officers are urged to be proactive in program development and are given even broader discretion."¹⁶

Community policing works better with college educated police officers. Getting a well-rounded education in the liberal arts and humanities helps officers deal with different types of people and situations in the community. It gives them more tolerance and understanding. Many college campuses offer courses on community policing also.

The knowledge and skills officers are required to have under community policing appears to be tailored specifically to college educated, because it appears that a college education makes an officer a more

¹⁵ Totzke, p. 6.

¹⁶ Carter, p. 3.

effective decision maker, a better service provider, a better communicator, and one who is more responsive to the police mission.¹⁷

The jury is still out on deciding if higher educated officers make better police officers than less educated ones. However, the statistics do support the proposition. Meagher's 1983 study of 183 officers at one agency showed a statistically significant and positive relationship between levels of education and the positive acts done by officers. Meagher did not claim that education was the only reason, but the study did show

A clear relationship between higher education and the performance of desirable police tasks, such as the ability to communicate, the capacity to evaluate personal characteristics of others, and the ability to analyze and synthesize data logically.¹⁸

Carter surveyed approximately 250,000 officers. He found that there has been a steady growth in police officer educational levels over the past twenty years. He also found that an increasing number of departments require some type of college education for employment or promotion. He stated that although the research is not

¹⁷ Carter, p. 3.

¹⁸ Mitchell Tyre, "Higher Education and Ethical Policing," FBI Publications-Law Enforcement Bulletin. (June, 1992), p. 2.

conclusive that educated officers are better, they are less authoritarian and cynical.¹⁹

When recruiters are hiring police officers for their departments, what do they think about when they find college-educated applicants? "There is an overriding public interest, and police agencies must employ only those individuals who can adequately perform in today's complex society. This particular problem can be overcome through aggressive recruitment."²⁰ The American Police Association says that a recruiter can "assume a certain degree of responsibility and commitment from college-educated applicants who have made the effort to attend class and exams. They can also expect their communication and problem-solving fairly advanced."²¹ They also know that college-educated applicants are better able to read state, local, and federal law, be able to write coherent, descriptive reports, and be able to communicate with a variety of citizens.

¹⁹ Carter, p. 4.

²⁰ Larry Gaines, et al. Police Administration. (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.: 1991), 271.

²¹ American Police Association, How Education Can Pave the Way to a Law Enforcement Career. <http://www.apai.org>, p. 1.

Critics believe that requiring college education for police officers unfairly discriminates against minorities and females. Carter found in his study that "Minority representation in American law enforcement agencies does, indeed, tend to approximate the general population. Moreover, the educational levels of minority officers are virtually the same as those of white officers."²² Carter also looked at the situation of female officers. In 1970, only about 2 percent of all sworn officers were women. Twenty years later, 12.8 percent are women. Studies also show that most female officers had one more year of college education than the males.

This may exist because: 1. women tended to believe that they must have stronger credentials to compete effectively for police positions, 2.) police departments may have been more rigid in their screening of female applicants, and 3.) many women entering law enforcement tended to come from other occupations that required a college degree, such as teaching.²³

In today's competitive world, law enforcement officers know that the only way to move up in the ranks is to get a college degree. Some have to go as far as a master's degree to be promoted. They know that a college

²² Carter, p. 3.

²³ Frank Kummer, "Police Find Payoff in Higher Education," Philadelphia Inquirer. (January 13, 2003), 3.

educated officer will get promoted more often and assume positions of leadership. "In Pennsylvania, the State Police Departments require 60 credits or an equivalent law enforcement experience."²⁴

Overall, there are many positive sides to being highly educated in law enforcement. Studies show that educated officers are able to handle the streets better and with more professionalism. In today's society, the citizens look to law enforcement for many services. Community policing is one aspect that helps to have college-educated officers. Studies have shown that minorities and females are not discriminated against for having college requirements to join law enforcement. Many officers know that if they want to get off the streets and be promoted within their departments, they will need a college education. The future will only see more officers getting education due to technology and on-line classes becoming readily available.

Court Ruling on Requiring Higher Education

The first known case to go to trial for requiring education in the job description was *David v. Dallas*. "The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit held that the

²⁴ Kummer, p. 4.

