

**EDUCATED COPS: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF POLICE CHIEFS' AND
POLICE OFFICERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTS OF POST-SECONDARY
EDUCATION ON JOB PERFORMANCE**

by

James Wesley Blair

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Abstract

Municipal policing in the United States requires a complex array of skills for police officers to perform the duties of their jobs effectively. At any given time, a police officer may act in the role of a warrior in confronting an armed assailant in a school or deliver a death notification to a family whose life has just been shattered by a tragic car crash. That same officer will be asked to perform CPR on a heart attack victim, counsel a suicidal individual on the edge of a bridge, and deliver a presentation to a group of business owners. Each of these tasks requires a specific and individualized set of skills generally associated with a particular occupation. On any given day across our nation, we expect a police officer to perform a variety of tasks at the same level as an educated soldier, paramedic, counselor, statistician, social worker, urban planner, lawyer, minister, or MBA graduate.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers relative to the effects of post-secondary education on the job performance of municipal police officers. Through interviews with police chiefs and anonymous online surveys with police officers, this study qualitatively assessed the perceptions of the two groups on the benefits of post-secondary education as it relates to development of interpersonal skills, use of force decision-making, critical thinking skills, job satisfaction, and intent to leave a police department.

Keywords: policing, post-secondary education, use of force, critical decision making, police turnover rates, communication skills

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Policing in the United States is a unique occupation that requires a variety of skills for police officers to perform the duties of their jobs effectively. At any given time, a police officer may act in the role of a warrior in confronting an armed assailant in a school or deliver a death notification to a family whose life has just been shattered by a tragic car crash. That same officer will be asked to perform CPR on a heart attack victim, counsel a suicidal individual on the edge of a bridge, and deliver a presentation to a group of business owners. Each of these tasks requires a specific and individualized set of skills generally associated with a particular occupation. On any given day across our nation, we expect a police officer to perform a variety of tasks at the same level as an educated soldier, paramedic, counselor, statistician, social worker, urban planner, lawyer, minister, or MBA graduate.

Recent critical incidents involving police use of force have propelled the United States to examine policing as it exists today. Notably, the events in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 have led to calls for massive police reform, especially when police use of force is involved when the force proves fatal to the citizen in the encounter (Engel et al., 2020). The cry for increased accountability sparked the Obama administration to create a task force to review policing in the United States and make reform recommendations (Donner & Olson, 2019). Among the recommendations from the task force was the need for law enforcement agencies to commit to encouraging post-secondary education for police officers as a mechanism to professionalize

policing in the United States (COPS, 2015). The focus of this study was to determine police chiefs' and police officers' perceptions of the benefits of post-secondary education as it relates to job performance.

Background

Historical Context

Given the diversity and complexity of police officers' tasks, it would seem reasonable that police departments would require applicants to possess some form of formal education to be considered employable for a position as a police officer. The introduction of community policing has reduced reliance on assertive and dominant characteristics as critical to becoming a police officer. It has pushed dependence more toward a candidate with a diverse ability to think critically (Hilal & Litsey, 2019). However, that is not the standard practice in the United States. There are over 18,000 county and municipal police agencies in the United States, with approximately only 1 percent of those requiring an undergraduate degree (Cordner, 2019). A 2010 survey determined that there were only 60 American police departments that required a bachelor's degree. Of those, 23 would waive that requirement for an applicant with military or previous law enforcement experience (Bruns & Bruns, 2014).

The diversity and broad range of police departments across the country also contribute to inconsistencies in educational and training requirements for police officers (Cordner, 2019). According to Cordner (2019), this factor is also driven by a lack of requirements at state levels for post-secondary education as a commissioning requirement as a police officer. Furthermore, the level of existing literature on the topic of post-secondary education does not align with an increasing public demand for continuing education for law enforcement personnel. When practitioner perceptions are examined, the response field is vast between both positive and

negative assumptions regarding the value of a college degree (Williams et al., 2019). The wide array of responses informs the need for additional research to fully understand the phenomenon.

Social Context

Societal views on policing are currently in flux after highly publicized events that resulted in the deaths of citizens at the hands of the police. These emotionally charged events have led to calls for police reform across the nation and intensified both the debate and demand for better-educated police officers (Antrobus et al., 2018). The results of this study have implications for police officers, police leaders, and the public they serve. The implications are observed in post-secondary education's influence on critical decision-making, police use of force, communication skills, and police turnover.

Further, informing the social context for how each of these areas impacts society as a whole is the results of President Obama's 21st Century Task Force. Four principles arose as recommendations for social improvement in police-citizen interactions; those four principles state: (1) the need to treat all individuals with respect by the police, (2) approaching decision-making from a neutral viewpoint, (3) being transparent in motives to show trustworthiness, and (4) providing citizens with an opportunity to be heard during police encounters (Mazerolle & Terrill, 2018). Furthermore, Rosenfeld et al. (2018) indicate that the task force recommended that attainment of those principles can be achieved, in part, through incentivizing higher education for police officers. Therefore, examination of the perceptions of police officers' and police chiefs' attitudes toward post-secondary education has far-reaching societal applications.

Theoretical Context

There are many benefits to including college-educated individuals in the applicant pool that would not be present with their exclusion or minimization (Morrow et al., 2019). The

purpose of this research was to understand police chiefs' and police officers' perceptions of the need for post-secondary education before a career in municipal policing. This study aimed to conduct a qualitative analysis of these perceptions as they relate to critical decision-making, use of force, interpersonal communication skills, and turnover rates at the municipal level of law enforcement. A clearer picture of these perceptions can inform law enforcement policy-makers on best practices in recruiting potential applicants with post-secondary degrees.

The ability to critically and effectively make decisions is an integral part of policing. Often, the critical decision-making process occurs during high-risk and high-stress events with only seconds to process all the options available (Andersen & Gustafsberg, 2016). Police officers seldom are allowed to take time to slowly think through all possible scenarios or seek the opinions of others before making decisions that can have life-altering effects. Moreover, law enforcement officers must demonstrate effective communication skills to convey their actions in rapidly evolving situations. This skill requires maturity and the capacity to solve problems (Haberfeld, 2016). Additionally, a police officer's actions must be fair and procedurally just. This requires wisdom on the part of the officer, which research indicates is a learned trait (Haberfeld, 2016).

The corporate world recognizes a need for advanced skills associated with a college education. As a result, it is common for organizations to rely on obtaining a bachelor's degree to form a successful foundation for entry-level employees (Ahmad & Pesch, 2017). Municipal policing is an exception to this requirement. Research indicates that 86.1 percent of police agencies only require a high school diploma, and very few require more than an associate's degree or equivalent credit hours (Gardiner, 2015). However, municipal law enforcement is just as complicated as many other organizations requiring post-secondary degrees.

Situation to Self

The research surrounding perceptions of the value of higher education for police officers is particularly applicable to this researcher. As a practicing police chief, this author is acutely aware of the necessity for highly-skilled police officers in today's ever-changing and extremely challenging law enforcement environment. After the events of Ferguson and other nationally recognized police use of force situations, President Obama formed a task force to make recommendations to inform best practices for law enforcement agencies. One of the recommendations was for the Federal Government and police agencies across the country to encourage and incentivize a college education for police officers (COPS, 2015). This recommendation informs the need to understand the effectiveness of a college education as it relates to police officers' job performance.

Problem Statement

An integral part of policing is the ability to make decisions critically and effectively. This critical decision-making process often occurs during high-risk and high-stress events with only seconds to process all the options available (Andersen & Gustafsberg, 2016). Police officers, especially those in street patrol functions, routinely lack the opportunity to take time to leisurely sort through all possibilities available or seek the opinions of others. Moreover, a police officer needs to have the communication skills to effectively convey their decisions in a rapidly evolving environment that requires maturity and the capacity to solve problems (Haberfeld, 2016). There exists a lack of consistency in current literature regarding the difference between officers with post-secondary education and those without (Rosenfeld et al., 2018). The perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the necessity of education to effectively perform the tasks mentioned above are also lacking.

Along with critical decision-making and interpersonal communication skills, today's police officers must assimilate into the evolving nature of police work and how technology is changing how people interact in modern society (Haberfeld, 2016). One aspect of police work that requires this is technological advances that have become common factors in policing. Intelligence-led policing and other strategies require police officers to assess and interpret large amounts of data while also comprehending neighborhood dynamics to solve the complex issues of a rapidly changing society (Gardiner, 2015). The abundance of attention focused on police use of force by politicians and mainstream media amplify the need for police officers to possess the ability to make sound and justified decisions in determining the utilization of use of force (Andersen & Gustafsberg, 2016). In making these decisions, it is essential for police officers to exercise their authority in a procedurally just manner (Silver et al., 2017). The ability to affect their authority fairly and impartially indicates a need to adhere to a higher level of critical thinking skills. Haberfeld (2016) asserts that wisdom is a learned trait. If this is accurate, it is necessary to gain the perceptions of police chiefs and their officers regarding the relevance of this training through post-secondary education.

Beyond the need for a patrol officer to possess these skills, officers in management positions and other specialized units such as investigations, crime scenes, and internal affairs utilize higher-level cognitive skills (Paoline et al., 2014). Businesses outside policing recognize this need for advanced skills associated with a college education, and it is not uncommon for organizations to rely on undergraduate education to form a successful foundation for entry-level employees (Ahmad & Pesch, 2017). Law enforcement on the municipal level appears to be an exception to that requirement, with 86.1 percent of police agencies only requiring a high school

diploma (Gardiner, 2015). However, municipal law enforcement is just as complicated as many of the other organizations that require post-secondary degrees.

Job satisfaction is instrumental in turnover rates for a municipal law enforcement agency. Not only is the overall morale of a police department affected, but there are also financial considerations associated with a high officer turnover rate (Wareham et al., 2013). Hiring and retaining police officers is a costly endeavor that can quickly strain a department's budgetary resources with a high turnover rate. Additionally, losing experienced police officers due to job dissatisfaction affects police departments' ability to effectively meet the needs of their communities (Wareham et al., 2013). Determining if a relationship exists between job satisfaction and undergraduate degrees can provide insight into the cause of police officer turnover rates. While the research shows the importance of reducing turnover rates, it does not provide police chiefs' and officers' perspectives of education being a factor in officers' decision to leave a police department.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers as they relate to the effects of post-secondary education on municipal police officers' job performance. For the purposes of this study, job performance was generally defined as critical decision-making, use of force decisions, communication skills, and turnover intention. The theory guiding this study was that a post-secondary degree has a positive impact on policing in the United States (Cordner, 2019) as it to the four job performance indicators mentioned previously.

Significance of the Study

There exists a lack of consistency in current literature regarding the difference between officers with post-secondary education and those without (Rosenfeld et al., 2018) the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the necessity of education to effectively perform the aforementioned tasks are also lacking. Therefore, the purpose of this research was two-fold. The first purpose was to add to the existing body of literature. Secondly, this researcher intends to provide academic support for policy decisions regarding the necessity for post-secondary education for police officers.

Recently, the United States has born witness to a demand for more educated police officers to address the issues of critical thinking, communication skills, and use of force decisions. This is not a new concept and was introduced into the profession of policing by August Vollmer more than 100 years ago. Often referred to as the “father of American policing,” Vollmer posited that education was a critical ingredient in professionalizing policing (Cordner, 2022). However, there is a scarcity of current literature examining the societal phenomenon from the perspective of professional police officers and police chiefs.

In their research, Marciniak, and Elattrache (2020) developed several hypotheses regarding police chiefs’ perceptions of the value of higher education for police officers. Notably, their theories that exposure to higher education was viewed favorably by police chiefs in making police officer hiring decisions. This view was predicated on problem-solving skills, communication skills, and the ability to embrace the diversity that accompanies college attendance (Marciniak & Elattrache, 2020). However, the research was limited to police chiefs of small to mid-size communities. The current study aimed to expand on the research of Marciniak and Elattrache (2020) to contribute a broader cross-section for analysis.

The task force commissioned by President Obama in 2014 developed guidance for the nation's law enforcement agencies that stipulated the need for higher education for police officers if there were to exist true police reform (COPS, 2015). If there is to be adherence and acceptance of this pillar of policing, then it is critical to examine the perceptions of practitioners in the field as to the effectiveness of reforming America's policing model (Cordner, 2022; Edwards, 2019; Marciniak & Elattrache, 2020). Therefore, this body of research broadens the scope of that understanding and informs scholars and practitioners of the legitimacy of college education and police reform.

Research Questions

There is an increasing belief in the value of bachelor's degrees across many industries (Horowitz, 2018). From 1950 to 2010, college-educated Americans rose from 7.7 percent to 31.7 percent (Horowitz, 2018). However, research indicates that the increase in the number of college graduates entering the workforce is not necessarily the same in public or private sectors as in law enforcement. For example, only one-third of municipal police departments require a college education for entry-level officers (Edwards, 2019). Growing national sentiment indicates a desire for this to change by shifting reliance on police academies alone to provide adequate education for police officers and dependence on post-secondary education (Makin, 2015). This belief is reflected in President Obama's report on 21st Century Policing, which recommends a college education for police officers (COPS, 2015). It is also significant to determine if a college degree translates into better morale and less turnover in a municipal police department. The perceptions of police chiefs and police officers relative to post-secondary education are significant to policing as they can help inform the need, or lack thereof, for the municipal police departments to require bachelor's degrees as an eligibility requirement for employment as a

police officer. The following research questions were formulated to understand this societal phenomenon.

The research questions for this study were:

Question One: What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police officer's critical decision-making process?

Question Two: What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police officer's utilization of use of force?

Question Three: What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police officer's interpersonal communication skills?

Question Four: What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police department's turnover rate of police officers?

Definitions

The following definitions apply to the terms used throughout this study:

The IACP defines a mid-size department as a police department consisting of between 50 and 99 police officers (International Association of Chiefs of Police [IACP], n.d.-a).

The IACP defines a small agency as a police department consisting of fewer than 50 police officers (International Association of Chiefs of Police [IACP], n.d.-c).

Police Officer is defined as any non-ranking individual working as a commissioned officer within a municipal policing agency. This definition includes detectives, traffic patrol officers, and other officers assigned to specialty assignments.

Police Chief refers to the highest-ranking, commissioned officer in a municipal police department. For this study, a police chief will be the official with ultimate policy, operational, and budgetary responsibility for the entire police department.

Post-secondary education is generally defined as education beyond high school graduation and includes two-year colleges, four-year colleges, and trade schools teaching advanced job skills (Bathmaker, 2017). Post-secondary education is defined as an undergraduate degree from an accredited university for this study.

A Municipal Law Enforcement/Police Department is an organization with primary law enforcement duties within a city or town in the United States and reports to a local government body (Bureau of Justice Statistics, n.d.).

Critical decision-making is an individual's ability to assimilate various aspects and consequences of a situation to decide the course of action to be taken (Cotugno, 2018). A higher level of understanding of the issue's complexities results in more appropriate responses to the problem.

Use of Force is defined as the level of physical force applied by an officer to a subject perceived to be non-compliant (Jetelina et al., 2017). The use of force often occurs during dynamic, stressful, and volatile interactions with citizens (Hine et al., 2016).

The turnover rate is when police officers act on decisions to leave a police department for employment at another department or in another field of work.

Summary

Chapter one introduced the study of post-secondary education in relationship to policing by providing background and the nature of the problem. Additionally, this chapter presented the purpose of the study and research questions created to determine the perceptions of police chiefs

and police officers on the relationship between post-secondary education and the job performance of police officers. Organizational definitions and the study's scope and limitations are presented in the final section of this chapter. Chapter Two contains a review of the literature and the strategy utilized to research the literature.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

It is necessary to understand the origins of American policing and its evolution to the modern era to have an informed discussion on post-secondary education as a requirement for entering into the field of municipal policing. A review of the literature relating to the formalizing of police services is addressed in this chapter. Additionally, this chapter examined the literature on police use of force, the decision-making process of a police officer, the required communication skills to successfully interact with individuals in a law enforcement setting, and police turnover rates.

Utilizing a search of databases provided by Google Scholar, the Jerry Falwell Library at Liberty University, and the Kent Library at Southeast Missouri State University, articles were reviewed that proved relevant to the study. Articles were current research that had been conducted and reported on within the previous five years and peer-reviewed from scholarly sources. Older research articles were utilized to locate study sources that have built upon the research and expanded within the previous five years. Utilizing the approach provided a breadth of information that might not otherwise be available without understanding the historical context of earlier studies. The references cited in this study are primarily from scholarly, peer-reviewed articles written within the past five years and, to a lesser degree, from older research or other sources.

Policing in the United States is at a crossroads, fueled by increased scrutiny of police tactics in the wake of the high-profile deaths of citizens at the hands of police in recent years. Calls for police reform often focus on educational standards for police officers. Additionally, the procedural justice with which police interact with the public has become a topic of much debate and a factor in the demand for better-educated police officers (Antrobus et al., 2018). While President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (COPS, 2015) calls for implementing post-secondary educational requirements for police officers, the thought of such an endeavor is not new. Often referred to as the father of modern law enforcement, Berkley California Police Chief August Vollmer advocated for making college education mandatory for the nation's police officers in the 1930s (Hilal et al., 2013). However, the public demand for better-educated police officers has been adopted slowly by law enforcement practitioners, with only one-third of the nation's police departments requiring any college education and less than one percent requiring a bachelor's degree (Edwards, 2019). This starkly contrasts with the public sector, which places a premium on college education for entry-level workers (Decker, 2019). Additionally, there is little current data on the number of degree-holding police officers. However, historical research indicates that while more than seven percent of the general workforce has a post-secondary degree, only about three percent of the nation's police officers do (Gardiner, 2015).

One factor contributing to the disparity in post-secondary education and law enforcement is the lack of standardization of training and even the structure of police agencies (Cordner, 2019). Each police department is left to set its own educational requirements. Although many states have mandatory standards for entry-level training, there is no requirement for a bachelor's degree by regulatory agencies at the state or national level (Cordner, 2019). Minnesota is the only notable exception to post-secondary educational requirements. Police

officers hired for employment at local and state levels in that state must first possess a two-year associate's degree (Hilal et al., 2013). Additionally, Wisconsin sets an educational standard that requires police applicants to possess some college and ultimately obtain an associate's degree. This leaves the majority of the remaining states to only require a high school diploma for admission into the profession of policing (Hilal et al., 2013).

Although no states currently have a bachelor's degree as a minimum requirement for licensing as a police officer, some municipal police agencies have adopted a four-year degree requirement as a prerequisite to employment as a police officer (Hilal et al., 2013). In their research, Hilal et al. (2013) discovered that approximately 64 municipal police departments required a four-year degree. Additionally, the researchers discovered that approximately 9 percent of municipal police departments required an associate's degree, while only 1 percent required a bachelor's degree for employment (Hilal et al., 2013). Conversely, Hilal et al. (2013) point out that federal law enforcement agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), often require bachelor's degrees for acceptance in their ranks as law enforcement agents.

The Arlington, Texas police department requires a college degree for acceptance as a police officer at their department. As a result, the department reports increased minority recruitment and higher critical thinking and communication skills for the officers on staff. Additionally, the Burnsville, Minnesota Police Department, which also requires a four-year degree, indicated that they can attract and retain more culturally aware and competent police officers as a direct result of the educational requirement (Mayo, 2006).

Adding to the argument for higher educational standards for police officers is the understanding that many other similarly situated social services occupations such as nursing, counseling, education, state social services, and many other social worker roles require four-year

degrees. This differentiation causes the occupation of policing to stand out as a departure from traditional ideology in social services and further complicates the argument of whether policing is a profession or an occupation (Hilal et al., 2013).

The development of soft skills, or skills that are intrinsically linked to life skills or often referred to as people skills, are proven to be desirable attributes in new employees entering the workforce. These include an individual's ability to work with others on multiple levels. There is a multitude of traits that employers consider to be soft skills. However, they are most commonly identified as problem-solving abilities, communication proficiency, critical-thinking skills, and an ethical compass (Kinsella & Waite, 2020). Workplace employers often look to post-secondary educational institutions to instill these skills in their graduates, making them commodities to private sector organizations. It should not be surprising then that hiring managers in public service organizations such as municipal and local governments emphasize developing soft skills for individuals exiting college and entering their workforce (Kinsella & Waite, 2020).

Not only does the existing literature indicate that soft skills are developed in college, but there is a growing insistence from employers that it is the responsibility of post-secondary educational institutions to provide these skills development (Succi & Canovi, 2019). Succi and Canovi (2019) theorize that many employers currently find fault with universities when applicants emerge in the workforce without developed soft skills. Scholars also indicate a preference for developing these skills in the university setting, going so far as to indicate that soft skill development is critical for post-secondary institutions to play in workforce development (Succi & Canovi, 2019).

A potential limitation to the aforementioned preferences discovered by Succi and Canovi (2019) is that current literature also indicates there is a belief amongst modern-era employers that

universities are not adequately developing soft skills at the rate required by the workforce. To bolster that argument, some scholars argue that employers' views of the necessity for an undergraduate degree have waned somewhat in recent years. Much of this perception stems from a belief that universities are not adequately turning out graduates with enhanced communication or critical thinking skills (Biswas & Haufler, 2018). Studies indicate that fewer than 40 percent of employers currently believe those entering the workforce are adequately equipped with soft skills and almost 75 percent perceived universities' ability to develop these skills as lacking (Biswas & Haufler, 2018; Doyle, 2013; Strauss, 2016). While additional research may be needed to fully understand this phenomenon, it does indicate the necessity for public and private sector organizations to work collaboratively with post-secondary institutions to satisfy the workforce's needs (Succi & Canovi, 2019). Although this sentiment is a potential limitation of the existing literature, it is outside the scope of this research project.

Kinsella and Waite (2020) discovered that local government hiring managers believed that attaining a post-secondary degree was critical and highly desirable for applicants. Notably, the type of degree was of lesser importance, especially in the opinion of police chiefs, than the mere fact that an applicant had invested the time and gained the overall soft skills offered by any four-year college degree (Kinsella & Waite, 2020). This perception indicates that the overall college experience, not the job-specificity that some degrees may offer, enhances a candidate's suitability for employment as a police officer.

Another benefit that local government hiring managers perceived as a corollary to attaining a college education is the employee's learning ability. In their study of local government department heads perceptions of college education, Kinsella and Waite (2020) discovered that college exposure made applicants more adaptable to learning new skills.

Additionally, the department heads believed that an applicant's college involvement enhanced their ability to work independently and in teams with co-workers. This perception was partly based on the belief that a college student's exposure to individuals and cultures different than their own is an inherent part of the college experience and broadens the applicant's acceptance of others who may not have the same life experiences as their own. Additionally, the department heads indicated that this ability was especially essential in local government where employees must often communicate with a wide array of stakeholders including community groups and elected officials. Given the complexity of local government and policing a diverse society, communicating effectively on multiple complex topics with groups of various backgrounds and interests is a critical soft skill for an applicant to possess (Kinsella & Waite, 2020).

Another discovery of Kinsella and Waite (2020) in their study of local government department heads was the value placed on college students' extracurricular activities that exposed them to civic engagement activities that they might not otherwise experience outside of the university setting. Activities outside of the college classroom were encouraged by this set of higher managers as a necessary element to developing soft skills needed in the public government workplace (Kinsella & Waite, 2020). The literature seems to indicate that college experience benefits the development of soft skills desirable to employers extraneous to the classroom.

Antagonists of post-secondary educational requirements for police officers may place an over-reliance on the police academy as a venue for obtaining all the skills necessary to effectively police in a democratic society. While a police academy is necessary to teach recruit officers mechanics of the job, they often fail to educate students on the softer skills required in the real world (Shipton, 2022). Policing in the 21st century has become a complex task that

gravitates away from the traditional model of policing that tended to rely on reaction rather than community collaboration. The new societal shift in demands for responsive police forces dictates a need for enhanced skills that foster community engagement, empathy, cultural competency, and cohesive problem-solving initiatives (Shipton, 2022).