Dallas police department's requirement of 45 semester hours of college with a "C" average was a job-related requirement in light of unique responsibilities of the police and the public responsibility of law enforcement."²⁵ This meant that they had to base college requirements on written policy. This was the first state to show that it is not impossible to mandate college requirements. Carter goes on to say, "This means that a college-educated police force that is racially, and ethnically representative of the community can be achieved. This only serves to make a police department more effective and responsive to community needs."²⁶

Utah and Bringing Higher Education to the Police Officers

Utah's strategy to promote professionalism in law enforcement started in the mid 1990's. The police chief of Sandy City, Utah, and the criminal justice director of the Salt Lake Community College (SLCC), got together to discuss how they could bring the college's program to the officers. The police chief realized the police department already had a perfect set-up at its facility. It had an

²⁵ Carter, p. 4.

²⁶ Carter, p. 4.

on-site classroom with CD-ROMs, TV/VCE units, and other instructional technologies. Nothing stood in its way of getting started.

Soon thereafter, five other Utah law enforcement agencies opened sites on their own premises: Salt Lake City, South Salt Lake City, Murray, the West Valley City Police Departments, and the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Department.

SLCC offers either a two year Associate of Science Degree (AS), which is for those who wish to go complete a bachelor's degree at a four year institution, or a two year Associate of Applied Science Degree (AAS). Officers who successfully complete an AS are able to transfer their law enforcement and general education credits to Weber State University to pursue a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice. Westminster College, Columbia College, and the University of Utah will also accept the officers' credits.²⁷

Any police officer is welcome to enroll in the courses, regardless of rank. Citizens are also able to enroll in courses offered at the agencies. The major

²⁷ Julie Slama, "Focus on Education: Utah Officers Head Back to School." FBI Publications-Law Enforcement Bulletin. (May: 1997), 1.

course requirements include introduction to criminal justice, criminal law, criminal investigations, criminalistics, and the laws of evidence. The electives vary for both degrees, but some of the choices are: Spanish for law enforcement, juvenile delinquency, and women and the criminal justice system.

The part-time and full-time instructors are well qualified. They have experience as law enforcement officers at the federal, state, and local levels. Many have earned graduate level academic degrees.

The different agencies offer a variety of ways to get officers and citizens involved in the program. Sandy City offers a scholarship for graduating high school students. They compete for a two year tuition waiver. While going to SLCC, the scholarship winner will work as an intern in the Sandy City Police Department. He/she can take classes at the station, on campus, or at both.

To encourage enrollment, some agencies reimburse police officers for completed courses. Salt Lake City Police Department allots tuition of \$1,800 per year. Sandy City will pay full tuition to any officer who earns a

grade of B or higher. It pays seventy-five percent to any officer who passes his or her class.²⁸

Many of Utah's agencies are requiring some college education or an advanced degree. Sandy City requires an AA or AS degree to become sergeant and a BA degree to become captain or higher. The Salt Lake County Sheriff's Department requires a BA from an accredited college or university to become sergeant, lieutenant, and captain.

An evaluative problem with this program is that the departments have not kept statistics on how well the officers are doing with higher education. I called the different departments and none know how many of its own officers had taken part in the college classes offered at their facility. Only one had statistics on the college level of its officers: the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Department. I was told that out of four hundred deputies, forty-five percent had an AA, AS, or AAS or higher. All of the chiefs had Masters Degrees. They did not have statistics as to how many officers had taken part in the classes offered at its department, or comparing college-educated officers' performance and that of non-college-educated deputies.

²⁸ Slama, p 2.

By making college classes available to the officers at different departments around Utah, the colleges are allowing more people to become eligible for the higher-level positions. This will give the departments a larger pool of officers to choose from when making decisions for crucial public administrative positions. As of now, agencies in the United States do not have much choice when it comes to picking who will become administrators. They take the ones who have earned a college degree, which is a relatively small pool in many departments.

With police officers and citizens taking classes together, the community will see that the agencies are trying to professionalize law enforcement. The officers themselves realize that their agencies' management values them by bringing a service of education to them. The officers also realize the value of learning and understanding the attitudes, views, and perspectives of others. The citizens in the classes give the officers another point of view that they might have forgotten from being on the force for such a long time.

By providing the service of college at the police officer's place of work, they are able to learn how to deal with the changing complexities of their job. College

courses give them better knowledge, problem solving skill, and critical thinking, which is very useful on the job. The overall benefit is well-rounded officers on the streets of Utah.

New York City and the Police Cadet Corps

New York City is an example of how requiring higher education not only did not close the doors on minorities, but actually opened them. The New York Police Department (NYPD) started an innovative Police Cadet Corps, which is funded by the National Institute of Justice, dating back to 1985.

Recruitment occurs in the sophomore year of college to any students who are residents of New York City. If accepted into the Corps, they receive \$9,000 toward their future tuition; \$6,000 would be in payment for work, and \$3,000 in an interest-free loan that would be forgiven if the cadet served two years as a police officer for New York City. While attending college, the cadet works during the summer for \$8.14 an hour and part-time during the school year (three days per month).²⁹

²⁹ Hubert Williams, "Reconciling Higher Education Standards and Minority Recruitment: The New York City Model." Police Foundation Reports. (September, 1992), 2.

There were five major objectives of the Cadet program that the NYPD hoped to accomplish: 1.) To increase the educational level of the department. 2.) To test a more rigorous selection process for recruits. 3.) To increase the representativeness of the uniformed force. 4.) To increase the orientation toward community policing. 5.) To improve the leadership skills of new officers.³⁰

Candidates had to live in one of the five boroughs of New York City. By doing this, the police department hoped to tap into a whole new pool of potential officers that might otherwise not have been considered. The cadets also had to be in good standing with their college or university, pass medical, psychological, and oral examinations, and a background investigation.

Before the start of the cadets' junior year of college, they had to take part in an eighty-hour training and orientation program. During their junior and senior years, they took part in the Community Patrol Officer Program.

Once the cadets graduate from college, they take the police entrance exam. If they pass, they are invited to attend the Police Academy. If successfully completed, they

³⁰ Williams, p 3.

become a police officer immediately. Because they completed the cadet program, they received one year credit toward eligibility for the sergeant's exam.

The first year after the Cadet Corps, NYPD hired 133 cadets in 1986. By 1988, they had hired another 131. In 1986, 1,479 people showed interest in the Cadet Corps. The applicants were ethnically mixed (39.6% white, 33.8% black, 22.2% Hispanic, and 2.4% Asian/Pacific Islander). Out of 1,479, 419 were ineligible because they were not city residents. That left 1,060 candidates for the Cadet Corps. Only 684 showed up at an orientation, and after medical exams, only 373 were deemed eligible to continue the selection process.

The next step is to take the psychological test. Of the 373, 267 actually arrived for the psychological exam, 74.2 percent passed. While 89.2 percent of the whites passed, only 52.8 percent of black and 65.3 percent of Hispanics passed.

The 259 candidates then underwent background investigations, and 66 percent passed (78.4% whites, 45.5% blacks, and 58% Hispanics passed). At the end, 134 candidates of the 1,060 were eligible to become cadets.

NYPD defined five goals for the cadet program. The first goal was to increase the department's educational

level. Before the Cadet Corps was created, only 12.5 percent of police officers had a Bachelor's Degree or higher. By 1991, only 217 cadets graduated the program and became police officers. This only increased the percentage of police officers with degrees by 1 percent.³¹

The second goal was to test a more rigorous selection process. Instead of just going through physical, psychological, written exams, and the background investigation, the police department added an oral interview and two years of in the field training for cadets.

The third goal was to make the uniformed force more representative. The cadet program had more black and Hispanic officers than did the sworn officers who didn't go through the Cadet Corps. So this objective was met by helping increase representation of other ethnicities in the New York City Police Department.

The fourth goal was to increase the orientation toward community policing. The cadets' belief in the importance of community policing was strengthened after two years in the program. However, it remains to be seen if this continues when they go onto the streets.

³¹ Williams, p. 9.

The last goal was to improve the leadership skills of new officers. It is too early to determine if leaders have been created. This will take years to see how many go on to administrative positions.

Overall, the Cadets Corps has not made a big jump in the number of educated officers. If the program becomes a regular fixture at colleges and universities, then more might be interested. If the cadets who become police officers work well with the community, then a positive association will occur and more college students might become interested in the program.