The existing literature indicates that traditional police academies have slowly adapted to the changing social environment, if they have adapted at all. Instead, the teaching environment of the typical police academy is teacher-centric and quasi-militaristic in the approach to instruction on police-related mechanics such as arrest, defensive tactics, firearms training, and nuances of the law (Shipton, 2022). Understanding this dynamic call for the necessity of a post-secondary education through which a police applicant can learn and adopt the skills that modern-era society demands of its police officers.

Another factor that may influence the slow adoption of post-secondary education is police officers and police leaders' perception of its necessity. There is limited research on the subject, and what does exist indicates a wide range of opinions on the topic, with some officers adopting a positive view of higher education and others perceiving that institutional knowledge gained on the job as more valuable (Williams et al., 2019).

Hilal et al. (2013) notably researched the perceptions of police officers' opinions toward the utility of post-secondary education in municipal law enforcement and advocated for its necessity as result. However, the researchers cited the scope of their study being restricted to only police officers in Minnesota as a limitation of the existing literature on the subject (Hilal et al., 2013). Often those who argue against post-secondary educational requirements cite the lack of scholarly data supporting a correlation between improved police performance and a college degree (Hilal et al., 2013). This literature review assimilates much of the existing literature for a

better understanding of the limitations of the current literature on the topic of post-secondary education's impact on the policing profession.

Theoretical Framework

Related Literature

Critical Decision-Making

Defining critical decision-making is necessary to understanding its criticality to the policing profession. Critical decision-making is essentially the ability of an individual to synthesize stimuli including experiences, education, learned traits, and perceptions to solve a problem or determine a course of action. Often morality and ethics factor into this process and inform the final outcome (Howes, 2017). Through applying logic and experience, coupled with emotional intelligence, individuals reach an intellectual point of decision-making (Verhulst & Rutkowski, 2018). Critical thinking relies on one's ability to assimilate information through analysis by questioning and contemplating all aspects of an issue before reaching a conclusion (Friedman et al., 2019). Human response is naturally instinctive, and a critical thinker's reaction is not less instinctive. However, it is more informed based on the individual's innate ability to assess the presented information mindfully and being well-informed (Friedman et al., 2019). Additionally, Howes (2017) theorizes that the ability to think critically at a high level of performance is often attributable to attaining a college degree. Succinctly applied to municipal policing is the understanding that police officers must demonstrate an aptitude for decision-making in highly unpredictable scenarios wherein the room for failure is minimal and potentially presents life-altering consequences for either the officer or the citizen (Verhulst & Rutkowski, 2018). The intensity and uncertainty of volatile police-citizen encounters require those police

officers to employ more naturalistic thinking skills (Mangels et al., 2020) that can result in positive or, unfortunately, deadly outcomes.

Furthermore, Howes (2017) argues that learning critical decision-making skills through a college education is necessary if the status quo of the criminal justice system is to be effectively challenged and changed to be more equitable and procedurally just for all stakeholders. To achieve this end, it is crucial for those entering the criminal justice system to be able to perform higher levels of analysis than what is traditionally learned in grades one through 12 of the public education system. Therefore, the need to acquire these skills is relegated to college campuses and university curricula (Chikeleze et al., 2018).

One facet of post-secondary education that informs the development of higher-level thinking is using scholarly debate in the classroom. Through this medium of education, students gain experience in reviewing evidence and social contexts to develop reasoned arguments for or against a particular viewpoint. Scholarly debate enhances students' capabilities through perceptive thought and group work instead of thought development in isolation. As employers have indicated, these qualities are highly desirable in college graduates (Chikeleze et al., 2018). In their research of debate as a form of effective university education, Chikeleze et al. (2018) theorize that this is of a particular benefit to occupations in social sciences, including criminal justice jobs.

Other scholarly research, such as that conducted by Dealy (2020), theorizes that the active learning models in use in university settings contribute to better soft-skills development. Dealy (2020) further theorizes that the study of wrongful convictions proves beneficial for students considering criminal justice careers as it gives them the ability to make sound judgments based on a personal investigation of available evidence. Additionally, such collegiate projects

expose students to the nuances and intricacies of the complexities of the American criminal justice system. Such exercises also allow students to examine evidence such as witness statements, forensic evidence, and written reports to develop arguments either for or against conviction. Developing this knowledge before employment may benefit those desiring careers in law enforcement and other criminal justice-related careers by giving them an advantage over applicants who have not been afforded similar experiences (Dealey, 2020). Dealy (2020) further indicates that a greater societal benefit may result in students developing a deeper understanding and appreciation for victims.

The ability to reason is at the core of sound decision-making. It is imperative to a successful existence in all walks of life. Ingrained in the human brain is the ability to make conscious choices based on stimuli, data, and experience. In the workplace, critical thinking is a necessary skill desired by employers. Research conducted by PayScale, Inc. revealed that 50 percent of employers list a lack of critical thinking skills as their top complaint with newly hired employees (Friedman et al., 2019). A lack of ability to reason through a situation or process makes an individual less valuable to many employers. As will be addressed in this chapter, the ability to think critically is even more important for a police officer.

While a lack of critical thinking skills may be undesirable in the corporate marketplace, often the ramifications are less severe. This does not necessarily hold true for law enforcement. Poor decision-making by an officer that leads to unjustified use of force can have dire consequences for both officer and the police department. This rings especially true when the situation involves the use of deadly force unjustly against a citizen. The United States Department of Justice (DOJ) has placed several police departments under consent decrees of DOJ monitors after such incidents have been proven to occur. Often these consent decrees and

federal monitoring come with multi-million dollar price tags that cities like Albuquerque, Ferguson, and Baltimore can scarcely afford (Mangels et al., 2020). Financial concerns alone should not compel the argument for better decision-makers within police ranks, but it should be considered in the totality of the negative impacts that poor critical thinking skills produce.

Concerning thinking more critically, higher educational attainment has been attributed to increased societal benefits. Studies indicate that post-secondary education impacts such phenomena as human rights, inequality, and crime in a community. Additionally, a higher education level often informs a higher degree of valuable contribution to society. This dynamic is often found in individuals between the ages of 29-33 (Doyle & Skinner, 2017). The results of Doyle and Skinner's (2017) research hold significance in the argument for post-secondary education for police officers. Following the researchers' model to education at large, understanding the value of one's role in society as a police officer likely contributes to enhanced performance as a police officer. Additionally, the age range of 29 to 33 is significant because many frontline police officers engaged directly with the public fall broadly into this category.

One body of research found that police officers with higher educational levels were more likely to make procedurally just decisions when dealing with individuals suffering from a mental health crisis. Essentially, police officers with college degrees were far more likely to refer an individual to mental health professionals, while officers with lower educational levels were more likely to resort to arresting the individual or treating the situation as insignificant (Hilal et al., 2013). Research conducted by Mangels et al. (2020) of a major metropolitan police department in the United States concluded that educational background, in addition to the level of police experience was a factor in making decisions that mitigated escalation of a scenario. In their

study, the researchers found that experts and those with higher education levels outperformed their peers at rates of between 15 and 40 percent (Mangels et al., 2020).

Critical thinking and ethical decision-making are relational. The interrelationship between the two often informs how many universities structure courses designed to teach ethics. This connection is evidenced by many institutions relying on philosophy studies to fill the ethics niche (Friedman et al., 2019). Although this is a medium used by many higher education institutions, it is not necessarily reflective of the views of many researchers on the subject of ethics education. Friedman et al. (2019) state that research proposes that ethics should be taught with an emphasis on understanding the cognitive process that informs decision-making; or through courses built around behavioral ethics as opposed to philosophical models.

Allowing for Friedman et al.'s (2019) argument for a correlation between ethical decision-making and critical decision-making being skills attained at an institution of higher education, it can be argued that a police officer could benefit from this skill acquirement in the same format. This speaks to the criticality for police officers to be cognizant of their physiological responses to dynamically change situations (Bennell et al., 2021) with experience in post-secondary education contributing to a higher thought process level.

A concern with a lack of critical decision-making ability is the distortion of facts in assessing a problem or situation (Friedman et al., 2019). To make an ethical decision, one must be able to employ logic and reasoning to the set of facts presented. This requires critical thinking ability (Friedman et al., 2019). The decisions and actions must be informed by a framework built upon a logical set of facts. This becomes more important when considering that police officers often must respond quickly when presented facts may only vary slightly from what may be routine and inform a different path for the officer making the decision (Harman et al., 2019).

Not only must the officer make decisions, but they are also provided wide latitude of discretion while making those decisions. As a result, discretionary policing has become a topic of much debate in today's society, which informs the need for the modern police officer to possess even higher critical-thinking skills than the police officers of the previous decades (Haberfeld, 2016).

In policing, this has become increasingly more relevant. Modern policing is data-informed. Processing a large amount of statistical information has become common in municipal police departments to make decisions on staffing, deployment, and problem-solving initiatives. With a large amount of statistical data comes the necessity to logically process the data instead of taking a statistic at face value. Statistical findings should be evaluated with a critical examination before acceptance. Unfortunately, many people lack the critical thinking capability to challenge the conclusions presented to them confidently. To mitigate unethical behavior with statistics, Friedman et al. (2019) suggest including ethics in undergraduate statistics courses. Integrating this into college courses could develop the critical thinking ability of police officer recruits pursuing a post-secondary education before entering the job market or enhancing their police skills.

In the digital age, information is disseminated rapidly, both to law enforcement and those in the private sector. Because of this abundance of instantly available information, it is even more important for police officers and police policy-makers to possess the necessary critical and ethical decision-making abilities to process and appropriately apply the knowledge for the betterment of society (Friedman et al., 2019). With this ability, police officers will be more likely to make fair and unbiased judgments because they critically process the information before making decisions (Friedman et al., 2019).

The ability to think critically is just as, if not more, essential for the police leader as it is for the police officer. Organizations rely on their leadership to make reasoned decisions that align with their mission (Werner & Bleich, 2017). Leaders must have clarity when deciding on a course of direction. This is accomplished through critical decision-making. Werner and Bleich (2017), indicate several factors that should be present in a critically thinking and ethical leader. These factors include but are not limited to intellectual humility, intellectual courage, empathy, integrity, and fair-mindedness (Werner & Bleich, 2017). As police officers rise through the ranks into managerial positions, the need for critical-thinking skills becomes compounded as their decisions have a cumulative effect on the police officers who report to them. The development of this leadership skill begins before a police officer reaches a managerial rank and is incumbent upon learning these skills before or shortly upon entering the law enforcement services. The argument could then be made that this skill necessitates post-secondary education for police officers.

Although police officers in the United States must attend police academies, there is concern that these academies do not adequately equip today's police officers with the skills they need to be critical thinkers (Makin, 2015). This inadequacy may be partially due to police academies' inability to educate recruits in reasoning skills while adhering to standards for training in legal issues, tactics, and departmental policies. Federal, state, and local governments often dictate what training must be conducted at a police academy to meet minimum standards. These standards dictate what subjects must be taught, leaving little room for adding critical-thinking courses. Mandated courses also do not typically provide variances for incorporating ethical and decision-making studies into police academies' curricula (Makin, 2015).

As society becomes more complex, police departments must add more complexity to their services through crime reduction strategies such as problem-oriented policing, community-based policing, relational policing, and procedural justice; the need for a more complex thinking police officer is created (Christopher, 2015; Makin, 2015). The addition of complex data systems and analysis such as CompStat and other intelligence-led, data-driven models also requires police officers with an ability to decipher and effectively apply the data (Makin, 2015). Increased scrutiny accompanies the increased complexity and challenges modern police agencies to keep up with adequately educating their officers (Bartkowiak-Théron, 2019).

An argument against relying on police academies as a sole provider for police officers' educational needs is the usefulness of the lessons learned in the academy. As mentioned above, there is a leaning toward the teaching of information that does not align with critical thinking. In addition, a heavy emphasis on procedures, law, and administrative procedures in a paramilitary environment can detract from encouraging a recruit to employ essential thinking once in the field (Makin, 2015).

The paramilitary structure of police departments and police training is a potential detractor from critical-thinking education. Paramilitary organizations are often structured as top-down organizations wherein the lower-level employees seek and wait for the instructions of their supervisors to make decisions. This may be an effective method for instructing police officers on physical training, operational tactics, and other complex skill. Still, it does not inform the recruit adequately on the soft skills that are often more necessary for a police officer once they are in the field (Makin, 2015). Reasoning and critical-thinking abilities run counter to a reliance on following orders from supervisors.

Today's police officers are viewed as professional service providers who have obtained an education. Scholars argue that the trend toward professionalization is a critical component of social change and can be enhanced through advanced education (Okhrimenko et al., 2020). As society has advanced, policing has moved away from the stigma of being a trade and into a professional occupation (Jones, 2015). However, the advancement in the education of police officers has not come along as quickly. Approximately one percent of police departments in the United States require an undergraduate degree (Cordner, 2018). The remaining 99 percent require only high school education or partial college attendance. Instead, these police departments rely heavily on police academies, essentially trade schools, to provide the professional education required of the modern-era police officer. This opens the door to debate the difference in training and education in preparing the recruit to become a police officer. Police academies train the skills needed to perform the job's tasks immediately. However, they do little to educate police officers on the necessary critical-thinking and ethical-thinking skills required to be the problem-solvers and decision-makers society asks them to be (Jones, 2015).

The role of modern police officers requires police organizations to become learning organizations to equip police officers better to address the ambiguous and complex issues in society. Because police academies are essentially trade schools, police chiefs and police officer's perception of the need for post-secondary education to complement in-service and police academy training is necessary to advance the policing profession.

Police Use of Force

The use of force by police is at a heightened level of scrutiny and controversy in the United States. The killings of unarmed black men at the hands of police have raised the ire and mistrust of police to unprecedented levels. In modern history, these killings have resulted in

protests that later flared into riots costing lives, injuries, and millions of dollars in damage to property in American cities. The increased scrutiny of police deaths has been brought about by technology such as cell phone cameras, expanding social media and mainstream media conversation and coverage of the incident, and an increasing willingness of prosecutors to charge police officers with crimes when an individual dies as a cause of the police officers' actions (Marenin, 2016). As a result of, or in addition to, this increased attention; social justice movements have generated organizations such as Black Lives Matter (BLM) that keep the issue at the forefront of the nation's awareness (Jennings & Rubado, 2017). Once viewed as individual events with no correlation to other police killings, lethal police uses of force have increasingly been viewed as a systemic issue in United States policing (Engel et al., 2020). Most notably, BLM has advocated for change in police policies to reduce the number of deaths associated with police-related incidents, most notably the deaths of black men. Notably, there is little research into the specific police department policies related to deaths of citizens by police and what specific changes could be made to reduce the number of deaths (Jennings & Rubado, 2017).

Police use of force is a critical subject when examining the law enforcement occupation. In a democratic society, trust in the legitimacy of the police is critically important to effective policing. Nothing can erode the citizenry's trust in their police agencies more than misapplied or unlawful applications of force (Akinlabi, 2019). Additionally, public support is critical for the funding and functioning of a law enforcement agency, particularly at the municipal level. Additionally, trust facilitates cooperation. Without public support and cooperation, a police agency would likely be far less successful in its law enforcement activities (Akinlabi, 2019). Adding to the urgency of addressing police use of force in the context of generating public support is the current groundswell of mistrust surrounding police use of force situations in the

United States. Politics and racial disparity belief systems of society have brought this issue from a simmer to a boil and are a leading social issue in modern-era America (Italiano et al., 2021). One potential cause for this is the level of scrutiny placed on today's police officers and society's generality of being unforgiving when a police officer does err, a phenomenon not experienced in most American occupations (Bennell et al., 2021). Bennell et al. (2021) propose that scholars must look deeper into preparing potential police officer candidates to effectively make decisions with fewer errors.

It is necessary to understand what constitutes police use of force in the context of studying a police officer's decision to employ it relative to post-secondary education. Engel et al. (2022) indicate that force comprises the use, or threat of use of a firearm, less-than-lethal weapons and munitions, impact weapons, chemical or irritant sprays, and use of one's body without weapons to cause physical injury or pain compliance. Notably, using the aforementioned definition produces significant findings on the frequency of force employed by police in the United States. Research indicates that force is employed in approximately one to five percent of all police-citizen encounters and the force used in those situations tends to be less severe (Engel et al., 2022). When looking to our neighbors to the north in Canada, that percentage drops even further to approximately one percent in cities such as Vancouver. Additionally, when police use of force is reviewed by oversight boards and internal affairs investigations and adjudicated through the court systems, it is often determined to be justified and necessary (Bennell et al., 2021).

Eliminating the ability of police to use force when necessary would be detrimental to deterring crime in our nation. Police officers serve in a unique occupation that separates them from other occupations by their ability and the community's expectation that they use force when

necessary to achieve a law enforcement goal (Engel et al., 2020). This is one of the many factors that make the study of the decision-making process used in force decisions critical in law enforcement studies. Additionally, the powers vested in the police create a scenario of dominance over society to achieve social order. These complex interactions when officers must employ that power, particularly in the execution of force, when juxtaposed to the notions of freedom and democracy (Italiano et al., 2021).

Enhancing de-escalation training and policies is one of the most notable changes called for by police reform advocates. With the notable expectation of implicit bias training, no other police reform has gained as much national attention (Engel et al., 2020). Not only has it become a demand from the community at large, but it was also identified in President Obama's 21st Century Policing Task Force report as an actionable item relative to reducing police use of force (Engel et al., 2020; Office of Community Oriented Policing Services [COPS], 2015). However, it should be noted that this recommendation comes with the caution that there is not yet a large body of empirical data to support de-escalation as a mitigating factor in use of force (Engel et al., 2020) Scholars, politicians, and the general public have argued that this is critical in reducing police use of force incidents. Additionally, studies indicate that many police agencies have adopted some form of de-escalation training into their curriculum for police officer training (Engel et al., 2022). A recent survey of 91 of the 100 largest police departments in the United States revealed that more than a third of those agencies had policies that specifically addressed de-escalation as a concept in the use of force continuum (Engel et al., 2020). Engel et al. (2022) theorize that incorporating de-escalation tactics lead to improved police-citizen interactions and decreased police uses of force that may result in injury to the officer or citizen. However, critics argue that an overreliance on de-escalation tactics may result in officers acting too slowly in

potentially violent situations with injurious results (Engel et al., 2022). The literature surrounding the argument for de-escalation by police informs this current body of research to the extent that de-escalation tactics are potentially tied to one's ability to think critically in a volatile situation. Therefore, understanding a college education's role in this dynamic is important to the existing literature.

Police work can be dangerous. Police officers are expected to intervene in the commission of crimes and take enforcement action on those who have violated the laws of society. Sometimes this mission brings police officers into confrontations with armed and desperate individuals who will resist capture violently. When faced with these scenarios, law enforcement officers risk assault at 12 percent higher than all occupations (Hine et al., 2016). Police officers in the United States are murdered at a rate that is three times higher than the average national occupational homicide rate. Furthermore, over 90 percent of these deaths of police officers are committed by individuals with firearms (Swedler et al., 2015). The United States is not alone in these staggering figures. Research also indicates that 22 percent of Australian police deaths result from a suspect's attack (Hine et al., 2016). Should a police officer fail to recognize and appropriately and swiftly address, an imminent threat of serious bodily injury could result in irreversible outcomes for the officer's safety, potentially resulting in the officer's death (Boulton & Cole, 2016). Additionally, research indicates that psychological stress and physiological stress contribute to the outcome of dangerous police-citizen encounters (Andersen & Gustafsberg, 2016). Anderson and Gustafsburg (2016) theorize that improved cognitive training can inform better outcomes. Statistics such as these lend credibility to the assumption that police work is dangerous, and those police officers must be given the tools and training to protect themselves and other citizens from harm. Therefore, it is critical that scholars

and policy-makers address the dichotomy between the use of force errors and one's ability to quickly and accurately assess a situation to determine the appropriate amount of force used. Additionally, this must be addressed in such a way as to reduce the potential for error while maintaining a safe environment for the police officer (Bennell et al., 2021). This also leads to the necessity of exploring perceptions of post-secondary education for police officers.

As alarming as these statistics are, much of the day-to-day work police officers encounter does not routinely put them in armed confrontations. Much of what police officers do in modern society has less to do with law enforcement and more with social control concerns—having become the default agency for problems encountered in communities when solutions are not easily discerned on an around-the-clock basis. As such, police use of force and armed assaults on police officers is rare (Marenin, 2016). One might argue that given the low number of occasions police utilize force and the even lower number of citizen deaths associated with the police's use of force, there is no need to spend substantial time invested in researching and correcting this dynamic. However, any such assumption would be fallacious as any loss of life at the hands of a police officer invested in the public's trust should be examined to mitigate future incidents.

Much of the current research involving police officers' use of force concludes that multiple factors influence their decision to employ force in their duties (Jennings & Rubado, 2017). Factors include the agency's culture, the dynamics of the community receiving the police services, the racial makeup of the community, and crime rates. Also thought to be included with those factors is the robustness of a municipal police department's training program and the educational level of the involved police officer (Jennings & Rubado, 2017).

In their research on college education's correlation with improved policing at the municipal level, Hilal et al. (2013) theorize there is also a correlation between education and an

officer's decision to use force in tense situations. Specifically, the researchers indicated that officers with higher levels of educational attainment were less likely to employ physical force in situations than a similarly situated officer with a lower level of education. Additionally, officers with post-secondary education were much less likely to use deadly force against a resistant subject than officers who had no education beyond a high school diploma. Equally significant, officers without college degrees were the subject of citizen complaints, with those complaints being sustained at higher rates than officers with four-year degrees (Hilal et al., 2013).

Predominately, research on police use of force has focused on the two areas of personal and psychological motivators (Jennings & Rubado, 2017). Instead of emphasizing policy inadequacies, as advocated for by BLM, this approach focuses on police officers at the individual level. That does not discount the need to focus on organizational structure, culture, or policy. However, it rounds out that focus by examining the individual police officer's life experiences (professional and personal), personality, attitude, education, and demographics (Jennings & Rubado, 2017). A study of police recruits in an investigation found that the effects of organizational structure, culture, and policy play a role in an officer's decision to use force, but that role is limited in duration. However, the officers' views that they brought to the department through experiences, attitudes, personality, and education were more prominent and lasting in their decisions to employ force against citizens (Jennings & Rubado, 2017).

Significantly, research has found that higher incidences of use of force by police officers are directly associated with four characteristics of police officers. These four characteristics are a lower level of education of the involved police officer, the experience level of the police officer, an attitude of the police officer that demonstrates a more favorable view of force, and the officer's negative worldview of the citizens within the community (Jennings & Rubado, 2017).

An interesting, albeit confusing, result came from two studies of the relationship between police use of force and police training hours. These two studies discovered those police departments that required more training hours than average also experienced higher incidences of deaths of citizens by police officers (Jennings & Rubado, 2017). This dilemma indicates a need for additional research into in-service police training and police-related deaths. This dynamic may imply a need for a more robust educational experience than provided through police academies and in-service police training. It could be possible that the breadth of the undergraduate educational experience could broaden the police applicant's worldviews, reasoning abilities, and attitudes would make them more inclined to view in-service training with a more critical context than that of an officer with less educational experience.

Communication Skills

In 2014, the United States was galvanized by the presumably unjustified deaths of four African American men at the hands of American police (Tyler et al., 2015). The deaths of these men, identified as Eric Garner in New York, Michael Brown in Missouri, Ezell Ford in California, and Walter Scott in South Carolina, set a flurry of protests and calls of action into motion across the country (Tyler et al., 2015). As a result, President Obama formed a task force to assess and realign trust in policing in the United States. The task force's final report is titled "The Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing" (COPS, 2015) and made several recommendations for improving police-community relations. Out of this report came key principles required to start toward a path of improvement. These four principles were: (1) the need to treat all individuals with respect by the police, (2) approaching decision-making from a neutral viewpoint, (3) being transparent in motives to show trustworthiness, and (4) providing citizens with an opportunity to be heard during police encounters (Mazerolle & Terrill,

2018). Each of these principles centers on effective communication skills demonstrated by police officers. Another outcome of the task force's report was a recommendation that police agencies should incentivize higher education to achieve these goals (Rosenfeld et al., 2018). The current body of research supports this assertion, often noting the intrinsic value of learning communication and critical thinking skills through college curricula (Marciniak & Elattrache, 2020). However, opposing viewpoints argue that these skills may be better learned in the field as a working police officer and through on-duty training programs such as procedural justice training (Marciniak & Elattrache, 2020).

Communication is a critical skill for any employee, regardless of occupation. This is evidenced by hiring agents and managers across the spectrum of business, and government agencies routinely list this as a necessary skill in job descriptions (Chikeleze et al., 2018; Coffelt et al., 2019; Ortiz et al., 2016). Many employers contend that effective communication skills are critical in environments that have the potential to be volatile or violent due to the uncertain nature of the situation. The modern-era workplace has seen an increase in the need for employees across all spectrums to have the skills necessary to diffuse tense situations (Chikeleze et al., 2018). If this skill is critical in business, it stands to reason that its criticality is even more pronounced in policing in a democratic society where citizens' rights and lives are at stake (Rosenbaum & Lawrence, 2017). Kinsella and Waite (2020) list communication skills as one of the most critical skills sought by local government hiring managers when interviewing college graduates for occupations in the municipal workplace, particularly within a police department. When it comes to interpersonal communication, police officers must incorporate these skills as they mediate disputes between individuals, approach people in a mental health crisis, console victims of crime, interact with a broad range of criminal and non-criminal subjects, and navigate

through encounters with members of society who possess diverse backgrounds in race, ethnicities, and religious beliefs (Rosenbaum & Lawrence, 2017). Communicating effectively with minority communities is critical to establishing rapport between police and the communities they serve (Adegbile, 2017).

Human nature makes it understandable that those who must comply with a directive of a police officer that runs counter to their desires will often result in conflict and dissatisfaction. This makes police-citizen interactions trying encounters that can often result in citizen dissatisfaction with the police. However, this level of dissatisfaction can be decreased if the encounter and the perception that the police officer was fair, empathetic, and impartial (Adegbile, 2017). To achieve this, police officers must learn and employ interpersonal communication skills if they do not already possess them before joining the policing services (Rosenbaum & Lawrence, 2017).

This perception of fairness, empathy, and impartiality, combined with providing citizens with an opportunity to have their voices heard during an encounter and, if feasible, before enforcement actions are taken, is known as "procedural justice." Procedural justice gives police actions a higher level of legitimacy in the community. It, therefore, results in a higher level of compliance that does not require the use of force to achieve. Social scientists have further identified the element of treating individuals with respect as critical in conjunction with fairness and voice (Rosenbaum & Lawrence, 2017).

If the answer to police officers and police chiefs' perspectives on post-secondary educational requirements is that communication skills are enhanced through attending and graduating from a university, then another question must be answered. The next question would be, do universities prepare students with these skills? A global review of employer perspectives

on communication skills taught in universities should be conducted to inform that question. Research indicates that employers expect graduates to enter the workforce with communication skills in 4 modes. These are written, oral, visual, and electronic (Ahmad & Pesch, 2017; Coffelt et al., 2019).

When speaking about written communication skills, employers expressed a desire for applicants to enter the workforce upon graduation with an advanced capability in communication. However, employers also expressed that a lack of good written communication skills and grammatical acumen damaged a writer's credibility (Ahmad & Pesch, 2017). This skill translates to the policing profession in that documentation of incidents and events is a primary function of the police. Just as in the business setting, effective and accurate written communication is necessary.

Employers also identified oral communication skills as a necessary trait of a student entering the workforce (Coffelt et al., 2019). In the need for oral communication skills, an emphasis was placed on the need for behavioral-oriented communication skills that translated into employees' abilities to engage with others in rapport building. This has substantial implications for the same need in municipal policing. As mentioned previously in this section, effective oral communication skills are critical to social order maintenance and procedural justice.

The final two modes of communication mentioned as necessary by employers were visual and electronic communication skills (Coffelt et al., 2019). There is a void in the research on the precise nature of visual and electronic communication skills that employers desire (Coffelt et al., 2019). However, anecdotally, a conclusion may be drawn between this skill set and police

officers' ability to process the growing volume of crime and social data to produce electronic reports and communicate effectively through emails and text messages.

As the literature review indicates, current research calls for effective communication skills in policing. However, the research also suggests that this skill set is not adequately addressed in the current curriculum offered in most police academies (Rosenbaum & Lawrence, 2017). Because of this dichotomy, it is necessary to gain the perspectives of police officers and police chiefs on the need for post-secondary education for those entering the municipal police services to address the void in interpersonal communication skills.

Proponents of post-secondary education for police officers align a bachelor's degree with enhanced communication skills. Hilal et al. (2013) attribute a higher degree of understanding of others' positions as a correlation to a four-year degree and argue that the relevance is significant for policing. Primarily, the significance relates directly to the need for police officers to work in diverse communities with people of different cultures and ethnicities. Strong communication skills are necessary for police officers to work effectively with their co-workers, superiors, and the diverse communities they are called to serve (Hilal et al., 2013; Kinsella & Waite, 2020). Enhancing understanding is attributable to higher education is a critical component of policing (Hilal et al., 2013).

Police Turnover Rates

The turnover rate refers to the number of employees leaving an organization regardless of the reason (Hilal & Litsey, 2019). This is also known as attrition in some academic literature. Turnover impacts every organization. Employees leave organizations for various reasons. For the purposes of this study, turnover can be defined as both voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary turnover accounts for attrition due to an employee's decision to leave the workplace. This can be

due to many factors ranging from job satisfaction issues to career changes (Allisey et al., 2013). However, not all police employee attrition is decided by the employee. Some turnover is forced by the department causing it to be considered involuntary. This form of turnover could range from misconduct to organizational restructuring (Allisey et al., 2013).

Allen et al. (2016) theorize that employees become stuck at their current places of employment not out of loyalty or job satisfaction but out of an attachment, albeit negative, to their current surroundings. While positive embeddedness can increase the performance of an organization because of management support, incentives, or job satisfaction, negative embeddedness can adversely impact an organization's culture when employees dislike the working condition but are too entrenched to consider leaving the organization (Allen et al., 2016). Jabeen et al.'s (2020) research adds to the existing literature on this topic and their indication that organizational support is a driving factor for turnover decisions. Therefore, it is crucial to keep this dynamic in mind when researching education related to police department culture and turnover rates.

Understanding a police officer's decision to leave a department or factors contributing to involuntary departure has implications beyond societal concerns. Fiscal concerns also drive the need to examine turnover causation. Allisey et al. (2013) discovered that the departure of a police officer within their first five years of service contributed to a large sum of financial expenditures that are considered wasted. Estimates indicate that the attrition of an officer costs a police department between one and five times the average annual salary of a police officer (Mourtgos et al., 2021). Additionally, attrition within police agencies is a significant issue that impacts many communities globally (Allisey et al., 2013). Contributing to the high-cost factor of police turnover rates is the extensive training required to onboard police officers. Recruiting and

vetting processes are lengthy and expensive. Additionally, some jurisdictions require training before taking the streets as a police officer can last up to 24 months (Allisey et al., 2013). These contributing factors inform a need to understand police turnover and the potential relationship of post-secondary education in mitigation.

The deaths of Michael Brown, George Floyd, and other unarmed black men have contributed to the call for better education for policing, as indicated in President Obama's task force recommendations (COPS, 2015). Arguably, the increased scrutiny on policing has contributed to an increased attrition and turnover rate in America's police departments. After the death and subsequent riots surrounding George Floyd, the Minneapolis Police Department witnessed the voluntary departure of approximately 100 police officers. The Chicago Police Department reported an increased attrition rate of 15 percent, and the New York Police Department saw police officer departures double in only one year (Mourtgos et al., 2021).

Police departments, like any other place of employment, experience turnover. However, as previously mentioned, the heightened scrutiny on law enforcement in modern-era policing has increased the volume of employees leaving the profession. A study of police turnover indicates that planned and foreseeable retirements account for approximately 50 to 60 percent of police officer attrition, with voluntary resignations accounting for the second highest number of departures (Charman & Bennett, 2021). The latter is often more problematic than the former, given that resignations are more difficult to foresee and plan for by recruiting new officers to fill the void. Furthermore, the current global social climate and increased attitudes of public hostility toward police have sullied departments in their recruitment efforts. There are fewer police officer applicants entering the workforce. Charman and Bennett's (2021) research indicates that police agencies are receiving fewer applicants than vacancies that need to be filled by qualified police

officers. This phenomenon is not exclusive to the United Kingdom. Police departments in the United States report similar recruitment concerns (Morrow et al., 2019).

Voluntary turnover is significant to the communities affected by police staffing shortages. Reduced staffing numbers increase crime rates (Mello, 2019; Mourtgos et al., 2021). Studies suggest that both violent and property crimes are connected to police officer turnover rates (Mourtgos et al., 2021).

Another factor potentially related to increased police officer attrition is the inability to gain promotions. Post-secondary education has positive benefits in the arena as well. Post-secondary education has proven connected to increased career progression (Hilal et al., 2013). Additionally, officers studying for promotional tests tend to have an advantage due to the better study habits developed during their college careers (Hilal et al., 2013).

Further contributing to the crime issue associated with turnover is the loss to the community on multiple levels. The loss of tenured police officers results in a loss of institutional knowledge and advanced skills in favor of lesser skilled and educated police officers (Hilal & Litsey, 2019; Mourtgos et al., 2021). Fewer skilled officers can snowball into decreased productivity and service quality, ultimately contributing to slow emergency response times, problem-solving initiatives, and decreased public trust (Mourtgos et al., 2021).

It may not be as directly tied to educational requirements, but police chief turnover warrants discussion in the overall context of police officer turnover rates. As previously discussed, a high turnover rate may negatively impact the morale of a police department because of, in part, more workload and reduced service to the community (Li & Brown, 2019).

Understanding this factor, it is significant that a study of Texas police chiefs found that the

average tenure for police chief at a municipal police department was between four and six years (Li & Brown, 2019).

Turnover intentions are not relegated to only rank and file officers. Strain and harmful factors are impactful for police managers as well. Therefore, it is critical to understand the intentions to leave among these managers when attempting to understand the turnover intention of lower-ranking officers (Andreescu & Vito, 2021).

This quick turnover rate is significant for the community and the police organization. Compared to other governmental leaders, the police chief of a municipal police department often has a high level of social impact both in profile and decision-making authority regarding the safety and quality of a community. Police chiefs must set the tone and culture of their departments and attend to the needs of their police officers and the needs of the community in which they serve (Li & Brown, 2019). Given the complexity of a municipal police chief's roles, the argument can be made that the need for highly educated police chiefs is necessary.

A police chief with high-level critical and ethical thinking skills is likely more adept at meeting these various needs than a poorer-performing police chief with fewer skills (Li & Brown, 2019). According to Li and Brown's research, high-performing police chiefs are less likely to experience turnover at the same rate as police chiefs with mediocre performance. This need for an educated police chief, which establishes tenure at a police department, can positively impact the culture of the department and the community's satisfaction with the police (Li & Brown, 2019).

Summary

Chapter Two provided an explanation of the manner in which the literature was conducted and the nature and source of references used to examine the question of the perception

of police chiefs and police officers regarding post-secondary educational requirements for police officers. Because of this discussion, it is evident that perceptions of professionals in municipal policing, specifically police chiefs and police officers, is imperative to inform the future of hiring practices of municipal police departments when considering education-based qualifications for the position of a police officer. Chapter Three addresses the methodology of conducting a qualitative study with police chiefs and police officers regarding their perceptions of the benefits of post-secondary education requirements for police officers. The manner in which the data was collected is explained in further detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

Multiple methods could be employed to gauge the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the need for a post-secondary education before employment. It is imperative to determine the appropriate methodology to conduct the research in a manner that provides the most significant benefit to municipal law enforcement policymakers and human resource managers. Traditionally, a large proportion of studies conducted in criminal justice are quantitative (Oliveira, 2019). Quantitative analysis is valuable to researchers and practitioners, and in many instances, the preference for a quantitative study may not adequately meet the needs of the study. This is true when the research addresses individuals' perceptions, as in the case of this study.

More extensive utilization of quantitative research does not translate into qualitative research being a substandard analysis method. On the contrary, many social scientists rely heavily on qualitative research to better their respective disciplines (Opsal et al., 2015). A qualitative study was conducted because of the limitations of the quantitative research method

for the topic of police chiefs' and police officers' perceptions of post-secondary education. However, assessing practitioners' perceptions in municipal law enforcement through qualitative research can benefit police departments with actionable hiring practices. This belief is based on research indicating that qualitative studies often lead to some form of action based on acquiring the knowledge gained from the study (Greason, 2018).

Qualitative research is understandably subjective (Twining et al., 2017). This study acknowledges that perceptions of police chiefs and police officers may be subjective to their own experiences and levels of education. Qualitative research is intended to inform the opinions of those in law enforcement. The researcher believes that this study, in conjunction with other studies on the topic and quantitative research, will broaden the body of research on police officer education. Although subjective, the methodology used in this research is intended to gain insight based on the experiences of the police chiefs and police officers based on their personal experiences. This approach allows more than one interpretation of the results that would otherwise be missing with a quantitative study (Lamb & Tarpey, 2018).

The research aimed to explain the perceptions of the need for post-secondary education for police officers. An explanatory approach is appropriate because it enhances understanding of the connection between theory and practice (Cornelissen, 2016). When conducting this form of qualitative research, it is necessary to do so with the intent of explaining the connection between factors. In this case, the relationships between post-secondary education and the four previously stated questions may explain the perceptions.

This study used a questionnaire-style format. As previously stated, the research aimed to gather the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers from a broad spectrum of municipal police departments in the United States. The questionnaire covered the four basic questions that

formulate the theory. These questions, or themes, include post-secondary education related to critical decision-making, police use of force, interpersonal communication skills, and police department turnover rates. Within these areas, the questionnaire contained specific questions relative to each to understand how police chiefs and police officers view the relationship to post-secondary education.

Questionnaires are a valid method of qualitative research. However, scholarly studies indicate that research conducted through interviews provides more insight than surveys ("Using Questionnaires in Research on Universities: Analysis of Experiences from a Situated Perspective.," 2019). Presenting police chiefs and police officers with an interview-styled questionnaire elicits in-depth responses from the participants that might otherwise be lost in a survey-styled study. Another benefit of the interview questionnaire is that it allows the participants to give context to their beliefs and motivations for their responses (Xerri, 2017).

This chapter addresses the method by which the research was conducted. This chapter also justifies employing the qualitative analysis method to gather the data required to form a hypothesis. Finally, a discussion on the ethical considerations of conducting this study is included.

Design

The overarching purpose of this research was to study the necessity of post-secondary education for police officers before employment with a municipal law enforcement agency. Specifically, the study aimed to determine the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the need for this education to perform the job of a police officer. Additionally, this research provides insight into what practitioners in law enforcement believe to be a minimum education level for a police officer. Research on the education levels of police officers is not new

to criminal justice studies (Vespucci, 2020). However, there appears to be a void in the literature regarding how professionals working in law enforcement view the need for higher levels of education for police officers.

Often, the most appropriate area for the use of qualitative research is when a social phenomenon needs investigation or explanation (Tehrani et al., 2015). The study employed phenomenological research through a qualitative analysis of perceptions of municipal law enforcement practitioners. Specifically, those practitioners are the police officers in the field engaged in the hands-on business of police work and the executive level police chiefs who employ, train, monitor, and guide those police officers.

A qualitative approach is best suited for this phenomenological study for various reasons. Qualitative research is designed to understand and assimilate the feelings and thoughts of the participants towards a certain phenomenon. In this study, the phenomenon is perception of college education, or lack thereof, in relation to critical skills needed to be an effective police officer. A qualitative methodology is the medium through which these perceptions are best understood. Qualitative research observes the subject matter naturalistically and in an interpretive manner. Additionally, it is designed to bring meaning to the perceptions through interpretation and analysis; a critical component of any study based on perceptions (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

A deeper dive into the nuances of phenomenological study requires the identification of what type of phenomenological approach is best suited (Gill, 2014). A transcendental approach is best suited for the purpose of studying police officer and police chief perceptions toward post-secondary education in relation to job performance. Transcendental phenomenology informs the necessity of the researcher to “transcend” their personal belief systems and assumptions about

the phenomenon in the pursuit of understanding. A suspension of assumptions creates a more accurate, and therefore more trustworthy and credible, body of research (Gill, 2014).

The researcher, understanding there may be assumptions made based upon professional experience in the law enforcement field, has employed a transcendental phenomenological approach to this study (Gill, 2014). As such, it is the perceptions of the participants that inform the results of the research. To achieve this goal, the use of interviews and surveys best informs perceptions and eliminate researcher assumptions.

The interviews with the selected police chiefs contained close-ended questions only for the purpose of achieving background data such as agency size, specific educational requirements of the department, etc. Additionally, the interviews with the police chiefs contained open-ended questions to elicit qualitative data on their perceptions of a college education for police officers. The surveys provided to sworn law enforcement police officers included the qualitative method of an open-ended survey for the officers. While there are similarities between the interviews and surveys, the survey for police officers focus on personal and peer-observed experiences and the police chief interviews focus on organizational observations from the viewpoint of a chief executive officer. The police chief interviews were conducted via phone calls. The police officer surveys were presented in an online format using the cloud-based software *SurveyMonkey*.

Research Questions

For this research, four qualitative research questions (RQ) were established. The research questions were:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police officer's critical decision-making process?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police officer's utilization of use of force?

RQ3: What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police officer's interpersonal communication skills?

RQ4: What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police department's turnover rate of police officers?

Participants and Setting

Properly selecting a valid population of participants is critical to the reliability of the research. To achieve validity, seven police chiefs were identified to participate in the study. Additionally, the police chiefs were asked to identify non-ranked police officers within their respective agencies to participate in the questionnaire. This method of solicitation presented a minimum of 52 participating police officers.

However, randomly selecting police chiefs for participation is not rigorous enough to justify the data collection results. Geographic location within the United States and police department size can also influence participant views. The International Association of Police Chiefs (IACP) provides an excellent framework for establishing the data collection participants to give the required demographic diversity. The geographic locations and size of the police departments participating in the study were dispersed evenly throughout the United States and consisted of mid-size and small municipal police agencies. The geographical division is consistent with the IACP's division of police agencies into the four geographical divisions of Mountain Pacific, North Central, North Atlantic, and Southern (International Association of

Chiefs of Police [IACP], n.d.-b). Police chiefs were selected from each region. The size of the agencies used for the study was assimilated from large police departments, mid-size police departments and small police departments.

This researcher understood that collecting the required amount of data was feasible due to the availability of association with the selected participants through the IACP. Additionally, the large number of members of the IACP provided a large pool of potential participant candidates.

Procedure

Documentation was submitted to Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to selecting and contacting participants for this study. Additionally, this researcher reviewed the code of ethics for the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS, n.d.). Included in these guidelines and adhered to in this research are the core principles that include causing no harm to participants, recognizing, and mitigating the potential for harm, and ensuring anonymity for research participants (ACJS, n.d.). The structure of the interviews and surveys as well as the method for delivery adhered to the guidelines of the ACJS and the IRB. Addressed in the following sections are detailed explanations that address how informed consent, privacy, and anonymity were obtained. Additionally, each participant was informed, in writing, that their consent could be withdrawn at any time and their participation was voluntary.

Informed Consent

The researcher provided participants with necessary information regarding this study to ethically gain their informed consent to participate in the study. The informed consent information provided to participants explained the purpose of the study, identified the researcher, potential uses of the study, and how the individuals were selected for participation. Additionally, each participant was advised of the approximate amount of time necessary to complete the

survey. The anonymous nature of the survey assured those surveyed were at very minimal risk for their participation. Additionally, each police chief and police officer that chose to participate was required to acknowledge consent (via a check box contained within the online survey that allowed the participant to continue once informed). The required acknowledgment ensured that participants understood the need to read and grant consent prior to completion of the survey.

Privacy

All participants were informed that their responses would remain confidential. The identities of the police chiefs were known only to the researcher. However, their individual identities were protected and no personal information about any participant was collected by the researcher. Instead of identifying the police chiefs and agencies by name, they were each labeled with pseudonyms that only described them as Chief one through Chief seven. Each agency was categorized by their IACP regional designations of Mountain Pacific, North Central, North Atlantic, and Southern (International Association of Chiefs of Police [IACP], n.d.-b). No personal identifying information was collected from any individual participating in the study.

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

The purpose of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) is to ensure that ethical standards and procedures are adhered to in any research involving human or animal participants. In compliance with this requirement, the researcher completed the necessary IRB forms and submitted them to Liberty University's IRB. The approved application (Appendix A) was received prior to beginning this research and prior to contacting any participating police chief or police officers.

Researcher's Role

Scholarly research informs that often the researcher embarks on a study to understand the phenomenological world that they occupy either through occupation or other environmental factors (Lewis, 2015). The researcher conducting the study is not an exception to this theory. The researcher is a police chief with over 28 years of experience in municipal policing. Ten of those years have been as police chief. As a practitioner, the researcher has observed the performance of police officers who both have and do not have post-secondary degrees. This casual observation, in part, generated the interest in the research.

Additionally, through IACP membership and the very nature of being a police chief in the United States, the researcher has developed a professional acquaintance with some of the police chiefs who will participate in the study. However, the researcher eliminated the potential for bias in the data collection and analysis through transparency, the anonymous nature of the research, and the methodology used to conduct the research.

Data Collection

In this study, the research used interviews and questionnaires to survey the participants. Additionally, reflexive memoing by the researcher rounded out the triangulation to ensure trustworthiness. As previously stated, the purpose of the study was to gather the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers from a broad spectrum of municipal police departments in the United States. The interviews were conducted with the police chief of each participating department. Subsequently, the questionnaires were distributed to non-ranking officers within those departments. The questionnaire's theme follows the four questions proposed earlier. These questions, or themes, include post-secondary education related to critical decision-making, police use of force, interpersonal communication skills, and police department turnover rates. Within these themes, the questionnaire contained specific questions relative to each to understand how

police chiefs and police officers view the relationship to post-secondary education. The body of literature regarding the use of surveys in qualitative research informed the decision to employ this methodology. Both open-ended and closed-ended questions were utilized in formulating the questionnaire. This manner of research is generally an acceptable method of data collection (Jain, 2021).

Data collection is critical to establishing the validity of the research. It is equally important for the collected data to be accurate (Zozus, 2017). Additionally, the process through which the data is managed is critical to conducting a rigorous study. The data in this research was managed in a multistage process beginning with data identification, definitions, data acquisition through the interview and questionnaire process, analysis, reporting, and sharing of data (Zozus, 2017).

When collecting data through the questionnaire format, it is important to consider the context. This also accounts for bias alleviation. It can become easy for a researcher to have tunnel-vision and focus on supporting data while either consciously or unconsciously dismissing data out of context or that does not validate the hypothesis (Walker, n.d.). Employing the transcendental phenomenological methodology mitigates the potential for researcher bias in this study.

Police Chief Interviews

Police chiefs were identified via the geographical and demographical parameters as addressed previously. Upon agreement to participate, the police chiefs were contacted via phone or email (Appendix B, Appendix C) given their individual preference. Each was provided the informed consent form via email that required a signature for participation prior to the interview. Open-ended questions were applied to determine agency-specific demographical information

such as agency size, educational requirements, etc. Additionally, the police chiefs were interviewed regarding their perceptions of a college education as it related to the four research questions. This method of data collection was employed to elicit a robust response from each police chief. The open-endedness allowed for the flexibility for the chiefs to expound on their responses and perceptions. Additionally, it provided the researcher an avenue to solicit information for clarity through follow-up questions. At the conclusion of each police chief interview, the researcher emailed the participating police chief a link to the online *SurveyMonkey* portal to disseminate to officers within their respective departments.