The Cadet Corps started off well, at least showing some positive changes that occurred by meeting some of the five objectives. The biggest change is the amount of representation of other ethnicities becoming involved in policing. The Corps is promoting a wider representation of blacks and Hispanics. By only taking cadets from the city's five boroughs, it allows different ethnicities to participate who are highly educated.

The Cadet Corps created a modern officer with broader intellectual ideals.

When compared to other classmates in the Police Academy, Cadet Corps recruits: 1.) placed more emphasis on a community orientation and less on traditional policing strategies; 2.) were less likely to believe that laws should be rigidly enforced; 3.)

were less likely to think that citizen complaints are an inevitable part of the job and less likely to believe that the ideals of politeness and decency are unworkable on the street.³²

In conclusion, it will take a few more years to measure the impact of the Cadet Corps program. However, the objectives should have been met with even better statistics than the first time done. No program takes off over night, but with the backing of colleges and universities the program is sure to grow and become more successful.

³² Williams, p. 9.

CHAPTER THREE

ARE THERE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION?

Critics of Higher Education for Police Officers

Some critics believe highly educated officers do not make a positive difference, or, in fact, may cause more problems than officers with less education. This section looks specifically at some of these negative aspects. Many of these areas have been dealt with in the other sections of this paper. However, critics do not agree all the time.

Historically, the police community has failed to advocate the importance of higher education. It cannot agree or come to a consensus on knowledge for the profession. Only one source throughout history has fought for college education to be a requirement. This was a series of blue ribbon advisory panels, which started as early as 1930.³³ "In 1973, the national Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals recommended that departments adopt a requirement of a four year degree by 1982. This goal, in vast majority of cases, has not been met."³⁴

³³ Michelson, ed, p. 1.

³⁴ Gaines, p. 270.

Critics point to several reasons to explain why all departments are not implementing higher education. There are short supplies of college-educated candidates for policing. Departments are afraid to lose good candidates who are not educated.³⁵ Another factor is that so many young people between the ages of 15 and 29 have been arrested. In one year there were 6,664,062 people arrested in the age group of 15 to 29. The workforce shrinks, and the departments have to compete for good candidates with the private sector and Armed Forces.³⁶ Small police departments get hit the hardest because of this.

Demographics is another factor. "By 2010, more than one third of all American children will be black, Hispanic, or Asian."³⁷ The Caucasian majority will become a plurality in one hundred years. Police Departments will have to hire people from a variety of ethnic origins to keep up with these changes. Minorities do not attend college at rates comparable to Caucasians. By requiring

³⁵ Gaines, p. 271.

³⁶ Ralph S. Osborn, "Police Recruitment: Today's Standard-Tomorrow's Challenge," FBI Publications-Law Enforcement Bulletin. (June, 1992), 2.

³⁷ Osborn, p. 1.

higher education, departments have reduced the pool of minority candidates.

As recruiting becomes more difficult, the temptation will be to hire now and qualify later. This is a dangerous posture to take--quantity will never be an adequate substitute for quality. Therefore, police departments must continue to focus on qualified applicants, offer incentives that are more than just adequate, and develop creative recruitment programs to meet tomorrow's challenges.³⁸

The number of high school graduates will decrease in the next decade, another slash in the candidate pool who fall within the age range of most applicants. Some departments might be dissolved with this shortage of officers. It would be impossible to make higher education a requirement for the job.

As previously discussed, many critics believe that requiring higher education for police officers will discriminate against minorities. "This sensitive issue has both philosophical and pragmatic implications.

Philosophically, police administrators do not want to discriminate against minority groups. Pragmatically, if a police organization has discriminatory policies, it could be held liable."³⁹ It is a fact that minorities get poor preparation in public schools, which makes it more

³⁸ Osborn, p. 1.

difficult to complete a college education. This causes a disproportionate number of minorities who have a college education. Because of this, Carter believes that college is a discriminatory requirement for police officers. However, police departments are still allowed to require it for police employment. Police departments do not necessarily intend to discriminate. They mostly want to recruit the best officers. They might ask for higher education, but then minorities will apply for the positions in fewer number because they know they will not get it. The National Advisory Commission of Higher Education for Police Officers states that many police executives oppose college requirements "Because fewer blacks than whites hold college degrees, and the requirement might therefore have the impact of disproportionately excluding blacks."⁴⁰ According to the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), "If minority-group members do not have equal access to higher education, such a requirement could be held to be discriminatory by the

³⁹ Carter, p. 4.