The police chief interviews (Appendix G) consisted of the following questions:

1. How many years have you been a police chief?
2. What is your highest educational level?
3. Please tell me about your department structure. How many sworn personnel do you have? What are your divisions (patrol, detectives, etc.)?
4. What is the required educational level for employment at your department?
5. Does your department keep data on the number of officers who have a college degree, or do you know the percentage of degreed versus non-degreed officers in your department?
6. Does your department offer educational incentives through specialty pay or tuition assistance?
7. What is your department's annual attrition rate?
8. From your personal experiences, do you feel a college degree has enhanced your career?

9. From your experiences as a manager of police officers, do you believe a college education plays a role in enhancing an officer's interpersonal skills?
10. From your experiences as a manager of police officers, do you believe a college education plays a role in a police officer's use of force decision-making process?
11. From your experiences as a manager of police officers, do you believe a college education plays a role in a police officer's critical decision-making process?
12. Do you believe there is a relationship between a college degree and a police officer's job satisfaction and decision to leave a police department.
13. Thank you for your time. I appreciate your responses and believe they will be very beneficial to my research. Is there anything else that you think would be important for me to know about this topic?

Questions one through seven are general knowledge-seeking questions designed to obtain demographical information needed to assess and evaluate the data gained through open-ended questions and the police officer surveys. This ensures validity of the data instead of relying merely on open-source documentation to elicit the information (Zozus, 2017). Additionally, it is beneficial in rapport-building between the participant and the researcher.

Question eight was designed to move the interview from demographical fact gathering to more perspective thought on the part of the participant. It is a transitional question that shifted the mental state from mere data to a more interpretive format that is necessary in the participant's reflections in questions ten through fourteen (Englebert & Carruthers, 2010). The remaining questions are the heart of the research and sought the perceptions of the police chiefs interviewed on the topic of post-secondary education.

Police Officer Surveys

Police officer survey links (Appendix D, Appendix E) were distributed by the police chiefs or their designees to a minimum of ten police officers in their respective departments. The link was to the online cloud-based survey tool *SurveyMonkey*. The landing page of the survey tool displayed the informed consent disclaimer (Appendix F) and a check box acknowledging that the participant had read, understood, and agreed to consent to the study. The participant was not linked through to the questions until selecting to do so after reading the consent form. Additionally, participants were informed that they could withdraw consent and stop the survey at any time by closing out of the browser without completing the acknowledgement page at the end of the survey. Additionally, the participants were reminded that their participation was completely voluntary, and that no personally identifiable information would be collected. The survey contained seven questions that incorporated yes/no questions. The design of the questionnaire was to elicit self-reported assessments of the participants as well as reflections on the necessity of a college degree for police officers in general. The participants were advised prior to starting the survey that it would take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

The online police officer survey (Appendix H) consists of the following questions:

1. In what ways, if any, does having a college degree enhance an officer's abilities as it relates to interpersonal communication skills?
2. In what ways, if any, does having a college degree play a role in preparing an officer for use-of-force decisions?
3. In what ways, if any, does having a college degree play a role in preparing an officer for making critical decisions on the job?
4. In what ways, if any, does a college education play a role in an officer's decision to stay or leave a police department?

5. If you do not have a four-year degree, how likely are you to continue your education?
6. If you have a four-year college degree, how do you feel it has benefited you in your career as a police officer?
7. Do you have any other comments you would like to provide?

Reflexive Memos

The third method of data collection to complete triangulation employed a reflexive memo process. Reflexive memos were critical to the transparency and trustworthiness of this study, given the researcher's experiences in law enforcement and higher education. Recording reflexive memos alongside the data from the interviews and questionnaires ensured rigor and proved critical to alleviating judgment or personal bias (Miller et al., 2018).

Additionally, employing a reflexive memo provided an audit trail that enhanced the study's credibility and transferability. This researcher's memos were a source for understanding the decision-making process, acknowledgment of bias where it may have occurred, and an account of the coding process. By bracketing the researcher's experiences parallel to the participant's views, objectivity in the data analysis was assured (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Data Analysis

In a phenomenological qualitative study, the experiences and perspectives of the interviewed subjects must be analyzed to understand their context fully. In this study, the participants provided their views on the value of post-secondary education as it relates to critical aspects of municipal police work. Before beginning the data analysis process, the interviews were transcribed into a written format (Appendix I). The online surveys with the police officers were download in an Excel format (Appendix J).

Coding is critical to qualitative research and is best suited for understanding the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding post-secondary education. A progressive process to link themes across the collected data proved invaluable to understanding these perceptions (Glesne, 2016). This researcher hand-coded the interviews and questionnaires as described in the following sections.

First Cycle Coding

The interviews and questionnaires were coded by hand to identify themes that directly related to understanding the participants' perceptions. In this cycle of coding, the general themes were categorized. Additionally, the research involved the reflexive memo process to ensure trustworthiness and mitigate bias in theme development.

Second Cycle Coding

The second coding cycle was designed to develop themes and organize those themes in a manner that allowed the researcher to look for patterns and comparisons (Glesne, 2016). This coding cycle was necessary to discover themes and phrases that appear with more regularity or significance. Completion of the second cycle of coding allowed the researcher to assimilate the research analysis.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a critical component of any study. It is more complex and nuanced when the research is qualitative. A particular concern relative to qualitative research is the propensity toward researcher bias. This is often due to the researcher being the instrument through which the study is conducted (Jones & Donmoyer, 2021). Additionally, the avoidance of confirmation bias is critical to establishing research trustworthiness (McSweeney, 2021). To achieve rigor, it is imperative that the researcher rely on a depth of data (Elo et al., 2014).

To achieve trustworthiness, the research must adhere to certain standards. These standards include a necessity for the data analysis to be thorough, precise, and consistent. Additionally, the way the study is conducted must be thoroughly explained and detailed to ensure credibility, dependability, and transferability (Nowell et al., 2017).

To achieve trustworthiness, the researcher employed an interview that sampled the perceptions of seven police chiefs and an online survey tool that sampled 52 police officers. The use of both interviews and surveys adds to the trustworthiness of the study. Additionally, the depth and breadth of the research across multiple police departments across the United States ensured rigor and trustworthiness.

Credibility

It is critical to establish credibility in qualitative research. Credibility comes in the forms of tenacious observation, triangulation, and rigorous exposure to the subject material (Morse, 2015). In-depth examination can be achieved through assessing multiple viewpoints of the phenomenon being studied. Therefore, assimilating and assessing the viewpoints of multiple participants adds to the rigor and credibility of the research (Alexander, 2000).

The triangulation of the data by using various resources, namely police officers and police chiefs from multiple geographical areas of the United States, ensured an adherence to rigor and credibility of the study. The diversity of the participants' locations, as well as diversity between officer level participants and executive level participants further ensured credibility. This diversity greatly reduced, if not eliminated all-together, cultural norms and ideologies that might arise from sampling only officers from one agency or geographically location. Additionally, assessing viewpoints from two divergent perspectives (police officers and executive level police chiefs) proved to further ensure rigor and credibility.

As mentioned previously, interviewing multiple police chiefs and anonymously surveying police officers reduced the potential for researcher bias to factor into the study. Each question in the surveys sought the perception of the participant without influence or guidance from the researcher.

The researcher has an extensive history of conducting studies in both their professional and academic careers. As a veteran police officer and police administrator, the researcher has had multiple decades of experience in researching complex issues to inform a wide range of solutions. These issues and solutions have ranged from law enforcement policy development and strategic planning to participation in developing law enforcement best practices at the national and international level through participation on various research committees through IACP membership and appointments.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability and confirmability address the consistency of the research. It is necessary for a body of research to be prone to replication to ensure validity. Additionally, the data must support the findings with a high degree of consistency (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The conclusions drawn from the study must be repeatable if a similar study were conducted with the same participants and within the same contextual framework (Forero et al., 2018).

Additionally, confirmability is a necessary element of a rigorous study. It is critical to strive for objectivity in qualitative research with an understanding that bias can alter results in a less rigorous environment. To achieve confirmability, it is essential that the collected data must be accessible and replicable (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The methodology as well as the data collected for this study was thoroughly detailed in terms of instrumentation used as well as copies attached in the appendices.

Transferability

For a study to be transferable, it must be replicable in another context, in another setting, and with a different set of participants (Burchett et al., 2013). The detailed explanation of the methodology for data collection and analysis in this study comport to transferability for any potential studies seeking to replicate the current research.

Ethical Considerations

This researcher's professional involvement in municipal law enforcement must be considered. Social scientists and police chiefs have historically had competing views on how research should be conducted, why it is performed, and what the study's outcomes should achieve (Cowburn et al., n.d.). The concern stems from a theory that research into the field of policing is best accomplished by independent researchers with no affiliations with the profession (Cowburn et al., n.d.). These concerns are further broken down into four areas: the motivation of the research, the level of potential harm, consent concerns, and the level of influence of the researcher (Cowburn et al., n.d.).

The use of the questionnaire format is another ethical consideration. It is critical that the participants, especially the police officers, decide if they desire to participate without feeling compelled to do so because they have been asked to join by their police chief. This autonomous decision-making ability is necessary to maintain the scientific integrity of the study (Hammer, 2017). Privacy is a concern as well within the context of the autonomous decision of a participant (Hammer, 2017).

Summary

This study sought to understand the perceptions of police officers and police chiefs towards post-secondary education's benefits for a purposeful career in law enforcement. As

detailed in this chapter, a rigorous data sampling was sought across a wide swath of geographical locations and perspectives. The transcendental qualitative analysis approach proved useful in understanding the phenomenon and establishes trustworthiness and transferability for future studies.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

As previously discussed in preceding chapters, policing in the United States has become a complex phenomenon that requires unique skill sets for police officers to meet the demands of modern-day society effectively. Interpersonal communication skills, critical decision-making, and use of force decisions are predominant. Additionally, intent to leave employment as a police officer and a connection with attainment of post-secondary education warranted evaluation.

Chapter four presents the researcher's findings about the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding a connection between post-secondary education and the four above-mentioned phenomena. The data was collected via two methodologies. For the police chiefs, interviews were used. To gather the requisite data from police officers, an anonymous survey was done through the *SurveyMonkey* online platform. The researcher analyzed the data and developed themes from the interviews and surveys. The researcher employed reflexive memos and two data coding phases to ensure rigor and validity.

A qualitative approach was used in this body of research for two reasons. Quantitative research would not have fully facilitated the need for a deeper understanding of the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers. This is because the opinions expressed by the participants are subjective and deserve a more nuanced study. Additionally, qualitative research can inform future decisions for practitioners in municipal policing. It is common for qualitative research to

be translated into actionable items that law enforcement leaders can take based on the results of the study (Greason, 2018).

Participants

To achieve validity and a thorough analysis of perceptions across the spectrum of municipal police departments, participants were selected from both police chiefs and non-ranking police officers. This distinction was important to finding a balanced approach to the research. It is not uncommon in any workforce for the administration (police chiefs) and the workers (non-ranking police officers) to have differing views on what is necessary or desirable for job performance (Penning de Vries et al., 2020). Therefore, comparing and contrasting the perceptions of both groups proved instrumental to achieving a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon.

Police Chiefs

Participating police chiefs were selected from the four primary regions designated by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, commonly known as the IACP. These regions were identified as Mountain Pacific, North Central, North Atlantic, and Southern (International Association of Chiefs of Police [IACP], n.d.-b). One police chief from the Mountain Pacific region, three police chiefs from the North Central region, one from the North Atlantic region, and two from the Southern regions participated in the study.

Additionally, this researcher's professional experience as a veteran in municipal policing informed that perceptions may also vary across department sizes. To achieve a balance of opinions, the researcher included departments of varying sizes to query for the purposes of this study. Of the seven police chiefs interviewed, three led departments of 100 or more police officers, and four led departments of 99 or fewer officers.

To achieve complete anonymity, the police chiefs were assigned pseudonyms of Chief One through Chief Seven and were only identified by their region, tenure as a police chief, education level, and authorized police officer staffing levels. As an additional safeguard to ensure anonymity, larger city police chiefs were not selected because of the limited number of cities with large police forces. This dynamic would have made identification of those chiefs much easier, and they were necessarily excluded.

Chief One

Chief One was a 36-year veteran of municipal policing. However, this chief's career progressed slower than that of other chiefs interviewed. This chief indicated that they had worked at more than one police department before becoming the chief at their current agency. Chief One was in his fourth year as a police chief at the time of the interview. Chief One's department consisted of an authorized strength of 118 police officers and was located in the Southern region. Chief One's department was a full-service municipal law enforcement agency with multiple divisions assigned to patrol work, community service, a detective division, and a traffic division. Chief One had earned a master's degree prior to the interview.

Chief Two

Chief Two was a 15-year veteran of municipal policing. Chief Two indicated that they had spent their entire law enforcement career in their current department and rose through the ranks in various divisions before being selected for the position of chief of police. Chief Two had been the police chief for two years at the time of the interview. This chief's department was composed of 81 officers and located in the North Central region. Chief Two's department was a full-service municipal law enforcement agency with multiple divisions assigned to patrol work,

community service, a detective division, a special response unit, and a traffic division. Chief Two had earned a master's degree prior to the interview.

Chief Three

Chief Three was a 20-year veteran of municipal policing. This chief had also spent their entire law enforcement career at one agency, having achieved the rank of police chief after being promoted through the ranks of the department. Chief Three had been the police chief of the department for approximately three years at the time of the interview. This chief's department was composed of 55 police officers and was located in the North Central region. Chief Three's department was a full-service municipal law enforcement agency with multiple divisions assigned to patrol work, community service, a detective division, and a traffic division. Notably, Chief Three is the only chief interviewed who had less than a master's degree. They did have a bachelor's degree.

Chief Four

Chief Four was a 35-year veteran of municipal policing. This chief had also spent the majority of their law enforcement career at one agency, having achieved the rank of police chief after being promoted through the ranks of the department. After serving in that department for 15 years, this chief transferred to another police department and led that agency for three years prior to the interview. This chief's department was composed of 71 police officers and was located in the North Atlantic region. Chief Four's department was a full-service municipal law enforcement agency with multiple divisions assigned to patrol work, community service, a detective division, a special response unit, a bomb squad, and a traffic division. Chief Four had earned a master's degree prior to the interview.

Chief Five

Chief Five was a 19-year veteran of municipal policing. Chief Five indicated that they had spent their entire law enforcement career in their current department and rose through the ranks in various divisions before being selected for the position of chief of police. Chief Five had been the police chief for two years at the time of the interview. This chief's department was composed of 104 officers and was located in the Southern region. Chief Five's department was a full-service municipal law enforcement agency with multiple divisions assigned to patrol work, community service, a detective division, a special response unit, and a traffic division. Chief Five had earned a master's degree prior to the interview.

Chief Six

Chief Six was a 32-year veteran of municipal policing. This chief had also spent the majority of their law enforcement career at one agency, having achieved the rank of police chief after being promoted through the ranks of the department. After serving in that department as the police chief for 10 years, this chief transferred to another police department and led that agency for 5 years prior to the interview. This chief's department was composed of 368 officers and was located in the North Central region. Chief Six's department was a full-service municipal law enforcement agency with multiple divisions assigned primarily to patrol work, community service, a detective division, a special response unit, a bomb squad, a violent crime task force, and a traffic division. Chief Six had earned a master's degree prior to the interview.

Chief Seven

Chief Seven was a 28-year veteran of municipal policing. This chief indicated that they had worked at more than one police department before becoming the chief at their current agency. Chief Seven was in his tenth year as a police chief at the time of the interview. Chief Seven's department consisted of an authorized strength of 80 police officers and was located in

the Mountain Pacific region. Chief Seven's department was a full-service municipal law enforcement agency with multiple divisions assigned to patrol work, community service, a detective division, and a traffic division. Chief Seven had earned a master's degree prior to the interview.

Table 1

Police Chief Demographics

Pseudonym	Region	Years as Chief	Education Level	Authorized Staff
Chief One	Southern	4	Master's degree	116
Chief Two	North Central	2	Master's degree	81
Chief Three	North Central	3	Bachelor's degree	55
Chief Four	North Atlantic	18	Master's degree	71
Chief Five	Southern	2	Master's degree	104
Chief Six	North Central	368	Master's degree	368
Chief Seven	Mountain Pacific	10	Master's degree	77

Police Officers

Each participating police chief was provided a link to an online survey administered through the online platform *Survey Monkey*. The link to the survey was then distributed to police officers by the police chiefs in their respective police departments. As a result, 52 police officers anonymously participated in the study. Of the participating officers, one officer did not answer questions three, five, and six, while five officers did not answer question seven.

Table 2

Number of Responses to Online Survey

Question Number	Completed Responses	Skipped Responses
1	52	0
2	52	0
3	51	1
4	52	0
5	51	1
6	51	1
7	47	5

Results

Theme Development

The theme was developed in alignment with each research question that required a phenomenological approach to be adequately answered. Both police chiefs and police officers' responses were hand-coded by the researcher to develop the relevant themes. The transcripts of the police chief interviews and police officer surveys were read by the researcher to identify emergent themes. Additionally, a side-by-side analysis was used to identify repetitive words and clusters. As these clusters were developed, the researcher made a notation of the themes developed. To develop themes around the overarching research questions, the interview and survey questions were developed to align in relation to the four research questions proposed in Chapter One of this study.

Police Chief Interview Responses

Police chief interview questions were developed in three parts. The first part, comprised of questions one through four, sought to obtain basic demographic data. This data has been discussed previously in this chapter and represented in Table 1 above. The second part, comprised of questions five through eight, was to gauge the current status of degree requirements, degree attainment assistance, the approximate percentage of officers in each department who possessed a post-secondary education, and the department's annual attrition rate. This background was designed to inform how those factors may influence the responses of both the police chiefs and police officers. The third part, questions nine through 14, sought to understand the police chiefs' perceptions as they related to the four research questions proposed in Chapter One.

Question Five asked if each chief's department had an educational requirement for acceptance as a police officer with that department. Five departments had no degree requirement before being hired as a police officer. One department required an associate's degree, and one department required completion of 30 hours of college before eligibility.

Question Six asked if each chief's department kept data on the number of officers who had post-secondary education and what the percentage was of degrees versus non-degred officers if they did collect such data. Three of the respondents indicated that approximately 50 percent of their officers had degrees; two indicated that the percentage was approximately 60 percent; one indicated a percentage of 80 percent, while one chief stated, "a significant amount," with the remaining chief stating that they did not collect that data at their department.

Question Seven asked if their departments provided any incentives for having an education. That could come in the form of incentive pay or tuition assistance. One responded that they did not. Another chief indicated they offered \$4,900 in tuition reimbursement and awarded promotional process points for college degrees. Five of the chiefs indicated that their agencies also paid tuition reimbursement for officers to continue their education. Another chief indicated they provided incentive pay for having a bachelor's degree.

Question Eight asked what their department's annual attrition rate was. Those rates ranged from seven to 19 percent. The exact numbers for each chief's department are shown below in Table 3.

Table 3

Department Demographics

	Educational requirement	Percentage of officers with degrees	Educational incentives offered	Annual officer attrition rate
Chief One	None	50%	no	6%

Chief Two	None	50%	yes	5%
Chief Three	60 hours	80%	yes	7%
Chief Four	None	66%	yes	19%
Chief Five	None	unknown	yes	15%
Chief Six	30 hours	unknown	yes	10%
Chief Seven	None	60%	yes	12%

Questions nine through 14 related to the core research questions of the study. Question nine required a personal reflection on the benefits of post-secondary education for the chiefs themselves. Questions 10 through 13 are directly related to the four research questions presented in Chapter One. The final question was designed to be a catchall question for any additional comments and proved to be the least useful question of the interview with no measurable responses.

The interviews with the police chiefs elicited two primary themes and one lesser theme. The primary themes were that post-secondary education either did or did not have an impact relevant to the research questions. The third theme was a lack of a formative opinion on the connection between post-secondary education and the question proposed.

In their personal reflections, the police chiefs overwhelmingly indicated that a college degree had enhanced their careers substantially. Each police chief stated that a degree had assisted them professionally, especially in the ability to be promoted to the level of police chief. Three of the responding police chiefs also indicated that a degree assisted them with critical thinking skills. Chief Three stated, “It has helped with my critical thinking and ability to solve complex problems.” Chief Five provided context to their assertions that a degree had been useful

in their career by stating, “One of my biggest sticking points though, is it isn’t about being smarter necessarily, but it does teach ways to think differently and exposure to different things.” Chief Six indicated it contributed to their critical thinking skills by stating, “It prepared me more for research and analysis for reaching higher level thought processes.” Finally, Chief Seven stated, “A degree has broadened my thought processes and caused me to be more analytical in my approach to solving issues faced at the administrative level.”

Research Question One

Research Question One asked, “What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police officer's interpersonal skills?” To answer that, the specific question stated: “From your experiences as a manager of police officers, do you believe a college education plays a role in enhancing an officer’s interpersonal skills?”

In response to this question, each police chief stated that a post-secondary education positively impacted an officer’s interpersonal skills. While each chief agreed that a degree did add value to interpersonal skills, some offered the caveat that a degree was not necessarily a deciding factor in one’s development of law enforcement-related interpersonal skills. The following is a synopsis of the chiefs’ responses to provide context to this overarching belief.

Chief One stated, “I think it does. The college experience enhances problem-solving abilities and helps partnership building, especially communication training. College-educated officers can talk on multiple levels. Part of that is because you often have to work well with other people to get a degree.”

Chief Two replied, “I absolutely do. It has given me better written and verbal skills. Having said that, I don’t believe you absolutely have to have a degree to be a good officer.”

Chief Three stated, “That isn’t without exception, but I think generally yes.”

Chief Four responded, “I do. One thing I see generic across the profession is that a degree facilitates good communication skills and adds the value of life experience.”

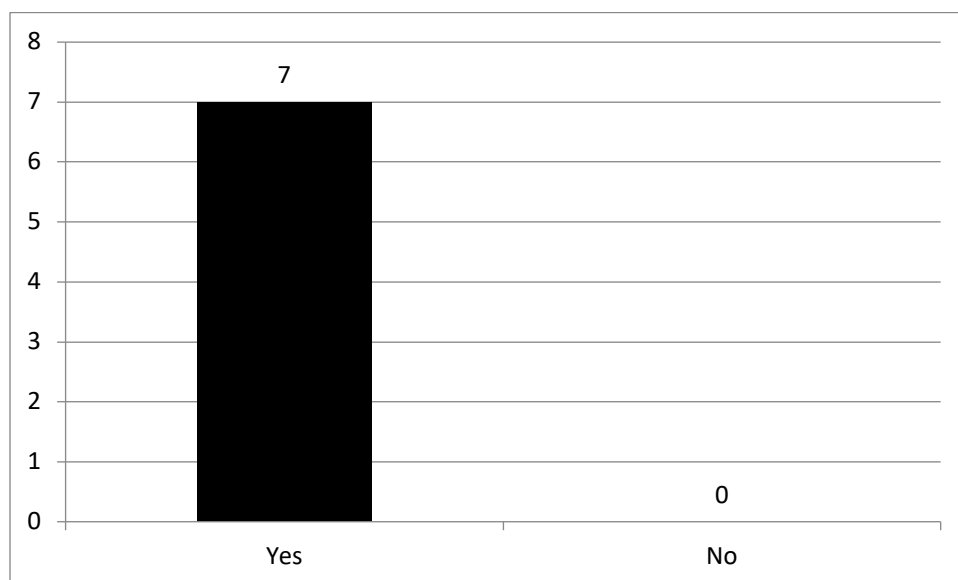
Chief Five replied, “100 percent. They have bigger ideas and can communicate more effectively.”

Chief Six responded, “Definitely so. Those with the initiative to seek out education have to interact with others at a higher level. More well-rounded and better officers in general.”

Chief Seven stated, “Some officers innately have good communication skills that are not necessarily reflective of time spent in an academic setting.”