⁴⁰ Lawrence Sherman et al., The Quality of Police Education. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Publishers, 1978), 179.

courts. Not only that, but there are also obvious ethical and social issues raised."⁴¹

Another argument is that more highly educated police officers may be more difficult to control. Some believe college-educated officers become bored with their jobs easily because many of their tasks are routine. Critics also believe that the more highly educated officer is milder and more socially involved. They do more on the job than they should because they are encouraged to utilize the knowledge learned in college. The citizens then start expecting too much.⁴² Some believe that a college education is not relevant to effective police work. Many believe that non-college educated officers have done just as well.⁴³

The Nebraska Case Study

The study done on Nebraska shows that much work needs to be done before that state adopts higher education standards. It is an example of a department that only requires minimum education or high school graduation.

⁴¹ Roy Rogberg et al., Police and Society. (Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Co.: 2000), 417.

⁴² Totzke, p. 6.

⁴³ James Fyfe, et al., Police Administration. (Boston: McGraw-Hill: 1997), 287.

Nebraska, like many other states in the United States, does not really see the need for a higher education requirement. It might agree that it can have a positive affect on officers, but it also believes that such a requirement would be an impediment to hiring qualified officers. Requiring higher education would make some of these departments close.

In 1969, Nebraska realized the need to have trained law enforcement throughout the state. It enacted a statute requiring all law enforcement officers to meet a minimum training requirement prior to appointment. Statute 81-1414 states:

On and after January 1, 1972, no person shall receive appointment as a law law enforcement officer unless he or she has been awarded a certificate by the commission attesting to satisfactory completion of the minimum curriculum of the training center as established by the council or has been awarded a certificate attesting satisfactory completion of a training program which the council find equivalent thereto. Any person who has not been awarded such a certificate may receive an appointment conditioned on satisfactory of such a training if he or she immediately applies for admission to the training center and enrolls in the next available basic training class. If such training is not completed within one year after the appointment, the person's employment shall not be renewed by the appointment or otherwise and such person shall no longer be recognized as a law enforcement officer as defined in section 81-1401, except that in cases of extreme hardship, upon application by the officer, the council may grant a waiver to allow the officer to complete the basic training program as soon practicable after the one year time allowance. For

purposes of this section, the council shall deem the successful completion of the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs basic training program as administered by the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center to constitute such an equivalent training, and officers certified by virtue of such equivalent training may exercise full law enforcement authority exclusively on tribal lands.⁴⁴

In 1980, the state of Nebraska also improved on the education level of its sheriffs: All must now attend a minimum of twenty hours of continuing education per year in criminal justice and law enforcement. Courses could be taken through seminars, college or university classes, or conferences. If a sheriff does not complete the yearly twenty hours, then he or she will be fined an amount equal to a sheriff's monthly salary.

Nebraska opened the Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Center in 1972. Training began with two weeks, but it has expanded to twelve weeks of intense training. It usually is longer than eight hours a day.

However, there is a problem with the Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Center. It does get its police officers ready for the streets, but that is where the training ends. The Center does not offer continued or advanced education to its officers. They are not trained on technical or legal changes that go into affect. They do

⁴⁴ Totzke, p. 7.

not have a plan of action on how to inform their officers in the field of new information. This may lead to confusion at a later date.

The study of Nebraska's law enforcement education looked at different areas. At the state level, Nebraska does not require as much training as many other states. Nebraska requires 93 county sheriffs to obtain continuing education. The remaining police officers do not have a continuing education requirement, whereas 66 percent of other states require mandatory continuing education for police.

The study found that police chiefs were the most educated among Nebraska's police officers. Of the chiefs, 23 percent have a masters degree, 38.5 percent have a bachelor's degree, 26.9 percent have an associates degree, and 11.5 percent have only a high school diploma. These chiefs were the ones who took part in the study by answering questions in a survey on how they felt higher education affected the quality of work of their officers.

The first question asked was if the police chiefs believed that a mandated continuing education requirement would improve Nebraska Law Enforcement. Seventy-three percent agreed or strongly agreed. The forty-six percent

who said they strongly agreed at least had an Associates degree.

The study also found that chiefs having more education were the departments that made officers go through the longest field training programs (FTO).

Respondents were asked to rate how college educated officers compared to high school grads with communication skills. Seventy-five percent agreed that the college-educated officers have better communication skills.

The second area of question was on use of officer discretion. Fifty-three percent of the chiefs surveyed thought that college educated officers have better discretionary abilities. In the area of writing, over seventy-nine percent of the chiefs felt that college educated officers have better report writing skills.

Overall, the study shows that chiefs believe, on the most part, that some college can help make a better well-rounded officer on the field. All of the questions asked had at least a fifty percent approval rating that college educated officers work better with the public, write better, and make better decisions in the field. The survey also showed that chiefs do not believe that

college-educated officers are more difficult to supervise.⁴⁵

Where Nebraska sees the negative side of higher education, is recruiting a sufficient number of recruits to meet their needs. They agree that it is beneficial, but they are in no place demographically to exclude recruits because of lack of education.

San Bernardino Sheriff's Department
and Higher Education

Historically, San Bernardino Sheriff's Department (SBSD) believed that requiring a higher education would create problems within the department. They were afraid to lose good candidates who are not educated, like minorities.

It is also very difficult to change a culture that has been adhered to for years. Not too long ago, on-duty officers were wearing cowboy belts and boots. A strong culture that minimizes the importance of education is in charge of the department.

San Bernardino County is a vast area of cities, small towns, and deserts. There are more square miles than there are deputies to cover it. SBSD covers almost 22,000 square

⁴⁵ Totzke, p. 23.

miles. The cities are densely populated, and many other areas are not populated at all. Why would higher education be needed for officers who are just doing security of a remote area? Many officers do not come into contact with citizens and believe they have no need for communication skills or community policing.

The county is also one of the poorest in California. It has a wide range of ethnicities who are both educated and non-educated. By requiring education at SBSD, they would ignore a huge group of candidates that are needed to help out with its diverse population.

There has been no official study conducted by SBSD to look at its levels of higher education within the department. SBSD's training facility at Glen Helen recently took a survey of the levels of education of its officers. It was conducted on 2,500 deputy sheriffs. The survey showed that only one percent of deputies have a masters degree; that's a total of twenty seven officers. Six percent of deputies have a bachelor's degree and the rest have associate degrees or high school diplomas.

SBSD has a long way to go before it will unilaterally require higher education as one of its requirements to become a deputy sheriff. Change is hard for a department that is so set in their ways. The most likely scenario for

change to occur is when new, high-ranking officials, who have college degrees, take over the department. Even then, they will have to be careful not to alienate an entire pool of candidates because so many in this county only hold a high school diploma.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE GROWING EMPHASIS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Changes Presently Occurring in Law Enforcement

As a whole, police departments in the United States are showing a growing emphasis on higher education. Each one handles it differently than others. This section will show what some departments are doing and what scholars have found needs to be done throughout the United States.

Since many critics believe that minorities and women are being negatively affected by the requirement of higher education, many departments are dealing with this situation. Carter states, "There is no need to limit entry or promotional educational requirements for minorities as long as innovative and aggressive recruiting programs are in place, which is in the area of policy development."⁴⁶ However, "many women, people of color, and well educated individuals, who have much to contribute to policing, do not regard police work as an appropriate career."⁴⁷

The police profession needs to find ways to increase their numbers of highly qualified officers. Many times the ones who apply are the officers who get to be known as

⁴⁶ Carter, p. 7.

⁴⁷ Fyfe et al, p. 288.

being "badge heavy." They are the ones that are the most enthusiastic to get the job, and it is difficult to pick up on unsuitability until it is too late. Police departments need to find new ways to attract the best available candidates.⁴⁸ "If American policing is to survive in the twenty-first century, officials must plan today to address the problems of tomorrow. Police managers must begin now to recruit qualified individuals who can lead departments successfully into the next century."⁴⁹

There are plausible suggestions to attract the higher qualified candidates. A study was done by the Los Angeles Police Department to see how most applicants hear about its job openings. The study found that over sixty-four percent of new recruits found out about the available positions within the department from police officers, friends, or relatives. Only two percent learned about the available positions from newspaper employment ads.⁵⁰ With this information, LAPD must view every police officer as a potential recruiter. It should give an incentive to each officer who brings in a new candidate. The Marine Corps

⁴⁸ Fyfe et al, p. 288.