Graph 1

Does a College Education Enhance an Officer’s Interpersonal Skills?



Research Question Two

Research question two asked, “What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police officer's utilization of use of force?” To answer that, the specific question stated, “From your experiences

as a manager of police officers, do you believe a college education plays a role in a police officer's use of force decision-making process?"

In response to this question, the police chiefs had varied views on the connection between use-of-force decisions and post-secondary education. Two of the seven chiefs believed that post-secondary education aided an officer in using force decision-making. However, three of the chiefs felt there was no connection, while two were equivocal in their responses, indicating there could be a connection, but it was not concrete. The following is a synopsis of the chiefs' responses to provide context to this overarching belief.

Chief One stated, "No. If someone has use of force issues, those are character issues. Education cannot change that."

Chief Two replied, "Maybe if they have a degree specific to criminal justice to understand the law, but not generally."

Chief Three stated, "Maybe in learning about current events. Conversations on campus can broaden one's thinking about other cultures. So yes, it also helps in understanding the impacts of those decisions."

Chief Four responded, "Maybe anecdotally because of life experiences gained through the college experience of interaction with and understanding of diverse communities and cultures. Plus, it teaches you about dealing with conflict, such as dorm life. It provides a bigger toolbox to pull from."

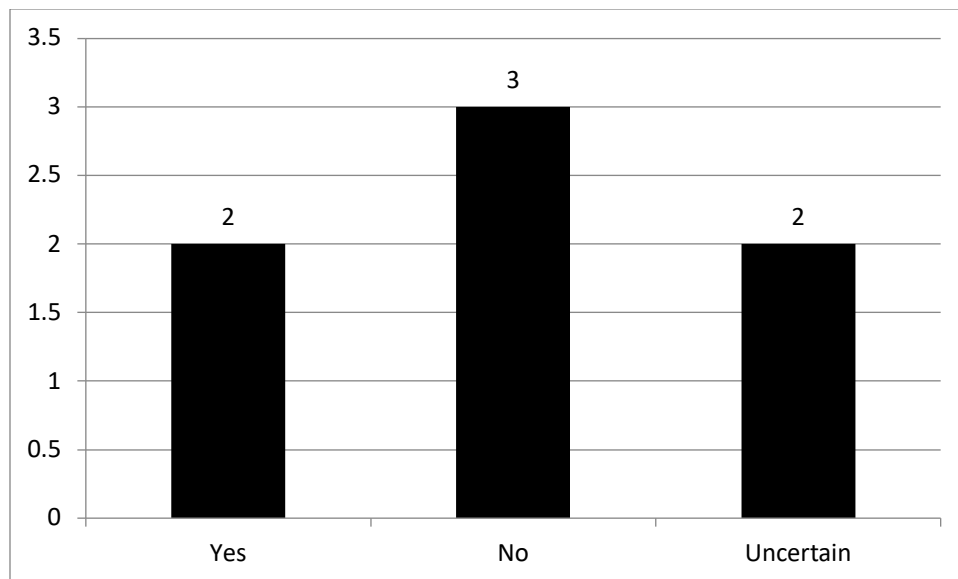
Chief Five replied, "It isn't a universal truth, but yes, it provides exposure to different cultures and people's perspectives."

Chief Six responded, “I do think so. It gives them bigger picture thinking. Not what can I justify legally, but what is the best solution.”

Chief Seven stated, “No. I don’t see a connection. Training, yes. College, not really.”

Graph 2

Does a College Education Play a Role in the Use of Force Decision-Making Process?



Research Question Three

Research question three asked, “What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police officer's critical decision-making process?” To answer that, the specific question stated, “From your experiences as a manager of police officers, do you believe a college education plays a role in a police officer’s critical decision-making process?”

In response to this question, each police chief stated that a post-secondary education positively impacted an officer’s critical decision-making process. Their responses to this prompt proved to be the most universally supported theory of the questions asked of the police chiefs. The following is a synopsis of the chiefs’ responses to provide context to this overarching belief.

Chief One stated, “Absolutely. They have better critical thinking skills and are outside-of-the-box thinkers.”

Chief Two replied, “It does help. College requires critical thinking, so it helps in that aspect. Also, it helps in writing papers, which is important in law enforcement with report writing. It also requires them not just to take things at face value.”

Chief Three stated, “Yes, for sure. It’s a big part of that.”

Chief Four responded, “College provides a larger toolbox to the officer and provides deep life experiences. College graduates entering police work are generally older and a little more mature. They also typically have a wider perspective and seek training opportunities more.”

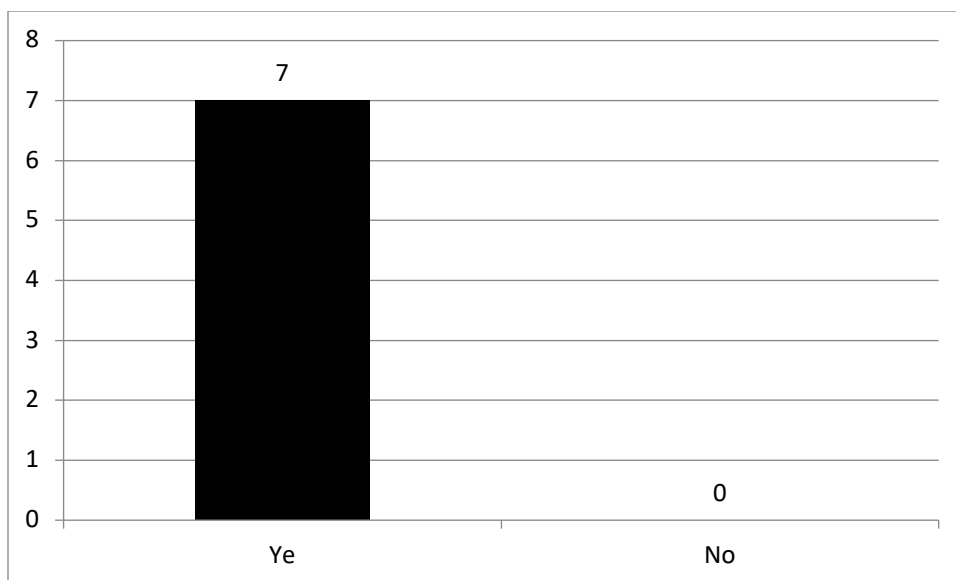
Chief Five replied, “Absolutely, for the reasons I mentioned previously.”

Chief Six responded, “Same thing. College encourages a thought process and gives them experience researching and thinking outside the box. Coming to a solution from different angles.”

Chief Seven stated, “Without a doubt. The college experience is all about making critical decisions, or at least learning to think more deeply.”

Graph 3

Does a College Education Play a Role in an Officer’s Critical Decision-Making Process?



Research Question Four

Research question four asked, “What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police department's turnover rate of police officers?” The specific question stated, “Do you believe there is a relationship between a college degree and a police officer’s job satisfaction and decision to leave a police department?”

In response to this question, the police chiefs had varied views on the connection between job satisfaction and the decision to leave a police department and post-secondary education. Four of the seven chiefs believed that post-secondary education aided a police officer’s job satisfaction and decision to leave a police department. However, three of the chiefs felt there was no connection. The following is a synopsis of the chiefs’ responses to provide context to this overarching belief.

Chief One stated, “I do. It opens more doors in the private sector for opportunities outside police work. We don’t emphasize college in recruiting; we appeal to a sense of service.”

Chief Two replied, “No. Not really.”

Chief Three stated, “Maybe to leave for other careers.”

Chief Four responded, “I’m going to give that a qualified yes. Perhaps they’ve done more research on the profession before joining and have more realistic expectations of the job. On the flip side, they have more perspective on what else is out there and provides more opportunity for private sector employment.”

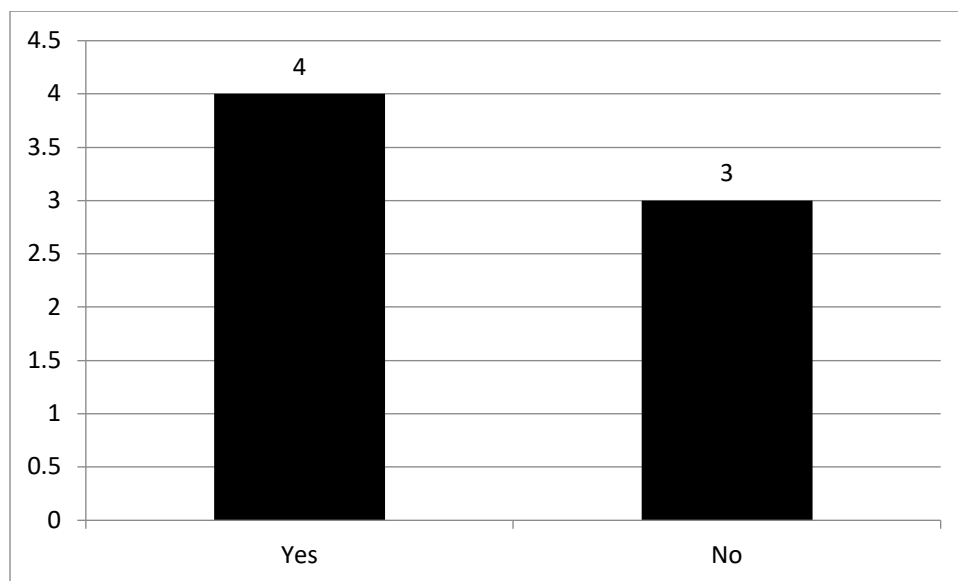
Chief Five replied, “No, I don’t really see a relationship.”

Chief Six responded, “I would say yes, but because of the opportunities it opens up. If they aren’t willing to take that step, they cannot promote, and it limits their opportunities.”

Chief Seven stated, “That is not something I’ve really given much thought to. I guess one could make that argument, but no. I do not think there is a correlation between the two.”

Graph 4

Is a College Education Connected to Job Satisfaction?



Police Officers

Police officer survey questions were developed in three parts. The first part, comprised of questions one through four, sought to understand the police officers’ perceptions as they related

to the four research questions proposed in Chapter One. The second part, comprised of questions five and six, elicit information on the participant's current post-secondary education status and intentions and assess their perceptions of how a four-year college degree had benefited them if they possessed one. The third section, question seven, was to allow the participants to add information they deemed appropriate to the research.

Research Question One

Research Question One asked, "What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police officer's interpersonal skills?" The specific question stated: "In what ways, if any, does having a college degree enhance an officer's abilities as it relates to interpersonal communication skills?"

In their responses, 29 of the police officers believed that a college degree enhanced an officer's interpersonal skills, while 23 of the officers felt there was no connection. In analyzing the responses, this researcher was able to detect two emerging themes in the participant's response to this question. The theme generated around the writing skills of police officers and their abilities to communicate in diverse groups of people.

While many held the belief that a college did not necessarily translate to interpersonal skills and that those skills could be developed through other life experiences, many of the participants did find a connection between a greater ability to articulate thoughts in writing and that of having spent time in college courses. The following quotes from participants provide context to this belief.

One participant stated in the anonymous online survey, "They become better writers and researchers." While another surmised, "It could improve an officer's grammar in report writing." Several of the participants shared this thought process, leading to a theme of college courses as a

baseline for improving one's writing skills. One police officer succinctly summarized this when they wrote, "I believe that college education makes an officer more well-rounded with better written communication skills."

Another emergent theme shared across the spectrum of the participants who believed there was value to a college education as it relates to interpersonal skills was of the ability to foster relationships and learn how to communicate with others across a diverse spectrum of society. To demonstrate this theme, one participant stated, "I feel a college degree enhances and officers' exposure to a variety of people and exposes he or she to folks on all levels. The exposure can only enhance the officer's communication skills in that capacity."

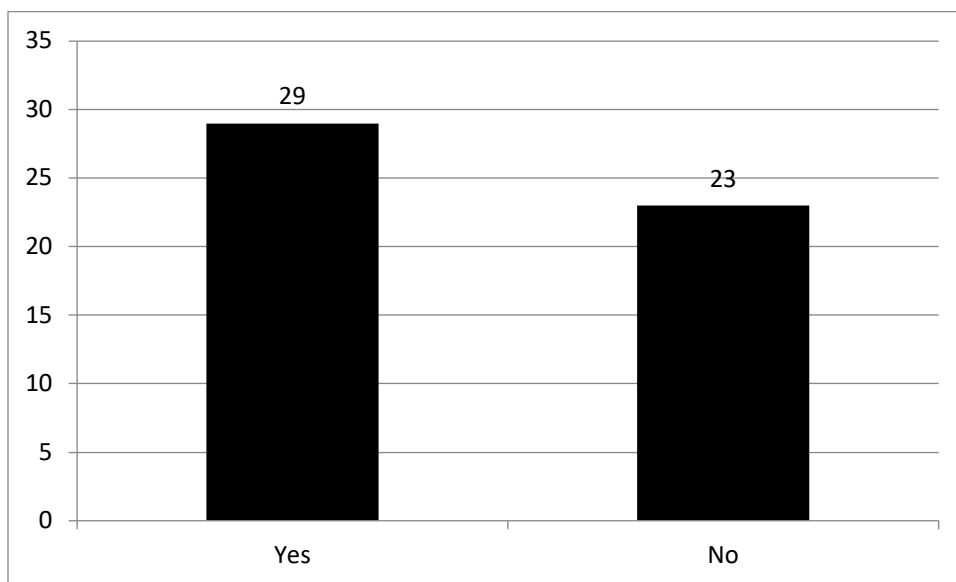
Many survey participants spoke more generally about the benefits of a post-secondary education as it related to broader communication skills. A particular participant stated, "I believe having a degree could help with this skill set by being able to relate or having knowledge of certain subjects when it comes to communicating with people. At the same time, some of the best communicators I know do not have college degrees." Another indicated, "During my time in college, I had to take speech classes. Those helped in developing more comfort in being able to talk to strangers. I also went six hours away to college." This particular theme of general development of interpersonal skills resonated through the comments of those who perceived a connection between college education and interpersonal skills.

While approximately 55 percent of the respondents did perceive a connection, a converse theme emerged from the participants who did not. That theme involved various forms of life experience and common sense as a more accurate developer of interpersonal skills. A participant illustrated this point when they wrote, "Education seems to help but common sense works better- the ability to read people." Others equated military experience in lieu of a college education as a

developer of interpersonal skills as seen in this participants comments, “I have seen supervisors with four year degrees who are horrible supervisors because they think they are automatically better than someone who spent four to six years in the military.”

Graph 5

Does a College Degree Enhance an Officer’s Abilities as it Relates to Interpersonal Skills?



Research Question Two

Research question two asked, “What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police officer's utilization of use of force?” The specific question stated, “In what ways, if any, does having a college degree play a role in preparing an officer for use-of-force decisions?”

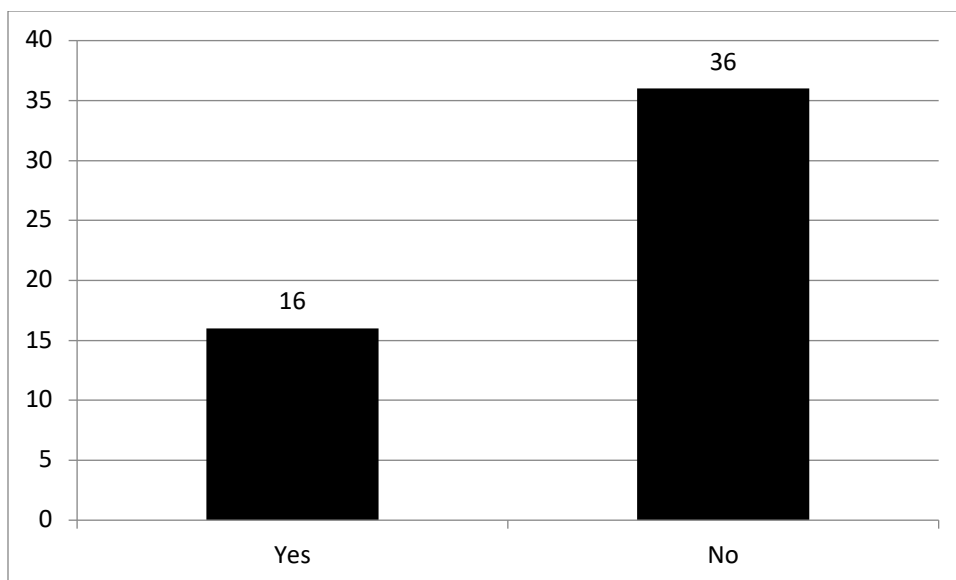
Based upon the responses from the police chiefs as noted above, this researcher anticipated the police officer responses to find little to no connection between post-secondary education and a police officer’s use of force decisions. However, the responses tended to draw a perception of a closer connection than those from the police chiefs. While the overwhelming

majority (69 percent) did not think there was a connection, the theme that developed among the 16 who did was compelling. Thematically, those participants who did sense a connection believed it was predicated on the development along the lines of decision-making enhancements in general. One participant illustrated this point with their response, “College would enhance a person's decision making skills, providing them with additional options (negotiation, de-escalation) to use in force situations.”

While there were those who saw a connection, the overwhelming majority of participants valued law enforcement-specific training to the development of this skill over that of a college education. “None. My degree has never aided me in any use of force situation” was the emphatic response from a participating police officer. Another summed up the general consensus of the participants with, “A college degree has no bearing on use-of-force decisions. Training and real-life experiences prepare the officer for these situations. If it is a reactionary issue where the officer must make a decision within seconds, they will always fall back on training. Use of force is extensively taught at the academy.” While there were the few who saw a connectedness, the general theme of this question’s response related to on the job training and police academy training.

Graph 6

Does a College Degree Play a Role in Preparing an Officer for Use of Force Decisions?



Research Question Three

Research question three asked, “What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police officer's critical decision-making process?” The specific question stated, “In what ways, if any, does having a college degree play a role in preparing an officer for making critical decisions on the job?”

The police officers’ response to this question was more evenly balance between those who did see a connection and those who did not. However, the majority still leaned toward a lack of connection with 20 holding that belief, 30 believing it did, and two respondents indicating they were undecided on the phenomenon. The emergent themes of those who did not see a connection fell back to life experience and time spent in the military. On the other hand, those who did see a connection thematically espoused the rigors of college to critical decision-making development.

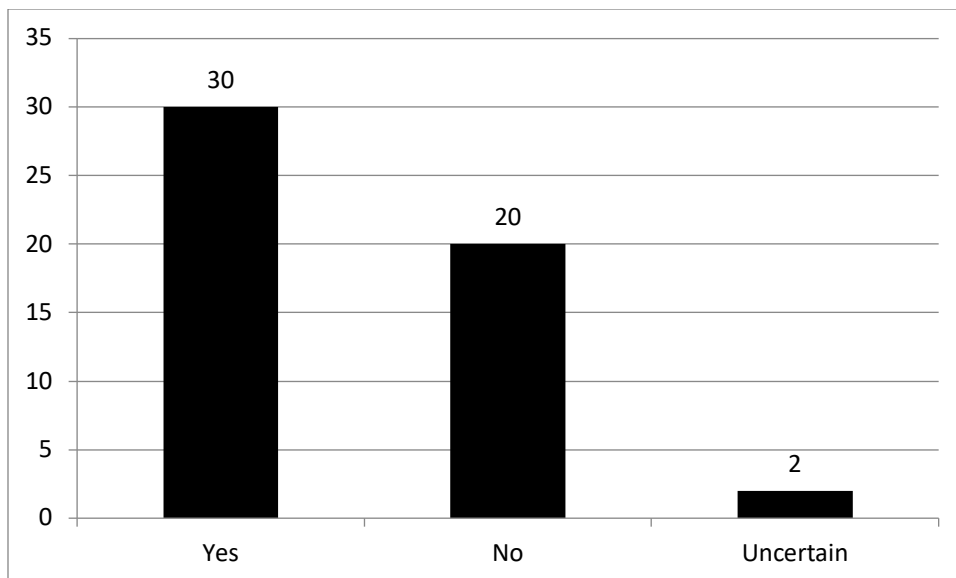
Of the 38 percent who saw no value, the following participant’s comments provide context to the theme-development: “It was military experience, prior security employment and actual police training and experience which best prepared me for making real-time critical

decisions in tense, uncertain and rapidly evolving situations.” Another wrote, “It doesn’t. I’ve seen officers with and without degrees freeze when a critical decision is necessary, and I’ve seen officers with and without degrees make decisions when needed. You can think under fire or you can’t. It depends on the person, not the degree.”

The remaining majority equally developed an emergent theme that the rigors of college did, in fact, prepare one to attain a higher degree of mastery in making critical decisions. One participant succinctly articulated this thought when they wrote, “The officer is used to working under pressure in college with numerous deadlines, projects, papers, etc., so he/she has more experience dealing with pressure. Decision-making is easier if you're used to making them under pressure.” Another theme that favored college education involved what many participants described as “big picture thinking,” as stated in the following responses, “Officers with degrees generally have higher levels of critical thinking. They are able to see things from other view point.” and “Better vision of the big picture.”

Graph 7

Do You Believe a College Degree Plays a Role in Preparing an Officer for the Critical Decision- Making Process?



Research Question Four

Research question four asked, “What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police department's turnover rate of police officers?” The specific question stated, “In what ways, if any, does a college education play a role in an officer’s decision to stay or leave a police department?”

There was an overwhelming theme in response to this question. Few, less than 14 of the participants viewed a connection between education job satisfaction and intent to leave a department. The emerging theme for those who espoused this belief was that salary was a driving factor, not an education. One participant summed this theme up by writing, “none-doesn't change salary.”

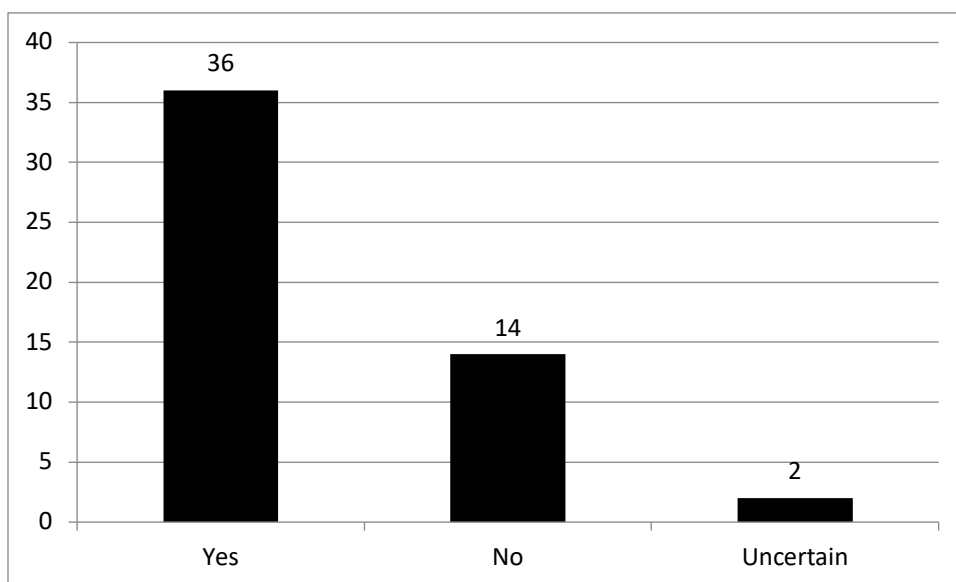
Of the 14 who did see a connection, the theme was directly related to promotability. Most comments related an officer’s ability to promote to higher ranks within the department as the connection between a college degree and job satisfaction/intent to leave a department. Of all the themes developed throughout the questionnaire, a link between post-secondary education and ability to promote within one’s department was the strongest. The following comment illustrates

this emergent theme. An officer wrote, “Officers with college degrees are more likely to seek career advancement. If they do not see rapid advancement at their current agency, then they are more likely to seek employment elsewhere.”