⁴⁹ Osborn, p. 1.

⁵⁰ Osborn, p. 3.

already does this with its officers. The officers get extra vacation time and extra points for promotion for every new recruit into the Marine Corps. Another idea is to inform residents of the open positions in the department that is hiring. There should be public service announcements on radio, television, and the newspaper. "Leaders of such groups as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and athletic associations frequently remain in touch with their alumni, and they should be contacted personally for suggestions about well-qualified individuals."⁵¹ College campuses are good places to find future candidates. Police recruiters should make themselves visible on the campuses through job fairs or by putting up flyers. Also, departments should get involved with the academic departments and the career center on the campus.

Police departments in the United States are still a long way from requiring some college as a requirement in their job description. However, there are some that do. "Fourteen percent of the departments had a formal college requirement for employment. And in nearly all of the remaining departments, applicants with a college education were at a competitive advantage in the selection

⁵¹ Fyfe et al., p. 288.

process."⁵² Some departments require from fifteen semester units all the way up to sixty semester units. Not all require these units to be in the field of law enforcement. However, it is more favorable to have some courses completed in criminal justice.

Police officers today realize that they need to have a college education if they are going to be promoted. Not all departments require it, but it is easier and faster to get promoted with a college degree. Without a degree, you have to have more experience on the job than those with a college degree. "Eight percent of the departments required some college beyond their entry-level requirement, while five percent wanted a college degree."⁵³

"People are realizing there are benefits to having more educated officers. They have supervisory, leadership and administrative skills. I have read studies where better-education are less prone to be involved with internal complaints. They are less involved in civil rights and more of an asset to the agency."⁵⁴ In 2000,

⁵² Carter, p. 5.

⁵³ Carter, p. 5.

⁵⁴ Kummer, p. 3.

more than thirty percent of all police officers held a bachelor's degree in the United States.

Not only are recruitment strategies changing, so are the ways in which police administration conducts business. They are moving away from running the department like a public business to a private business. "Perhaps the most direct method of changing the management philosophy of American police agencies is to hire successful business management techniques to top-level police administration. This means transferring proven modern business management methods directly to police management."⁵⁵ They need to apply strategic planning for the police managers. By coming up with goals and objectives, the police departments will know which direction to go towards for recruiting and other administration decisions. This strategic planning is difficult for some managers to accept. "What police managers need to do is to readjust their thinking to include a positive attitude toward taking risks or chances."⁵⁶ Taking risks only brings about progress. Soon the environment will change from a threat

⁵⁵ Walter M. Francis, "Changing Police Management with Business Concepts," FBI Publication-Law Enforcement Bulletin. (April, 1992), p. 1.

⁵⁶ Francis, p. 1.

to be seen as an opportunity. "They will eventually adopt a proven system of operation from the business world."⁵⁷

The Future of Law Enforcement and Higher Education

Everyday the police departments across America are one step closer to the future. They need to start making changes before it is too late. The most promising way to start changing is to incorporate strategic planning to help the process. Colleges and universities also need to provide classes for criminal justice and law enforcement that will benefit police officers in the future.

The best known way to change the management philosophy of American police agencies is to bring successful business management techniques to top level police administrators. "Once this Nation's police administrators realize that progress results from taking chances, and that risk-taking can be directed by planned change and strategic planning, they will eventually adopt proven systems of operation from the business world."⁵⁸ If administrators do this, then the dynamic environment of policing will be seen as an opportunity instead of a

⁵⁷ Francis, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Francis, p. 2.

threat. Strategic planning will help police managers make goals and objectives so they will know in what direction they are going towards and to meet them. "Private industry has known for years that the best way to ensure future success is to plan now."⁵⁹ Law enforcement would do well to learn from this.

Change is hard, and strategic planning requires some risk-taking, which police managers are no good at doing. However, it is not that difficult to transfer the proven management techniques to a police agency. Police managers only have to be willing to change, and they will see that strategic planning has many benefits. "What police managers need to do is to readjust their thinking to include a positive attitude toward taking risks of change."⁶⁰

Colleges and universities need to change their classes for law enforcement that will benefit them in the future to deal with the street and the changing society. "As police work changes, so do the skills and knowledge needed to be effective police officers. Therefore, colleges and universities should be developing policies

⁵⁹ Osborn, p. 4.