The secondary theme in those who perceived a link developed a theme that a college degree provided more opportunities outside of law enforcement for those wanting to leave. Symbolic of the overall theme were comments such as, “If officers are educated, they may have more options available to them and would have the confidence to seek out new opportunities.” and “Having a college education creates opportunities for officers to leave and do something else.” Additionally, along the same theme and indicative of the current climate surrounding law enforcement, one officer wrote, “Having higher education can play a large roll in an officer’s decision to continue working as a police officer. If I can get a job making more money and not portrayed as a villain by the local news why wouldn't I?”

Graph 8

Do You Believe a College Education Plays a Role in an Officer’s Decision to Stay or Leave a Police Department?



Survey Questions Five

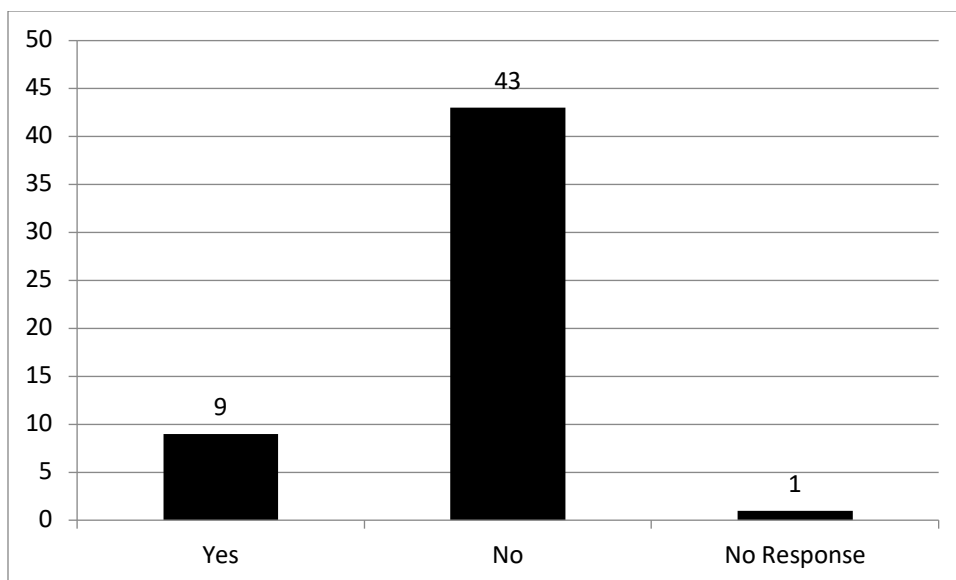
Survey question five was designed to elicit data from officers on their intentions to further their education. The survey question stated, “If you do not have a four-year degree, how likely are you to continue your education?”

This question generated nine affirmative responses, 43 negative responses, and one no response. This seems to run disproportionately counter to the previous questions regarding the value of a degree in relation to interpersonal skills, use of force decisions, critical thinking skills, and job satisfaction. The emerging theme that informed this result was about position and status in life. Many respondents simply did not feel that the benefit was not weighty enough to justify a return to college for a bachelor’s or advanced degree. A responding officer provided the summation for this theme with the words, “I am at the stage in my life that going back to college is not on the table.” Another respondent stated, “Those individuals that do not have a four-year degree by early adulthood are likely to not pursue a degree due to family/job demands.”

Of those who stated they would at least consider the option coalesced around the earlier theme of promoting to a higher rank. None of the respondents indicated that they would consider continuing their education to enhance their abilities in any of the skill set areas identified by the research questions. The theme was about job advancement only. As stated by a participant, “It would depend on if the department requires it for promotion. My department requires at least an Associate for promotion to Sergeant, so I plan on returning to school to acquire one.”

Graph 9

Are You Likely to Continue Your College Education?



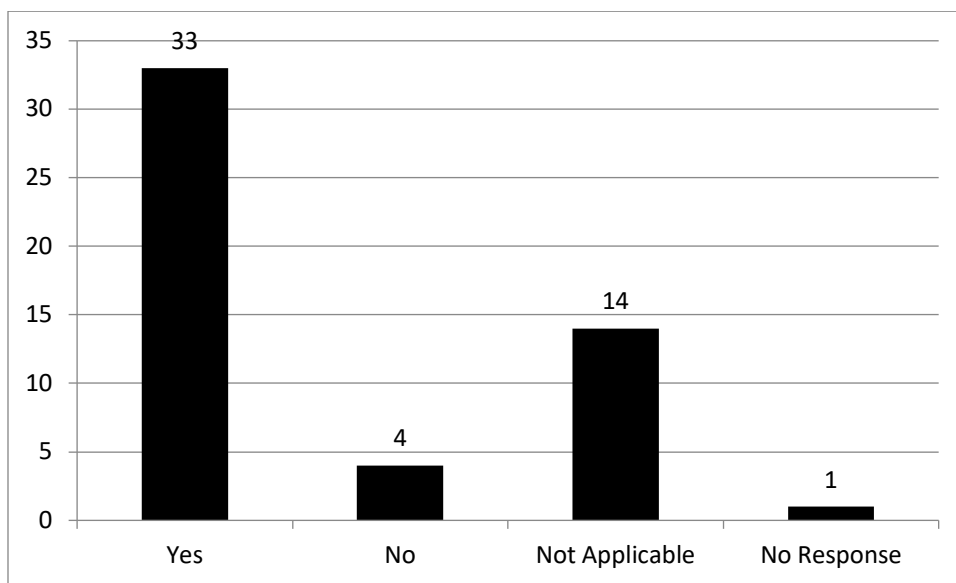
Survey Question Six

Survey question six was designed as an open-ended question to elicit responses from officers on the impact a college education has had on their careers. The survey question stated, “If you have a degree, how has a degree benefited you in your career?”

When asked this question in the survey, 33 participants stated that a degree has benefited their careers, four indicated that it had not, 14 replied that the question was not applicable to their situation, and one respondent did not answer the question. The theme that developed from this question was near universal with most respondents referencing promotion as a benefit. Only five respondents indicated that it had improved their interpersonal skills and two stated, “I think I am a better communicator, both written and orally.” and, “College exposed me to explore different sides of problems, forced me to communicate with others different from myself and get out of certain comfort zones.” Notably, the majority of the respondents referenced an ability to promote to a higher rank that a degree afforded them as evidence of the benefits. “It has probably helped me promote simply by having it on the resume.” wrote one participant, summing up the consensus of that theme.

Graph 10

Has a College Degree Benefited Your Career?



Survey Question Seven

Survey question seven was designed as an open-ended question to elicit any additional responses or comments from officers that they perceived as beneficial to the study. The survey question stated, “Do you have any other comments that you would like to provide?”

Of the polled participants, 47 answered this question with an emerging theme that a degree, while valuable, was not the only factor that influenced interpersonal skills, use of force decisions, critical thinking skills, and job satisfaction. This thought process was best summoned up by an officers response, “Education and experience combined make the best leader.”

Summary

Chapter Four presents the results of a qualitative study of the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding a connection between post-secondary educations as they relate to interpersonal skills, use-of-force decision-making, critical thinking processes, job satisfaction, and intent to leave a police department. The first section of this chapter includes an overview of

the study and demographic information on the participants of the study. Following is an analysis of the responses of police chiefs with a synopsis of their responses. The next section provides an analysis of the police officers' responses and a summation of participant responses to support the theories presented. The next chapter will provide an overview of the research, a summary of findings, conclusions from the study, implications, delimitation and limitations, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Overview

While there have been many societal calls for increasing police professionalism by requiring officers to possess college degrees in the post-Ferguson era, there is little empirical data to effectively assess the perceptions of law enforcement practitioners on the merits of these recommendations. This demand for professionalizing police forces throughout the United States promoted President Obama to form a task force to make recommendations for improving the nation's law enforcement agencies. Among the President's 21st Century Task Force recommendations was a recommendation to encourage post-secondary education for police officers (COPS, 2015). To understand the utility of this recommendation, it has become imperative for scholars to examine the efficacy and practicality of this view. Chief among those who should have input on the recommendations of increased educational requirements are the police chiefs who oversee the activities of police officers and the police officers themselves. More research needs to be conducted to understand their perspectives.

This study aimed to address the limitations of the scarcity of qualitative data. Specifically, this researcher sought to understand the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers' views on the necessity, or at a minimum, the benefits a post-secondary degree played in

critical areas of municipal policing. These four areas that informed the research questions were interpersonal communication skills, the use of force decision-making process, necessary thinking skills, and job satisfaction/intent to leave a police department.

This chapter summarizes the research findings into the police chief's and police officers' perceptions related to the four research questions. Additionally, included in Chapter Five is a discussion on the relevance of the existing literature and the implications of the study. Delimitations and limitations of this study are discussed, as is a recommendation for future research on the phenomenon.

Summary of Findings

Phone interviews were conducted with seven police chiefs of small to middle-sized police departments to determine their perspectives on the phenomenon. Subsequently, police officers from their respective police departments were solicited to participate in an online survey through the platform *SurveyMonkey*. A total of 52 police officers completed the study as requested. The questions for police chiefs and officers were designed to answer four research questions. The research questions are followed by a discussion on the insight gained from the interviews and the online surveys.

Research Question One

The first research question stated, what are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police officer's interpersonal skills? From the perspective of the police chiefs, there was a unanimous consensus that a post-secondary education enhanced an officer's interpersonal skills. Each police chief favorably supported that idea.

The police officers surveyed were less aligned than the police chiefs on this question. While a majority of officers still believed a post-secondary education played a role in interpersonal skills, 44 percent of the officers surveyed disagreed and pointed to other factors outside a college education that enhance interpersonal skills.

Research Question Two

The second research question stated, what are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police officer's use of force? The police chiefs were split on their response to this question. With two believing there was a connection, three thinking there was not, and two left uncertain, it is impossible to definitively state that there is agreement on this phenomenon at the chief level and that additional research may be required to obtain a deeper understanding of perceptions.

The consensus of the police officers was that there was little connection between an officer's decision to use force and a post-secondary education. A staggering 69 percent saw a link and attributed that decision-making process to other factors, such as law enforcement-specific training instead of the college experience.

Research Question Three

The third research question stated, what are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police officer's critical decision-making process? Much like the first research question, there was unanimous support from the police chief perspective that college education did play a role in enhancing a police officer's critical decision-making abilities.

Conversely, the perceptions and attitudes of police officers on the topic of critical decision-making could have been more solidly in favor of post-secondary education than the

police chiefs' perspective. Although 57 percent did believe there was a connection, it was not an overwhelming majority of the police officers. Those who dissented from this view also thought it was more attributable to training a prior military experience.

Research Question Four

The fourth research question stated, what are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police department's turnover rate of police officers? Again, on this question, the police chiefs were split on their perceptions, with four believing that there was a connection and three taking a position that no connection existed.

Most police officers surveyed, 69 percent, attributed job satisfaction/intent to leave a police department to a post-secondary education. The rationale largely revolved around a college degree's connection to the ability to be promoted to higher ranks and use a college education to seek careers outside of law enforcement.

Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers of a connection between post-secondary education and an officer's interpersonal skills, use of force decisions, critical thinking skills, and intent to leave their police department. Qualitative research was chosen because it more adequately gauges perceptions of a phenomenon than a quantitative approach would have achieved (Tehrani et al., 2015). The study was conducted with two groups of participants; police chiefs and police officers. This was necessary to achieve a valid result covering the spectrum of municipal police from the administration level to the first line worker level. This section contains a discussion of the

findings in relation to the connections of the theoretical and empirical literature evaluated in Chapter Two.

Theoretical Literature

There is an abundance of literature that explores the theoretical framework of college education as it relates to job performance in the private sector. However, there is a gap in the literature relevant to the specific job of policing. Policing is a unique occupation in the United States in that it is the only career that gives an employee the legal and moral authority to take away an individual's freedom, compel them to take certain actions at the command of the police officer, or to exercise lethal force in some situations. In light of this, it is equally surprising that there is a gap in the literature that explores the framework for critical thinking skills, use of force decisions, and interpersonal skills for this highly scrutinized occupation. Granted, there is a plethora of research that explores the dynamics of human thought and instinctive decision-making (Friedman et al., 2019), but there is little in existence for an occupation as singularly specific as municipal law enforcement. This study sought to fill some of that void through a phenomenological exploration of the police officer, police chief, and their perceptions.

Empirical Literature

The literature review for this study informs that communication is a critical skill for any employee, regardless of occupation. This is evidenced by hiring agents and managers across the spectrum of business, and government agencies routinely list this as a necessary skill in job descriptions (Chikeleze et al., 2018; Coffelt et al., 2019; Ortiz et al., 2016). It holds that police officers are not an exception to the need for effective communication skills. This skill set is critically important in modern-era policing where the lives of citizens and officers may be at stake (Rosenbaum & Lawrence, 2017). This body of research corroborates the importance of

interpersonal and communication skills for police officers. The interview of police chiefs confirmed an overwhelming connection between a college education and development of this critical skill for police officers. Additionally, the survey of police officers informed a significant believe that a college education enhanced an officer's proficiency in this skill set.

Police use of force is a much studied and debated topic in the United States. Incidents in recent years have kept this topic fresh in the minds of society with a propensity to view lethal police of force as a systemic issue in today's police culture (Engel et al., 2020). Many point to de-escalation as a tactic to reduce police uses of force and have demanded that this training be incorporated into police academy training (Engel et al., 2020). However, there is little scholarly evidence to suggest that police academy training is solely the appropriate venue for this curriculum. Arguably, the decision to use force is built upon a platform informed by communication skills (de-escalation) and critical thinking skills that inform the need to use force as opposed to other avenues of gaining compliance. The learning and processing of these skills align with the nature of post-secondary education.

This study produced an interesting result in the analysis of the police chiefs and police officers' perception of a college education's relevance in use of force decisions. While both groups predominately accepted that interpersonal skills and critical thinking skills could benefit from post-secondary education, they were less apt to support that use of force decisions could benefit from the same. A reliance on police-specific training informed much of this perception.

As discussed in Chapter Two, critical thinking relies on one's ability to assimilate information through analysis by questioning and contemplating all aspects of an issue before reaching a conclusion (Friedman et al., 2019). Human response is naturally instinctive, and a critical thinker's reaction is not less instinctive. However, it is more informed based on the

individual's innate ability to assess the presented information mindfully and being well-informed (Friedman et al., 2019). Practically, college campuses are bastions for exploring and developing critical thinking skills. As such, an examination of this phenomenon in relation to police officers' critical thinking skills was warranted. The results of the interviews with the police chiefs unanimously supported this proposition. Although, not in unanimous agreement, the survey of the police officers supported the existent literature on the topic.

Hilal & Litsey (2019) propose a definition of turnover as intent to leave an organization regardless of the reason. Additionally, some employees fail to leave their organizations because they feel stuck there for varying reasons (Allen et al., 2016). One such reason is a lack of opportunity for those without bachelor's degrees. This study revealed that police chiefs did not generally view a connection between intent to leave and a post-secondary education. However, the surveyed police officers took a slightly differing view. This study adds to the existent body of research by uncovering the phenomenon that police officers view a bachelor's degree as being tied to one or more of three factors: providing an ability to be promoted, providing the ability to seek a career at another department, or providing the ability to seek a career outside of law enforcement.

Implications

This study incorporated theoretical, empirical, and practical qualitative research. The phenomenological method of qualitative research was employed to conduct an analysis of the data collected. The empirical findings in this study inform the practical implications for stakeholders in municipal policing.

Theoretical Implications

This study sought to understand the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers through their worldview and develop an understanding of those perceptions based on their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Understanding these perceptions from the two divergent points of view expands the groundwork for future theoretical research. The ability of a police officer to critically and effectively make decisions in rapidly evolving, and often dangerous, situations is a critical job function (Andersen & Gustafsberg, 2016). Additionally, there has been a universal acceptance that college-educated individuals in job applicant pools proves beneficial (Morrow et al., 2019). The theoretical implications of this study examine those two viewpoints from the perspectives of police chiefs, those doing the hiring, and police officers, those being hired for the job. The results of this research seek to inform the broader body of research on the benefit, and in some instances, the lack of benefit of a college education in municipal law enforcement.

Empirical Implications

There is much demand from the public for police officers to increase their education in order to effectively serve their communities (Antrobus et al., 2018). However, there exists a gap in the literature involving post-secondary education and the job performance of police officers. Moreover, the existent literature on the subject fails to substantially address the perceptions of practitioners of law enforcement in relationship to this demand for more educated police officers. The empirical implications of this research add to the existent body of research by filling a portion of that gap. The results of this phenomenological study provide future researchers a springboard from which to take a deeper dive into a connection or correlation between the opportunities offered by college degrees and their practicality to improving the performance of police officers.

Practical Implications

This study produced an interesting result in the analysis of the police chiefs and police officers' perception of a college education's relevance in use of force decisions. While both groups predominately accepted that interpersonal skills and critical thinking skills could benefit from post-secondary education, they were less apt to support that use of force decisions could benefit from the same. A reliance on police-specific training informed much of this perception. In an ongoing effort to understand the phenomenon of police use of force, which was outside the scope of this study, scholars and practitioners can gain deeper understanding of law enforcement officers' attitudes toward the cause of use of force and a connectivity with advanced education.

Delimitations and Limitations

Understanding the delimitation and limitations of a study informs the validity of the research. Additionally, identifying the delimitation and constraints of a particular piece of analysis can inform recommendations for future investigation, as will be addressed later in this chapter.

Delimitations

Delimitations are intentional omissions in the body of research. These omissions are necessary to limit the boundaries and scope of a study to assure rigor and validity. One such delimitation of this study was the exclusion of questions seeking perceptions on the types of post-secondary education that might enhance an officer's skills. This delimitation was by design. It was necessary to understand the attitudes of law enforcement towards post-secondary education as a sum before researching the educational track that an officer should pursue at the college level. Additionally, no controls were implemented to account for the age, sex, race, or

gender of the police officers or the police chiefs. This, too, could inform future research on a more nuanced level than was intended with this study.

Another delimitation was that this study only sought to understand the perceptions of those currently working in law enforcement. There was no consideration for the perceptions of those considering a future in municipal policing or the perceptions of the community members served by municipal police officers.

The final delimitation was found in the narrow focus of the study on municipal police officers only. Many other law enforcement agencies serve the citizens of the United States, including the local, county, state, and federal levels. While there would likely be benefits to understanding the perceptions of law enforcement personnel in these other agencies, it needed to be more pertinent to this study.

Limitations

Where delimitations are intentional choices made by the researcher, limitations are potential faults with a study that are uncontrollable. The primary limitation of this study is the sample size of the participants. A more extensive sampling of police chiefs from demographically diverse communities could produce different results. This holds especially true was the research to go deeper than broad geographic regions and incorporate more police chiefs and police officers from rural versus urban communities or communities with universities versus communities without. Additionally, a larger sample size of police officers from more diverse communities could produce divergent results.

Recommendations for Future Research

Law enforcement practitioners are consistently attempting to improve the profession of municipal policing. The results of this study inform future research on the perceptions of police

chiefs and police officers regarding the necessity, or at a minimum, of the value of post-secondary education for police officers who must interact with citizens daily in times of crisis. As this study has discovered, the belief is generally held that a college education can improve a police officer's ability to improve their interpersonal skills and critical decision-making skills. Such an improvement could have overarching impacts on perceptions of police legitimacy. However, additional research would be required to assess that phenomenon.

Future research should also consider the types of post-secondary education most beneficial to a police officer. As mentioned above in the section on delimitation and limitations, this body of research should have addressed what a police officer should study at the university level to improve interpersonal and critical decision-making skills. The delimitation and limitations section of this chapter provides suggestions that could inform future research with a more nuanced study on the perceptions of citizens who have had interactions with college-educated police officers versus interactions with non-college-educated police officers. While it is essential to understand the perceptions of law enforcement practitioners, a more holistic understanding could be gained by pairing this research with community members' perceptions.

Should future research support theories that propose more education for police officers, more studies will be necessary to determine the feasibility and practicality of having post-secondary educational requirements for individuals entering the law enforcement workforce. With additional research, it is known if such a requirement would exasperate the already understaffed police departments in the United States.

Summary

This study focused on the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the value added by a post-secondary education in the four areas of interpersonal skills, use of force

decision-making, critical thinking skills, and job/satisfaction/intent to leave a police department. The researcher aimed to provide a meaningful and insightful view of the practitioner's perspectives in the municipal law enforcement field. It was imperative to gain the insight of both the working police officers and the administrators who supervise their daily tasks as police chiefs.

First and foremost, the study determined that these individuals did find merit, to some degree, in the connection between post-secondary education and an officer's ability to enhance their interpersonal skills, critical decision-making skills, and job satisfaction/intent to leave a police department at the officer level. However, the connection between post-secondary education and the use of force decision-making skills was less prominent. Also striking was that the perceptions of the police chiefs and the police officers did not fully align on the job satisfaction/intent to leave a police department question. These differences are likely based on the frame of reference from which each group viewed the question. It stands to reason that the individual policeman is viewing the question through a lens that comes from a sense of self. In contrast, the police chief, by necessity of their position, must consider the question from a more holistic view that encompasses the entire police department and its interactions with the community at large.

There is a crucial point that emerged from this study. There is some merit in studying the connection between law enforcement and higher education. The perspectives understood in this research are far from dismissing a connection. Arguably, the relationship between critical decision-making and the decision to use force deserves additional observation. Scholars and practitioners alike must recognize the phenomena uncovered by this study and others and attempt

to seek out commonalities where post-secondary education and policing can align for the betterment of society.

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Appendix A

Date: 11-30-2023

IRB #: IRB-FY22-23-831

Title: Educated Cops: A Qualitative Analysis of Police Chiefs' and Police Officers' Perceptions of the Effects of Post-secondary Education on Job Performance

Creation Date: 1-13-2023

End Date:

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: James Blair Review

Board: Research Ethics Office Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type Initial

Review Type Exempt

Decision **Exempt**

Key Study Contacts

Initial Submission

IRB Overview

Application for the Use of Human Research Participants

Before proceeding to the IRB application, please review and acknowledge the below information:

Administrative Withdrawal Notice

This section describes the IRB's administrative withdrawal policy. Please review this section carefully.

Your study may be administratively withdrawn if any of the following conditions are met:

- Inactive for greater than 60 days and less than 10% of the app has been completed
 - Duplicate submissions
 - Upon request of the PI (or faculty sponsor for student submissions)
 - Inactive for 90 days or more (does not apply to conditional approvals, the IRB will contact PI prior to withdrawal)
-

*required

- ✓ I have read and understand the above information.

Study Submission & Certification

This section describes how to submit and certify your application. Please review this section carefully. Failure to understand this process may cause delays.

Submission

- Once you click complete submission, all study personnel will need to certify the submission before it is sent to the IRB for review.
- Instructions for submitting and certifying an application are available in the IRB's Cayuse How-tos document.

Certification

- Your study has not been successfully submitted to the IRB office until it has been certified by all study personnel.
- If you do not receive a “submission received by the IRB office” email, your study has not been received.
- Please check your junk folder before contacting the IRB.

*required

- ✓ I have read and understand the above information.

Moving through the Cayuse Stages

In Cayuse, your IRB submission will move through different stages. We have provided a quick overview of each stage below.

In Draft

- The In Draft stage means that the study is with the study team (you). In this stage, the study team can make edits to the application.
 - When the IRB returns a submission to the study team, the submission will move back to the In-Draft stage to allow for editing.
-

Awaiting Authorization

- Each time a study is submitted, it will move from In-Draft to Awaiting Authorization.
 - During this stage, the submission must be certified by all study personnel listed on the application (PI, Co-PI, Faculty Sponsor). This ensures that every member of the study team is satisfied with the edits.
 - Please note, the IRB has not received your submission until all study personnel have clicked “certify” on the submission details page.
-

Pre-Review

- When your application is submitted and certified by all study personnel, your study will move into the Pre-Review stage.
 - Pre-Review means the IRB has received your submission. The majority of the IRB review occurs during the Pre-Review stage.
 - Once received, an IRB analyst will conduct a cursory review of your application to ensure we have all the information and documents necessary to complete a preliminary review. This cursory review usually occurs within 3 business days of receipt.
 - If additional information or documents are needed to facilitate our review, your submission will be returned to you to request these changes.
 - Your study will be assigned to an analyst once it is ready for review.
 - Preliminary and any subsequent reviews may take 15–20 business days to complete depending on the IRB's current workload.
-

Under Review

- Studies will only move into the “Under Review” stage when the analyst has completed his or her review and the study is ready for IRB approval.
-

*required

- ✓ I have read and understand the above information.

Finding Help

The IRB has several resources available to assist you with the application process. Please review the below information, or contact our office if you need assistance.

Help Button Text (?)

- Some questions within the application may have help text available.
- Please click on the question mark to the right of these questions to find additional guidance.

Need Help? Visit our website, www.liberty.edu/irb, to find: ●

Cayuse How-Tos

- FAQs
- Supporting document templates

Contact Us:

- irb@liberty.edu
- 434-592-5530
- Office Hours: M-F; 8:00AM-4:30PM

*required

✓ I have read and understand the above information.

*required

Acknowledgement

Please acknowledge that you have reviewed and understand the above information. You can refer back to this information at any time.

✓ I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information. Take me to the IRB application.

Project Information

*required

What type of project are you seeking approval for?

Please make the appropriate selection below.

✓ Research

- Research is any undertaking in which a faculty member, staff member, or student collects information on living humans as part of a planned, designed activity with the intent of contributing relevant information to a body of knowledge within a discipline.
-

Archival or Secondary Data Use Research ONLY

- Archival data is information previously collected for a purpose other than the proposed research. Examples include student grades and patient medical records.
 - Secondary data is data that was previously collected for the purpose of research. For example, a researcher may choose to utilize survey data that was collected as part of an earlier study.
-

Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Scholarly Project

- This option is specific to doctor of nursing practice (DNP) students' evidence-based practice scholarly projects.
-

Doctor of Ministry (DMin) Project

- This option is specific to Doctor of Ministry (DMin) student projects.
-

*required

Please indicate the primary purpose of this project:

Why is this project being proposed?

Doctoral Research

*Note: Students must enter themselves as PI and their faculty sponsor under Faculty Sponsor.

*required

Have you passed your dissertation proposal defense?

Doctoral candidates may not submit their project for IRB review until they have successfully passed their proposal defense.

Yes

No

N/A

Masters Research Undergraduate

Research Faculty or Staff

Research Class Project

Other

Study Personnel

Please fill in all associated personnel below.

Please note: All study personnel must complete CITI training prior to receiving IRB approval. The IRB will accept either of the following CITI courses: "Social & Behavioral Researchers" or "Biomedical & Health Science Researchers."

- [IRB Training Information](#)
- [CITI Training Website](#)

*required

Primary Contact

The individual who will receive and respond to communication from the IRB should be listed as the primary contact. For student projects, the primary contact will be the student researcher(s). For faculty projects, the primary contact may be the researcher or a student(s), administrative assistant, etc. assisting the faculty member. The same individual may be listed as the primary contact and the principal investigator.

Name: James Blair Organization:
Government
Address:

*required

Principal Investigator (PI)

The principal investigator (PI) is the individual who will conduct the research or serve as the lead researcher on a project involving more than one investigator. For theses or dissertations, the student should be listed as PI.

Name: James Blair Organization:
Government
Address

Co-Investigator(s)

Co-investigators are researchers who serve alongside the principal investigator and share in the data collection and analysis tasks.

*required

Faculty Sponsor

Projects with students serving as the PI must list a faculty sponsor, typically a dissertation or thesis chairperson/mentor.

Name

*required

Will the research team include any non-affiliated, non-LU co-investigators?

For example, faculty from other institutions without Liberty University login credentials. Note: These individuals will not be able to access the IRB application in Cayuse; however, the information provided below allows the LU IRB to verify the training and credentials of all associated study personnel.

Yes

No

Conflicts of Interest

This section will obtain information about potential conflicts of interest.

*required

Do you or any study personnel hold a position of influence or academic/professional authority over the participants?

For example, are you the participants' supervisor, pastor, therapist, teacher, principal, or district/school administrator?

Yes

No

*required

Do you or any study personnel have a financial conflict of interest?

For example, do you or an immediate family member receive income or other payments, own investments in, or have a relationship with a non-profit organization that could benefit from this research?

Yes

No

Funding Information

This section will request additional information about any funding sources.

*required

Is your project funded?

Yes

No

*required

Use of Liberty University Participants

Please make the appropriate selection(s) below:

I do not plan to use LU students, staff, and/or faculty as participants.

- Note: Use of LU students, faculty, or staff also includes the use of any existing data.
-

I plan to recruit LU students from a limited number of specific, identified departments, student organizations, clubs, or teams (e.g., students taking a residential psychology course, members of the women's hockey team, etc.).

I plan to recruit students because they meet a specific set of demographic criteria (e.g., male, freshmen, Hispanic, etc.), and I will advertise my study through word of mouth, social media, or flyers hung on campus.

I plan to recruit students because they meet a specific set of demographic criteria (e.g., male, freshmen, Hispanic, etc.), and I will require university assistance to identify and recruit my participants (i.e., LU personnel will need to run a database query to identify eligible individuals and send your recruitment email on your behalf.)

I plan to recruit faculty and/or staff.

*required

Purpose

Please provide additional details about the purpose of this project. This section should be easy to read for someone not familiar with your academic discipline.

Write an original, brief, non-technical description of the purpose of your project.

Please DO:

- Include a **BRIEF** description of your research hypothesis/question ●
Provide a narrative that explains the major constructs of your study
- Explain how the data will advance your research hypothesis or question

Please DO NOT:

- Exceed 500 words
- Copy and paste your abstract or proposal into the text box

The purpose of this research is to study the perceptions of the necessity of post-secondary education for police officers before employment with a municipal law enforcement agency. Specifically, the study aims to determine the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the need for this education to perform the job of a police officer. Additionally, this research will provide insight into what practitioners in law enforcement believe to be a minimum education level for a police officer. The research questions for this study are:

Question One: What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police officer's critical decision-making process?

Question Two: What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police officer's use of force?

Question Three: What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police officer's interpersonal communication skills?

Question Four: What are the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers regarding the relationship between an undergraduate degree and a police department's turnover rate of police officers?

This study uses interviews, surveys, and reflexive memos as a format. As previously stated, the research aims to gather the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers from a broad spectrum of municipal police departments in the United States. To achieve validity, 12 police chiefs will be identified to participate in the study. Additionally, the police chiefs will be asked to identify at least ten non-ranked police officers within their respective agencies to participate in the questionnaire. This method of solicitation should present a minimum of 120 participating police officers. The geographic locations and size of the police departments participating in the study are dispersed evenly throughout the United States and consist of mid-size and small municipal police agencies.

The questionnaire covers the four basic questions that formulate the theory. These questions, or themes, include post-secondary education related to critical decision-making, police use of force, interpersonal communication skills, and police department turnover rates. Within these areas, the questionnaire contains specific questions relative to each to understand how police chiefs and police officers view the relationship to post-secondary education.

Investigational Methods

Please indicate whether your project involves any of the following:

*required

Does this project involve the use of an investigational new drug (IND) or an approved drug for an unapproved Use?

Yes

✓ No

*required

Does this project involve the use of an investigational medical device (IDE) or an approved medical device for an unapproved Use?

Yes

No

Participant Information

Participant Criteria

Please provide additional information about your participants.

*required

What characteristics make an individual eligible to be in your study (i.e., your inclusion criteria)?

- For example, do your participants have to be 18 or older? Must they work in a specific career or field? Do they have to be part of a specific racial or ethnic group?
- If you will have multiple participant populations/groups, like a teacher group and an administrator group, please list the populations/groups separately and provide the inclusion criteria for each.
- If your participants will necessarily be 18 years old or older due to their occupation (e.g., licensed teachers, military personnel, etc.) or another aspect of your criteria (e.g., senior citizens), the 18-or-older age requirement does not need to be listed below.

Participants must be police chiefs of a municipal law enforcement agency and/or sworn law enforcement officers presently employed by a municipal law enforcement agency.

*required

What characteristics make an individual ineligible to be in your study (i.e., your exclusion criteria)?

- For example, will you exclude persons under 18 years of age?
- Note: Exclusion criteria are not simply the inverse of inclusion criteria--these are specific characteristics that would disqualify an individual from participating.

Any individual who is not either a police chief of a municipal law enforcement agency and/or sworn law enforcement officer presently employed by a municipal law enforcement agency.

*required

Are you related to any of your participants?

Yes

No

*required

Types of Participants

Who will be the focus of your study? (Check all that apply).

Adult Participants (18+)

Minors (under 18 years)

Seniors (65+)

College or University Students

Armed Forces Members (active duty, retired, discharged, etc.) Persons

Residing in the European Union (EU)

Inpatients, Outpatients, or Patient Controls

Pregnant Women

Fetuses

Individuals with Cognitive Disabilities

Individuals with Physical Disabilities Individuals

Incapable of Giving Consent Prisoners or

Institutionalized Individuals Specific Ethnic or

Racial Group(s)

Other Potentially Elevated Risk Populations

*required

Please provide a rationale for selecting the above groups(s).

(i.e., Why will these specific groups enable you to answer your research question? Why is the inclusion of these groups necessary?)

State and Federal laws do not allow individuals under 18 to become police officers. Therefore, adults over the age of 18 are viable candidates for participation.

*required

Provide the maximum number of participants you plan to enroll for each participant group.

You will not be approved to enroll a number greater than the number listed. If at a later time it becomes apparent that you need to increase your sample size, you will need to amend your protocol prior to doing so. As appropriate, sample sizes should be justified in accordance with the study design and methodology.

Police chiefs: 10

Police officers: 200

Screening

Please make note of the following guidelines:

- Screening involves ensuring that the individuals who express interest in your study meet your study criteria.
- Screening occurs before study data is collected from individuals.
- Screening may involve the collection of some demographic information, but that is not the purpose of screening.
- Screening does not involve deciding who among your screened and consented participants will engage in your separate study procedures.

*required

How and when will you screen your potential participants?

Common options are listed below:

Potential participants will answer screening questions when they talk to me in person/call/email me to express their interest in my study.

Potential participants will click on a link in the recruitment email to a screening survey.

Potential participants will be emailed a link to a screening survey after they contact me to express their interest in my study.

I/a designated official from my study site(s) will identify individuals who meet my study criteria and contact them by email, etc.

- ✓ I will list my participant criteria in my recruitment document and consent form, but I will not utilize additional screening procedures.

Other (describe):

If you will use a screening survey/questions, please attach your screening document(s) as separate Word documents* here.

*If you are using a proprietary screening tool (e.g., PAR-Q), it can be submitted as a PDF.

Note: If any screening documents will need to be provided in a different language, the translated documents should also be attached here.

Recruitment of Participants

This section will collect additional information on the recruitment of potential participants.

*required

How will you contact potential participants to recruit them for your study?

Select the recruitment method(s) you plan to use:

Email/Phone

My potential participants are personal acquaintances, and I will contact them via their personal email addresses/phone numbers.

The email addresses/phone numbers of my potential participants are posted online and are publicly accessible.

I will request the names and email addresses/phone numbers of potential participants from my study site(s).

My study site(s) will not be able to give me the names and email addresses/phone numbers of potential participants due to FERPA, HIPAA, etc., so I will ask my study site(s) to send my recruitment email/call potential participants on my behalf.

Other (describe):

Social Media

Flyer/Handout

In-person/Verbal Other

(describe):

*required

Does your study have a limited recruitment window?

E.g., The study site is a summer camp that is only open for three months out of the year, the site only allows data collection during specific months, etc.

Yes

✓ No

*required

Attach your recruitment documents as separate Word documents here.

Depending on your above responses, you may need to attach multiple recruitment documents:

- Email(s)
- Letter(s)
- Social media post(s) ●
Flyer(s), etc.

[Blair_831Recruitment\(Email\)\(Officer\)PreliminaryReview\(Revised\).docx](#)

[Blair_831Recruitment\(Email\)\(Chief\)PreliminaryReview\(Revised\).docx](#)

[Blair_831Recruitment\(FollowUpEmail\)\(Chief\)PreliminaryReview\(Revised\).docx](#)

[Blair_831Recruitment\(FollowUpEmail\)\(Officer\)PreliminaryReview\(Revised\).docx](#)

[\(Social Media\)](#) , [Recruitment \(Verbal\)](#)

Sample documents:
[Recruitment \(Letter/Email\)](#) ,
[Recruitment \(Follow-up\)](#) ,
[Recruitment \(Flyer\)](#) ,
[Recruitment](#)

Note: If any recruitment documents will need to be provided in a different language, the translated documents should also be attached here.

Determination of Consent Waiver Eligibility

The below questions will help us determine if your project qualifies for a waiver of consent, consent elements, or signed consent.

*required

Does your project involve deception?

Deception may include, but is not limited to, the following: ●

- Withholding the full/true purpose of the study.
- Withholding information about experimental/controls groups.
- Audio/video recording or photographing participants without their knowledge.

Yes

No

*required

Does your project involve anonymous data collection methods?

Anonymous means you will not be able to link individual participants to their personal responses at any time (e.g., anonymous surveys).

Yes

No

*required

Does your project involve a participant population where signing forms is not the norm?

A "yes" response would only apply in very specific situations with certain cultural groups where signing documents could put the person in danger, or where signing a name would be seen as culturally improper/offensive.

Yes

✓ No

*required

Waiver of Signed Consent

Please answer the below questions.

*required

Would a signed consent form be the only record linking the participant to the research?

✓ Yes, only the signed form would link the participant to the study.

No, there are other records/study questions linking the participants to the study.

*required

Does a breach of confidentiality constitute the principal risk to participants?

✓ Yes, while unlikely, the primary risk is a potential breach of confidentiality.

No, there are other risks involved than a breach of confidentiality.

*required

Does the research pose no more than minimal risk to participants?

(i.e., no more risk than that of everyday activities)

✓ Yes, the study is minimal risk.

No, the study is greater than minimal risk.

*required

Does the research include any activities that would require signed consent in a non-research context?

(e.g., liability waivers)

Yes, there are study-related activities that would normally require signed consent.

- No, there are not any study-related activities that would normally require signed consent

*required

Are the subjects or their legally authorized representatives (LARs) members of a distinct cultural group or community in which signing forms is not the norm?

Yes, the subjects/their LARs are members of a distinct cultural group or community in which signing forms is not the norm, and there is an appropriate alternative mechanism for documenting that informed consent was obtained.

- No, the subjects/their LARs are not members of a distinct cultural group or community in which signing forms is not the norm.

*required

Will you provide the participants with a written statement (i.e., an information sheet that contains all of the elements of an informed consent form but without the signature lines) about the research?

- Yes, participants will receive written information about the research.

No, participants will not receive written information about the research.

Obtaining Parental Consent and Child Assent

This section will gather details about the parental consent and child assent processes.

*required

Does your study require parental/guardian consent?

If any of your participants are under 18 years of age, parental consent is most likely a requirement.

Yes

- No

*required

Is child assent required for your study?

Assent is required unless the child is not capable of assenting due to age, psychological state, or sedation OR the research holds out the prospect of a direct benefit that is only available within the context of the research.

- Children under the age of 13 should receive a separate child assent form written at their grade level that they can read or that can be read to them.
- Children between the ages of 13 and 17 can provide assent on the parental consent form.

Yes

No

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Consent

This section will gather details about the consent process for persons residing within European Union (EU).

*required

Does your study involve the collection of data from or about persons in the European Union (EU)?

Yes

No

*required

Obtaining Consent

This section will gather details about the consent process.

*required

How and when will you provide consent information to participants?

Depending on your research plan, you may utilize more than one option. As appropriate, please select the method(s) you plan to use:

- Consent information will be provided as a Word/PDF attachment to my recruitment email(s).

Consent information will be provided as a Google Form or other online document linked to my recruitment document/sent via a separate email.

Consent information will be sent as an email attachment after a potential participant responds by phone/email/private message to my recruitment call/email/social media post.

- Consent information will be provided as the first page participants see after clicking on the survey link/scanning the QR code embedded in my recruitment email/flyer.

Consent information will be handed to the potential participant(s) in person (i.e., a physical copy) prior to taking part in any study activities.

Other (describe):

*required

How and when will signed consent be obtained?

Most studies will involve either anonymous data collection or confidential data collection. However, some may involve both (e.g., an anonymous survey and confidential interview). With this in mind, please make the appropriate selection(s) below:

My study involves anonymous data collection methods.

- Anonymous means you will not be able to link individuals to their data at any time.

*required

Please acknowledge the following:

- I acknowledge that I will still need to provide consent information to my participants.

- ✓ • I am requesting a waiver of the requirement that consent forms be signed and returned.

My study involves confidential data collection methods.

- ✓ • Confidential means you will be able to link individuals to their data, but will use pseudonyms or codes to conceal identities.

*required

Please make the appropriate selection(s) below:

Participants will type their name and the date on the consent form before they complete my online, confidential survey.

Participants will be asked to save a copy of the consent form to their computer, type their name and the date on the form, save the completed form, and return it to me as an emailed attachment before the study procedures begin.

Participants will be asked to provide an electronic signature using Adobe Sign, DocuSign, or a similar program. Once they've applied their signature, the document will be automatically returned to me.

- ✓ Participants will be asked to print the consent form, physically sign it, and return it to me as a scanned attachment via email/by mail/by taking a picture with their phone and texting it to me.

Participants will sign a hard copy of the consent form in person at the time of the study (e.g., when we meet for their interview/data collection).

I'm not sure.

Please attach your consent form(s) as separate Word documents.

If you have multiple participant groups, you may need to submit a consent form for each group.

[Police Chief Consent Form.docx](#)

[Police Officer Consent Form.docx](#)

[Blair_831Consent\(Chief\)PreliminaryReview.docx](#)

Sample documents: [Consent](#) , [Consent \(Medical\)](#) , [Consent \(Blood Draw\)](#)

Note: If any documents written in a language other than English will need to be provided to potential participants, the translated documents should also be attached here.

Procedures

Study Design

This section gathers additional information about planned procedures.

*required

Will your study involve any of the following?

Check the applicable boxes. If none apply, select "N/A."

Extra costs to the participants (tests, hospitalization, etc.)

Alcohol consumption

Protected Health Information (from health practitioners/institutions)

VO₂ Max Exercise

Pilot study procedures (which will be published/included in data analysis)

Use of blood

The use of rDNA or biohazardous material

The use of human tissues or cell lines

Fluids that could mask the presence of blood (including urine/feces)

Use of radiation or radioisotopes

N/A

Procedures

This section will gather additional information about all planned study procedures.

*required

In an ordered list, please describe the procedures for each participant group.

Be concise. Please include time estimates for each procedure. For example:

1. Online survey. 10 minutes.
2. Interview. 30-45 minutes.

If different participant groups are involved, you must also specify which procedures correspond to each group. For example:

1. Online Survey. 15 minutes. (All participants).
2. Focus Group. 45 minutes. (4-5 participants from Group A).
3. Recorded Interview. 30 minutes. (3 participants from Group B).

Police chiefs will be interviewed via phone or Zoom, depending on their preference. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes.

Police officers will complete an online questionnaire through the web-based SurveyMonkey platform. Completing the questionnaire should take approximately 15 minutes.

Please attach all of your data collection instruments as separate Word documents*

*If any of your data collection instruments are proprietary/validated instruments, you may submit them as PDFs.

Possible attachments may include:

- Survey/Questionnaire questions ●
Interview questions
- Observation protocols ●
Session outlines
- Prompts
- Checklists
- Educational handouts, etc.

[Police Chief Interview Questions.docx](#)

[Police Officer Survey Questions.docx](#)

Note: If any documents written in a language other than English will need to be provided to participants, the translated documents should also be attached here.

Note: If you are using a survey link, the survey link must also be provided above using the attach button.

Compensation

For research purposes, compensation involves reimbursing participants for their time and effort spent completing your research procedures. Compensation is not the same as benefits to participation, which are addressed later in the application.

Please make note of the following guidelines:

- Compensation for students or others in a group setting cannot be offered unless each participant will receive the same amount of compensation for each completed procedure. An opportunity involving equal time and effort to receive the same compensation must be made available for individuals who choose not to participate.
- Certain states outlaw the use of lotteries, raffles, or drawings as a means of compensating research participants. Your IRB analyst may offer additional guidance regarding this matter.
- Research compensation exceeding \$600 per participant within a one-year period is considered income and will need to be filed on the participants' income tax returns.
- If your study is grant funded, the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) policies may affect how you compensate participants. Contact the IRB or OSP for additional information.

*required

Will this project involve participant compensation?

Compensation may include gift cards, meals, extra credit, etc.

Yes

✓ No

Study Sites & Permissions

This section will gather information about study locations and any necessary permissions.

*required

Please state the actual location(s)/site(s) at which the study will be conducted. If the study will occur online, state "online/virtual."

Be specific. Include the city, state, school/district name, clinic name, etc.

online/virtual

*required

Will you need to receive conditional IRB approval before your study location(s) will grant permission?

The conditional IRB approval letter states that a study is ready for complete IRB approval once documentation of permission is received.

Yes

No

Please submit any permission letters you have obtained.

- If you are still in the process of obtaining permission letters, they can be uploaded at a later time.
- If you would like us to review your permission request template(s) or permission letter template(s), please submit those here.
- Acceptable permission documentation includes signed statements on official letterhead and/or time and date stamped email correspondence originating from an appropriate official/authority.

[Permission.Request.Email.docx](#)

Sample documents: [Permission Request](#) ,

[Permission Letter](#)

[Permission.Response.Email.docx](#)

Privacy & Data Analysis

This section will collect additional information about how you plan to protect privacy and analyze your data.

*required

For each procedure you listed in the procedures section, describe the steps you will take to protect the privacy of your participants. Guidance is provided below:

- If you will conduct interviews, will they take place in a private setting where others cannot overhear the conversation? Where will your interviews occur?
- If you will collect health-related, physical, athletic performance data, or biospecimens, will you do so in a place and manner that allows for participant privacy? Examples of data include height, weight, BMI, running speed, and blood samples. Where will your data collection occur?
- If you plan to use online surveys, will you utilize a survey platform that offers adequate security? How does the platform ensure privacy?
- If you plan to use paper surveys, how will the surveys be collected in a manner that will prevent others from viewing individual responses? How will they be collected and by whom?

Police chief interviews will be conducted via Zoom or telephone in a closed office setting where conversations cannot be seen or overheard by others. In the transcribed data, names will be replaced with alphanumeric codes. Police officer questionnaires are anonymously conducted via the online platform SurveyMonkey.

*required

Where will the data be stored and who will have access to the data?

- Examples of where include a password-locked computer, a locked drawer, a locked filing cabinet, etc.
 - Examples of who include the researcher, the researcher and faculty chair/sponsor, etc.
- Data will be data will be stored on an encrypted, password protected hard drive in a locked fireproof safe when not in use. After five years, all electronic records will be deleted and all

hardcopy records will be shredded. Only the researcher will have access to the password and locked fireproof safe. Only the researcher, Hamed W Blair, will have access to any and all data, records, passwords, fire safe combinations.

*required

Will you destroy the data after the retention period ends?

It is strongly advised that data be retained for a minimum of 3 years after the study has been completed.

Yes

*required

Describe how the data will be destroyed.

I.e., it will be deleted from the computer, paper copies will be shredded, etc.

5 years

No

*required

Will you retain the data or biological samples, if applicable, for future research?

Yes

No

*required

How will the data be analyzed?

As applicable to your methodology (i.e., quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods), briefly describe the method(s) you will use to analyze your data.

Qualitative analysis of the data will be used. The interviews and questionnaires will be input into the NVivo software, and this research will identify themes that directly relate to understanding the participants' perceptions. In this cycle of coding, the general themes will be categorized.