⁶⁰ Francis, p. 4.

and modifying curricula to ensure that they provide the educational background that meets the future needs of the police and society."⁶¹

The only way colleges and universities will know what changes need to be made are by an ongoing dialogue with police officials. The problem with this right now is that both are waiting to initiate the interaction with one another. They need to change this as soon as possible to help meet the needs of officers who are receiving higher education. Carter says, "Police departments must be prepared to teach the physical/vocational skills needed for policing. Similarly, they should expect academic preparation from colleges and universities. In turn, the colleges and universities must accept the responsibility of shaping academic preparation to meet the needs of law enforcement."⁶² By being in contact with one another, they will close the gap between colleges and law enforcement agencies.

As police officers are continuing to receive higher education, the models of education and law enforcement must be refined also. "It is apparent that law enforcement

⁶¹ Carter, p. 5.

⁶² Carter, p. 6.

will continue to face more complex, social problems and increasingly sophisticated criminal behavior as the twenty-first century draws nearer. As a result, the demand for effective police service will increase, along with the demands for accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness."⁶³

Carter does not believe that police agencies should ask if a college education is needed for their officers, but they should ask instead how much and how soon. The educational level of society is increasing, and with that more involvement between citizens and law enforcement will occur. The expectations from educated citizens are higher of law enforcement. Educated law enforcers will know how to deal better with an educated public. "Higher education will be the currency that facilitates development of innovative police practices and increased responsiveness to demands for police services."⁶⁴

Overall, the future for law enforcement will be demanding. It must change along with the public. The two ways improve their future is for police management to start running the departments more effectively and

⁶³ Carter, p. 5.

⁶⁴ Carter, p. 6.

efficiently using proven programs, like strategic planning, and to be in constant dialogue with colleges and universities. The number of highly-educated officers is inevitably going to grow. We have seen the numbers steadily grow. With a more educated public, their expectations of law enforcement will also grow, and the only way to meet their demands is with higher education. The future will be here tomorrow, and law enforcement officials and officers are going to have to be ready to face it head on.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

This paper focused on many aspects of higher education, and how this complex topic is affecting law enforcement today and will continue to affect it in the future. There are positive aspects as well as negative aspects of higher education. The majority of scholars agree that some college education is beneficial. College educated officers have better communication skills and written skills. They know how to deal better with the public. On the other hand, some scholars say college educated officers are more difficult to control, and that they don't stay satisfied with their job.

The biggest issue of contention is discrimination of minorities and females by including higher education as a requirement. The critics on the negative side argue that the demographics of the United States are changing, and soon there will not be a majority ethnicity. By requiring higher education, they are potentially removing a large number of minority candidates from the hiring pool. This could be detrimental to small departments, and it could force some to close forever if they make higher education a requirement. However on the positive side, other

scholars showed that minority educational levels are almost the same as whites. The New York City model showed that by going to the colleges and universities they were able to get a good representation of different ethnicities. The critics also showed that female officers usually have the same or more education than male officers before they enter law enforcement.

There will always be two sides to this issue. The important point is to understand where both sides are coming from, and to determine an effective strategy in light of resources and other potential impediments. Carter said it best when he argued that the focus shouldn't be if college education is needed, but how much and how soon. If both sides could come together and learn from one another, law enforcement would greatly benefit. The job of a police officer has changed over the past decades, and critics need to change along with it. Law enforcement needs to be seen as a professional job, not one that anyone can get into. It should be viewed like a doctor or a lawyer, which requires college education. Maybe not all departments across America will require some college education as a requirement in the future. However, statistics do show the steady growth of departments that do. The small towns and rural areas in America do not require higher education for

the police to do their job. However, the large cities and metropolises should make it a requirement since they are in close contact with citizens everyday.

No one is sure which way the United States will go as we turn a corner into this new century. The one thing that is for sure is that the number and percentage of educated people in society is growing. Their demands in professional law enforcement will grow. Society might force administrators to act before they are ready themselves. The older generation of police officers are retiring, and with it comes a new modern officer in charge. Time will only tell what changes they will bring with them.

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