Additionally, the research will involve the reflexive memo process to ensure trustworthiness and mitigate bias in theme development. Second cycle coding will be utilized to discover themes and phrases that appear with more regularity or significance. Completion of the second cycle of coding will allow the researcher to assimilate the research analysis.

*required

Please describe any plans you may have for the publication or presentation of your data.

Plans include publication for your thesis or dissertation, if applicable.

There are currently no plans to publish the dissertation outside of the requirements of Liberty University.

*required

Will this project involve the use of archival data or secondary data?

- Archival data is information previously collected for a purpose other than the proposed research. Examples include student grades and patient medical records.
- Secondary data is data that was previously collected for the purpose of research. For example, a researcher may choose to utilize survey data that was collected as part of an earlier study.
- If you plan to collect documents from participants or an organization (e.g., meeting minutes, policies, syllabi, notes, etc.) please choose "yes."

Yes

No

*required

Media Use

This section gathers additional information about any planned use of media and/or audio/video devices.

*required

Will this project involve any of the following?

Check the applicable boxes. If none apply, select "N/A."

- ✓ Audio recording of participants
- ✓ Video recording of participants
- Taking photographs of participants
- N/A

*required

Which procedure(s) involve recording and/or photography?

For example, "Only the interview will be recorded." OR "Both the interview and focus group will be recorded."

Only the 10 chief interviews will be recorded.

*required

How will the recording(s) and/or photographs be made/collected?

For example, Zoom, tape recorder, digital recorder, cell phone, etc.

The chief interviews will be recorded via Zoom unless conducted by phone and then will be digitally recorded.

*required

If a participant chooses to withdraw from the study, how will their recordings and/or photographs be disposed of?

They will be deleted from the hard drive that they are stored on.

Note: If you would like to use participant documents or photographs in presentations or publications beyond your research, you will need to have them sign a materials release form.

*required

Does your study involve anonymous data collection methods, confidential data collection methods, or both?

- Confidentiality means that the researcher can identify participants and link them to their data, but the researcher will not reveal participant identities to anyone outside of the study.
- Anonymity means that although the researcher knows whom he or she invited to participate in his or her study, once the data is collected, the researcher cannot link individuals to their personal data. This means that no personally-identifying information can be collected in an anonymous study.

My study involves anonymous data collection methods. My study involves confidential data collection methods.

- ✓ My study involves both anonymous and confidential data collection methods.

*required

Confidential Data Collection

This section will gather additional information about the confidential aspects of your project.

*required

Can participant names or identities be deduced from the raw data?

Note: If you are audio/video recording or taking photographs of participants, check yes.

✓ Yes

*required

Describe how names or identities could possibly be deduced and any steps to prevent this from happening:

All audio/video recordings will be transcribed by the researcher, with any identifying information redacted from the transcription. The recordings will be secured on a password-protected external hard drive. The hard drive and physical copies of the transcriptions will be secured in a locked, fireproof safe that is only accessible to the researcher.

No

*required

Will a person be able to identify a subject based on other information in the raw data (i.e., title, position, sex, etc.)?

Yes

No

*required

Describe the process you will use to ensure the confidentiality of the participants during data collection and in any publication(s).

For instance, you may be able to link individuals/organizations to identifiable data; however, you will use pseudonyms or a coding system to conceal their identities. Police chief participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with alphanumeric codes. Police Officer participant responses are completely anonymous.

*required

Do you plan to maintain a list linking pseudonyms or codes to participant identities?

Yes

*required

In the below box, state:

1. Where the linking list will be stored.
2. Who will have access to the linking list.

For example:

1. In a locked cabinet or drawer; in a separate password-protected folder.
2. Only the researcher.

Data will be stored on an encrypted, password-protected hard drive in a locked, fireproof safe when not in use. After five years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded. Only the researcher will have access to the safe.

*required

The researcher(s) affirm that the linking list will be stored separately from the raw data.

Failure to store the linking list separately from the data would defeat the purpose of providing pseudonyms or codes to participant identities, as one would be able to easily deduce participant identities.

Yes

No

*required

Anonymous Data Collection

This section will gather additional information about the anonymous aspects of your project.

*required

Please explain how you will ensure that the data is anonymous.

For example, will you not collect names, email addresses, or other identifying information on your survey or will a research assistant collect your study data and remove the identifiers before giving the data to you?

No names, emails addresses, or any form of personally identifiable information will be collected in the online survey of police officers.

Risks & Benefits

Risks

This section will gather information about any potential risks involved with your project.

*required

No study is without risks. Please check the applicable box(es) for any potential risks associated with your study:

-
- Information risks (e.g., loss of privacy and/or breach of confidentiality if the data is lost or stolen)
 - Psychological or emotional risks (e.g., fear, stress, guilt, triggering of past emotional experiences, etc.)
 - Social risks (e.g., social stigma)
 - Economic risks (e.g., loss of employment or insurability)
 - Physical risks (e.g., fatigue; pain or discomfort; potential for injury, illness or disease, or death)
 - Legal risks (e.g., risk of prosecution, mandatory reporting)
 - Genetic privacy risk (e.g., stigmatization, self-stigmatization, limits to insurance coverage or employability, etc.)

*required

List the steps you will take to minimize each of the risks you've just identified above.

For example, data will be stored on a locked computer only accessible to the researcher/study team; study participants will be directly monitored for any signs of fatigue/illness, etc.

Police Chief participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with alphanumeric codes. Data will be stored on an encrypted, password-protected hard drive in a locked, fireproof safe when not in use. After five years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for five years and then deleted. The researcher/researcher and members of his doctoral committee will have access to these recordings.

Police Officer responses are anonymous and collected on the online survey platform SurveyMonkey.

*required

Will alternative procedures or treatments that might be advantageous to the participants be made available?

Yes

No

*required

Is this project considered greater than minimal risk?

Remember, minimal risk means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

Yes

No

Benefits

This section will gather information about any potential benefits involved with your project.

- Direct benefits are those benefits that the participants may receive from taking part in your study.
 - Compensation for participation is not a benefit, so it is not listed in this section.
-

*required

Please check the applicable box(es) for any direct benefits associated with your study:

Psychological or emotional benefits

✓ Learning benefits Physical

benefits

Diagnostic or therapeutic benefits

Other (describe):

*required

Provide details about the expected direct benefits.

For example, participants will increase their knowledge/skills as a result of the intervention provided; participants will receive a copy of their diagnostic test results, etc.

Participants will become more self-aware of their perceptions based on the self-reflection that occurs during the interview and questionnaire process. There are no other personal benefits to the participants.

- Benefits to society are those benefits that individuals who share characteristics with your participants but were not part of your study may receive, along with general benefits to science and humanity.
-

*required

Provide details about the expected benefits to society.

For example, increased public knowledge on the topic, improved learning outcomes, etc.

The benefits of this research will be the increase in general knowledge of the perceptions of the police chiefs and police officers related to post-secondary education and job performance. Scholars and law enforcement practitioners may potentially gain a greater understanding of this phenomenon and can inform future policy decisions.

Evaluation of Risks and Benefits

This section establishes whether or not the study is worth doing based on the risks and benefits described.

*required

Evaluate the risk-benefit ratio.

Why is the study worth doing, even with any identified risks?

The low risk of this study does not offset the benefits that can be gained by understanding the participants' perceptions. National calls for increased police education inform that this is a worthwhile study with a high degree of societal impact.

Attachments

Human Subjects Training Documentation

Note: This upload is only required for non-affiliated, non-LU personnel. If you are affiliated with LU, we are able to view your CITI training report.

Sample documents: [CITI Program Website](#)

External Investigator Agreement

Note: This upload is only required for non-affiliated, non-LU personnel. If you are affiliated with LU, you are able to provide certification within the Cayuse system.

Proof of Permission to Use LU Participants, Data, or Groups

Note: If you are not using LU participants, data, or groups, you do not need to include an attachment here.

DNP Permission

Note: If you are not in the Doctor of Nursing Practice Program (School of Nursing), you do not need to include an attachment here.

Sample documents: [Permission Request](#) , [Permission Letter](#)

Screening

Note: If your study does not involve a screening instrument, you will not need to provide an attachment here.

Recruitment

Note: If you are strictly using archival data, you may not need to include an attachment here.

[Blair_831Recruitment\(Email\)\(Officer\)PreliminaryReview\(Revised\).docx](#)

[Blair_831Recruitment\(Email\)\(Chief\)PreliminaryReview\(Revised\).docx](#)

[Blair_831Recruitment\(FollowUpEmail\)\(Chief\)PreliminaryReview\(Revised\).docx](#)

[Blair_831Recruitment\(FollowUpEmail\)\(Officer\)PreliminaryReview\(Revised\).docxMedia](#) , [Recruitment \(Verbal\)](#)

Sample documents:
[Recruitment \(Letter/Email\)](#)
[, Recruitment \(Follow-up\)](#)
[Recruitment \(Flyer\)](#)
[Recruitment \(Social](#)

Parental Consent

Note: If your study does not involve minors, you will not need to provide an attachment here.

Sample documents: [Consent \(Parental\)](#)

Archival Data Forms, Templates, or Collection Sheets

Note: If you are not using archival data, you will not need to provide an attachment here.

Archival Data Permission

Note: If you are not using archival data, you will not need to provide an attachment here.

Sample documents: [Permission Request](#) , [Permission Letter](#)

Data Collection Instruments

Note: If you are strictly using archival data, you may not need to provide an attachment here.

[Police Chief Interview Questions.docx](#)

[Police Officer Survey Questions.docx](#)

Site Permission

Note: If you do not require external permission(s) to conduct your study, you may not need to provide an attachment here.

[Permission.Request.Email.docx](#)

Sample documents: [Permission Request](#) ,

[Permission Letter](#)

[Permission.Response.Email.docx](#)

Child Assent

Note: If your study does not involve minors, you will not need to provide an attachment here.

Sample documents: [Child Assent](#)

Consent Templates

Note: If you are strictly using archival data, you may not need to provide an attachment here.

[Police Chief Consent Form.docx](#)

Sample documents: [Consent](#), [Consent \(Medical\)](#),
[Consent \(Blood Draw\)](#)

[Police Officer Consent Form.docx](#)

[Blair 831Consent\(Chief\)PreliminaryReview.docx](#)

Debriefing

Note: If your study does not involve deception, you will not need to provide an attachment here.

Sample documents: [Debriefing](#)

GDPR Consent

Note: If your study does not involve European Union (EU) residents, you will not need to provide an attachment here.

Sample documents: [Consent \(GDPR\)](#), [Data Transfer Agreement \(GDPR\)](#)

Appendix B

Police Chief Recruitment Email

February 12, 2023

Dear Chief XYZ:

As a graduate student in the Helms School Government at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Criminal Justice Leadership Ph.D. The purpose of my research is to determine police chiefs' and police officers' perceptions of the benefits of post-secondary education as it relates to job performance and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be police chiefs of a municipal police department. Participants, if willing, will be asked complete either a telephone or Zoom video conferencing call with this researcher. After the call, the conversation will be transcribed by this researcher with all personal or agency identifying information redacted. It should take approximately 30 minutes to complete the survey. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

Upon completion of the interview, you will be requested to forward an email to ten sworn police officers in your department requesting completion of an online anonymous survey.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me via email at

Appendix C

Police Chief Recruitment Follow-Up Email

February 12, 2023

Dear Chief XYZ:

As a graduate student in the Helms School of Government at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Criminal Justice Leadership Ph.D. Two weeks ago, an email was sent to you inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to complete the survey if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is March 31, 2023.

Participants must be police chiefs of a municipal police department. Participants, if willing, will be asked complete either a telephone or Zoom video conferencing call with this researcher. After the call, the conversation will be transcribed by this researcher with all personal or agency identifying information redacted. It should take approximately 30 minutes to complete the survey. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

Upon completion of the interview, you will be requested to forward an email to ten sworn police officers in your department requesting completion of an online anonymous survey.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me via email at

Appendix D

Police Officer Recruitment Email

February 12, 2023

Dear Police Officer:

As a graduate student in the Helms School Government at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Criminal Justice Leadership Ph.D. The purpose of my research is to determine police chiefs' and police officers' perceptions of the benefits of post-secondary education as it relates to job performance and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be sworn police officers with your department. Participants, if willing, will be asked complete an anonymous online survey. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, please click here [SurveyMonkey hyperlink will to be inserted here].

A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Because participation is anonymous, you do not need to sign and return the consent document unless you would prefer to do so. After you have read the consent form, please click the [button/link] to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

Sincerely,

James W. Blair
Graduate Student
Helms School of Government
Liberty University

Appendix E

Police Officer Recruitment Follow-Up Email

February 12, 2023

Dear Police Officer:

As a graduate student in the Helms School of Government at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Criminal Justice Leadership Ph.D. Two weeks ago, an email was sent to you inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to complete the survey if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is March 31, 2023.

Participants must be sworn police officers with your department. Participants, if willing, will be asked complete an anonymous online survey. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, please click here [SurveyMonkey hyperlink will to be inserted here].

A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Because participation is anonymous, you do not need to sign and return the consent document unless you would prefer to do so. After you have read the consent form, please click the [button/link] to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

Appendix F

Consent Form

Title of the Project: Educated Cops: A Qualitative Analysis of Police Chiefs' and Police Officers' Perceptions of the Effects of Post-secondary Education on Job Performance

Principal Investigator: James W. Blair, Doctoral Candidate, Helms School of Government

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a sworn law enforcement officer presently employed by a municipal law enforcement agency. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the perceptions of police chiefs and police officers relative to the effects of post-secondary education on the job performance of municipal police officers.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

Participate in an online survey using *SurveyMonkey*. The survey should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Benefits to society include a better understanding of the relationship between post-secondary education and police officers' job performance.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be anonymous.
- Data will be stored on an encrypted, password protected hard drive in a locked fireproof safe when not in use. After five years, all electronic records will be deleted and all hardcopy records will be shredded.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is James W. Blair. If you have questions, **you are encouraged** to contact him via email or by phone. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You can print a copy of the document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

- Yes
- I.
- No

Appendix G

Police Chief Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about your professional background and how became the police chief at your current agency.
2. How many years have you been a police chief?
3. What is your highest educational level?
4. Please tell me about your department structure. How many sworn personnel do
5. What is the required educational level for employment at your department?
6. Does your department keep data on the number of officers who have a college degree, or do you know the percentage of degreed versus non-degreed officers in your department?
7. Does your department offer educational incentives through specialty pay or
8. From your personal experiences, do you feel a college degree has enhanced your career?
9. From your experiences as a manager of police officers, do you believe a college education plays a role in enhancing an officer's interpersonal skills?
10. From your experiences as a manager of police officers, do you believe a college education plays a role in a police officer's use of force decision-making process?
11. From your experiences as a manager of police officers, do you believe a college education plays a role in a police officer's critical decision-making process?
12. Do you believe there is a relationship between a college degree and a police officer's job satisfaction and decision to leave a police department?

13. Thank you for your time. I appreciate your responses and believe they will be very beneficial to my research. Is there anything else that you think would be important for me to know about this topic?

Appendix H

Police Officer Survey Questions

1. In what ways, if any, does having a college degree enhance an officer's abilities as it relates to interpersonal communication skills?
2. In what ways, if any, does having a college degree play a role in preparing an officer for use-of-force decisions?
3. In what ways, if any, does having a college degree play a role in preparing an officer for making critical decisions on the job?
4. In what ways, if any, does a college education play a role in an officer's decision to stay or leave a police department?
5. If you do not have a four-year degree, how likely are you to continue your education?
6. If you have a four-year college degree, how do you feel it has benefited you in your career as a police officer?
7. Do you have any other comments you would like to provide?

Appendix I

Sample Police Chief Interview Transcript

Interviewer: Please tell me about your professional background and how became the police chief at your current agency.

Chief 1: I started as a police officer in 1987 and then moved to a sheriff's office where I spent 26 years. I retired and started consulting before being hired as police chief.

Interviewer: Please tell me about your department structure. How many sworn personnel do you have?

Chief 1: We are authorized 116 police officers.

Interviewer: What is the required educational level for employment at your department?

Chief 1: We do not require a degree but it carries weight in promotions

Interviewer: What is your department's average annual attrition rate?

Chief 1: I was just looking at that the other day for council. It averages seven per year.

Interviewer: From your personal experiences, do you feel a college degree has enhanced your career?

Chief 1: Absolutely. It has opened doors that might not have opened without one. A degree allowed me to separate from my peers who did not have one in promotional processes.

Interviewer: From your experiences as a manager of police officers, do you believe a college education plays a role in enhancing an officer's interpersonal skills?

Chief 1: I think it does. College enhances problem-solving abilities and helps partnership building. Especially communication training. College educated officers can talk on multiple levels. Part of that is because you often have to work well with other people to get a degree

Interviewer: From your experiences as a manager of police officers, do you believe a college education plays a role in a police officer's use of force decision-making process?

Chief 1: No. If someone has use of force issues, those are character issues. Education cannot change that.

Interviewer: From your experiences as a manager of police officers, do you believe a college education plays a role in a police officer's critical decision-making process?

Chief 1: Absolutely. They have better critical thinking skills and are outside of the box thinkers

Interviewer: Do you believe there is a relationship between a college degree and a police officer's job satisfaction and decision to leave a police department?

Chief 1: I do. It opens more doors in the private sector for opportunities outside of police work. We don't emphasize college in recruiting, we appeal to a sense of service.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time. I appreciate your responses and believe they will be very beneficial to my research. Is there anything else that you think would be important for me to know about this topic?

Chief 1: No. I think that covered everything.

Appendix J

Sample Police Officer Survey Question Response

In what ways, if any, does having a college degree enhance an officer's abilities as it relates to interpersonal communication skills?

Respondent ID	Response Date	Responses
1.14374E+11	Jul 23 2023 04:31 PM	Time spent in college, with other people from all walks of life, enhances an officer's abilities in interpersonal communication skills. Not a college degree.
1.14368E+11	Jul 14 2023 01:20 PM	none
1.14366E+11	Jul 12 2023 08:46 PM	I have found it depends on the officer themselves. You can have a college graduate who may have led a sheltered life or did not have a social life. This college graduate did not learn who to talk to others as they kept to themselves. You could have a high school graduate who participated in sports or clubs who developed social skills. I do not think having a college graduate degree enhances IPC skills, as it relies on the person's overall upbringing.
1.14365E+11	Jul 12 2023 09:11 AM	It doesn't. In large part this is more personality based. We have officers with MS degrees and they have difficulty communicating effectively. We have officers with only HS diplomas and they are great with people.
1.14365E+11	Jul 12 2023 07:38 AM	There is no benefit.
1.14365E+11	Jul 12 2023 06:49 AM	Many college courses require communication for group projects or other assignments that force an individual to communicate with a wide variety of people which helps officers when they communicate with people at work.
1.14365E+11	Jul 11 2023 11:00 AM	Interpersonal skills are developed as a young adult as you interact with other people. They are not taught in a school. It is extremely important for Police Officer's, especially for those young officers with little to no real-life experience, to be able to communicate effectively in a professional manner. Perhaps college is one way to develop this skill, but it is not the only way and in my not-so-humble opinion, far from the best way. Many liberal universities are more concerned with telling young people what to think rather than how to think.
1.14364E+11	Jul 10 2023 03:01 PM	

Respondent ID	Response Date	Responses
1.14364E+11	Jul 10 2023 02:57 PM	I think it depends on your area of study. Being on a college campus could provide a more diverse environment and help you communicate with others outside your normal peer group.
1.14364E+11	Jul 10 2023 02:41 PM	It doesn't. Life skills, intelligence, emotional maturity, and other factors have much more to do with interpersonal communication skills than having a college degree
1.14364E+11	Jul 10 2023 02:35 PM	I believe it helps officers understand people from various backgrounds. I also feel that it helps the interaction they might have with various levels of society.
1.14364E+11	Jul 10 2023 02:25 PM	College classes typically require a student to work together with others collaboratively to achieve a goal. This may increase an officers interpersonal skills.
1.14364E+11	Jul 10 2023 02:24 PM	I am not certain it does. You can learn interpersonal skills without having to go to college.
1.14364E+11	Jul 10 2023 01:07 PM	None
In what ways, if any, does having a college degree enhance an officer's abilities as it relates to interpersonal communication skills?		
1.14362E+11	Jul 23 2023 04:31 PM	Time spent in college, with other people from all walks of life, enhances an officer's abilities in interpersonal communication skills. Not a college degree.
1.14361E+11	Jul 14 2023 01:20 PM	none
1.14361E+11	Jul 12 2023 08:46 PM	I have found it depends on the officer themselves. You can have a college graduate who may have led a sheltered life or did not have a social life. This college graduate did not learn who to talk to others as they kept to themselves. You could have a high school graduate who participated in sports or clubs who developed social skills. I do not think having a college graduate degree enhances IPC skills, as it relies on the person's overall upbringing.

In what ways, if any, does having a college degree enhance an officer's abilities as it relates to interpersonal communication skills?

Respondent ID	Response Date	Responses
1.14362E+11	Jul 23 2023 04:31 PM	Time spent in college, with other people from all walks of life, enhances an officer's abilities in interpersonal communication skills. Not a college degree.
1.14361E+11	Jul 14 2023 01:20 PM	none
1.14361E+11	Jul 12 2023 08:46 PM	I have found it depends on the officer themselves. You can have a college graduate who may have led a sheltered life or did not have a social life. This college graduate did not learn who to talk to others as they kept to themselves. You could have a high school graduate who participated in sports or clubs who developed social skills. I do not think having a college graduate degree enhances IPC skills, as it relies on the person's overall upbringing.
1.14361E+11	Jul 12 2023 09:11 AM	It doesn't. In large part this is more personality based. We have officers with MS degrees and they have difficulty communicating effectively. We have officers with only HS diplomas and they are great with people.
1.1436E+11	Jul 12 2023 07:38 AM	There is no benefit.
1.1436E+11	Jul 12 2023 06:49 AM	Many college courses require communication for group projects or other assignments that force an individual to communicate with a wide variety of people which helps officers when they communicate with people at work.
1.14359E+11	Jul 11 2023 11:00 AM	Interpersonal skills are developed as a young adult as you interact with other people. They are not taught in a school.
1.14359E+11	Jul 10 2023 03:01 PM	It is extremely important for Police Officer's, especially for those young officers with little to no real-life experience, to be able to communicate effectively in a professional manner. Perhaps college is one way to develop this skill, but it is not the only way and in my not-so-humble opinion, far from the best way. Many liberal universities are more concerned with telling young people what to think rather than how to think.

Respondent ID	Response Date	Responses
1.14358E+11	Jul 10 2023 02:57 PM	I think it depends on your area of study. Being on a college campus could provide a more diverse environment and help you communicate with others outside your normal peer group.
1.14358E+11	Jul 10 2023 02:41 PM	It doesn't. Life skills, intelligence, emotional maturity, and other factors have much more to do with interpersonal communication skills than having a college degree
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1.14359E+11	Jul 10 2023 03:01 PM	It is extremely important for Police Officer's, especially for those young officers with little to no real-life experience, to be able to communicate effectively in a professional manner. Perhaps college is one way to develop this skill, but it is not the only way and in my not-so-humble opinion, far from the best way. Many liberal universities are more concerned with telling young people what to think rather than how to think. I think it depends on your area of study. Being on a college campus could provide a more diverse environment and help you communicate with others outside your normal peer group.
1.14358E+11	Jul 10 2023 02:57 PM	It doesn't. Life skills, intelligence, emotional maturity, and other factors have much more to do with interpersonal communication skills than having a college degree
1.14358E+11	Jul 10 2023 02:41 PM	I believe it helps officers understand people from various backgrounds. I also feel that it helps the interaction they might have with various levels of society.
1.14357E+11	Jul 10 2023 02:35 PM	College classes typically require a student to work together with others collaboratively to achieve a goal. This may increase an officers interpersonal skills.
1.14356E+11	Jul 10 2023 02:24 PM	I am not certain it does. You can learn interpersonal skills without having to go to college.
1.14356E+11	Jul 10 2023 01:07 PM	None