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AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
HIGHER EDUCATION AND COMPLAINTS
INITIATED AGAINST POLICE OFFICERS

presented by
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has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Master degree in Science

College of Social Science
School of Criminal Justice

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**AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
HIGHER EDUCATION AND COMPLAINTS INITIATED
AGAINST POLICE OFFICERS**

By

Joel John Allen Jr.

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

MASTER OF SCIENCE

**School of Criminal Justice
College of Social Science**

1996

ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND COMPLAINTS INITIATED AGAINST POLICE OFFICERS

By

Joel John Allen Jr.

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between higher education and police officer performance. This study is designed to analyze the relationship between higher education and complaints initiated against police officers.

The data for this project were obtained from the internal affairs section of a large Midwestern state police agency and consist of all internal affairs investigations initiated against officers from January 8, 1987 through August 9, 1988. Four research questions were analyzed and a cross-tabulation was calculated for each of these questions.

The analyses of the research questions, offered in this study, have found that there is a significant relationship between an officer's level of education and complaints initiated against an officer. These findings will be useful to those who are interested in the issue of minimum education requirements for potential employees of law enforcement agencies.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

An Evolving Society

Today's law enforcement agencies are surrounded by a complex society that is constantly bombarding them with demands for change. The public in the 1990s will include more two income families, more single parent families, more senior citizens, and more minorities (Bennett, 1992). These recipients of police service will affect the delivery of that service. "The ways in which agencies are managed, people are led and basic police services are delivered will undergo significant modifications during the next decade" (Rippy, 1990, p. 136).

Another change is that the educational gap is increasing, with those at the bottom becoming even more disadvantaged (Bennett, 1992). As the general level of education is increasing in our society, the level of police officer education must also increase to enable effective communication between the police officer and the public.

An Evolving Police Philosophy

"Not only is this (effective communication) necessary to perform the most basic policing tasks, but also for the effective implementation of more complex policing practices, which seem to be the trend" (Carter and Sapp, 1991, p. 12). Many of these complex policing practices are influenced by concepts and philosophies that involve the decentralization of

police agencies. These concepts and philosophies include such innovations as community policing and other forms of participative management, which develop structures that promote democratic decision-making throughout the police organization.

This decentralization is a drastic change from the traditional autocratic structure and culture of police organizations. In order for these organizational changes to be effective, the police officers, who are being given more decision-making powers, must possess the necessary skills and knowledge to successfully help the organization meet its goals. As more agencies turn to philosophies similar to those of community policing, the need for higher educated officers becomes even more obvious:

Effective community policing requires skills officers acquire through higher education- research, critical thinking, problem solving, effective oral and written communication [skills], and an understanding of group and community dynamics. (Breci, 1994, p. 1)

As police departments decentralize and begin to operate based on philosophies like community policing, the individual officer will be given even more discretion than the officers operating under more traditional police philosophies. This additional latitude in officer discretion will intensify the need to have officers who can make sound judgments based on an understanding of the citizens of his or her community.

The skills which officers obtain through higher education are necessary for all forms of effective policing. "Education is the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge and aims to develop the powers of understanding and judgment" (Bell, 1979, p. 473). The powers of understanding and judgement are needed for all types of police work.

An Evolving Police Role

Another issue, that must be considered, is the current role of today's police officer and the needed evolution of this role to meet the demands of our complex and constantly changing society. It has long been established that most of a police officer's time is not spent enforcing the law. Police officers " . . . perform more service activities than they perform criminal law enforcement. Regrettably, as social workers, the majority of police officers are untrained and incompetent" (Bell, 1979, p. 470). Police work entails more than social work, however, today's police officer must be able to perform:

. . . a myriad of duties with skill and success - information processor, community organizer, crime analyst, counselor, street corner politician, arresting officer, school liaison, and community leader. (Vodicka, 1994, p. 92)

As our society becomes more technical and more complex, the role of the police officer will continue to grow. It may be asking too much of an individual with only a high-school education to fill this role. "To effectively manage the problems confronting the contemporary police officer, the high school education is painfully inadequate" (Bell, 1979, p. 468). "Education will permit police officers to view citizens' actions from a broader viewpoint than merely observing the results of their actions" (Bohigan, 1979, p. 142).

A Call for Higher Educated Police Officers

As early as 1931, the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement: The Wickersham Commission, the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice in 1967, and the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals: Report on Police in 1973, recognized the need for police officers to possess the qualities attributed to higher education.

It has been argued that the recommendations made by the above Commissions were based on assumptions and not on empirical research. A review of recent research, however, does indicate a positive relationship between college education and police officer performance.

Higher Education as a Minimum Requirement for Police Officer Employment

In 1973, the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals prescribed the following standards for the future development of the Criminal Justice System: every police agency should require two years of college education by 1975, three years by 1978, and a baccalaureate degree by 1982 (NAC, 1973, 372). A look at the statistics obtained from a 1989 national study revealed that only 13.7% of the law enforcement agencies that responded to the survey had a formal requirement of some college for employment (Carter, Sapp, and Stephens, 1989). This falls well short of the Commission's goals for prescribed standards. Two concerns that may account for the low percentage of agencies that have a formal requirement of some college for employment will be discussed.

The first of these concerns is the perceived negative effect that a higher education requirement will have on minority recruitment. The 1967 President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice commented that "... raising educational standards may negate the benefit of being able to add an adequate number of officers with minority group backgrounds to the police ranks" (Commission, 1967, p. 163). Recent research has shown that this first concern may be unfounded:

... higher education may not have an inherently discriminatory effect on minorities as strong as previously estimated, and [the data] provide strong evidence that college-educated minorities can be effectively recruited. (Carter et al, 1989, XIII)

Carter and Sapp were able to demonstrate that law enforcement agencies can effectively recruit and retain minorities who have a college education. Their national survey of police agencies revealed that minority police officers have an average level of education of 13.6 years compared to 13.7 years for white police officers. Additionally, they revealed that minority representation in law enforcement is very close to current Census Bureau estimates of the population makeup of the United States (1989).

The second concern is that a minimum education standard requires validation, and agencies are unsure how to validate higher education as a Bona Fide Occupational Qualification. This concern is also unfounded, because the precedent has been set that establishes a college requirement for police officers as a Bona Fide Occupational Qualification. In the court case of *Davis v. City of Dallas* 777 F. 2d 205 (5th Cir. 1985, Certiorari Denied to Supreme Court May 19, 1986) the Dallas appeals court found that:

. . . policing was a professional occupation requiring an unusual degree of risk with a unique public responsibility. With these factors present the court concluded that the 'educational requirement bears a manifest relationship to the position of police officer,' thereby mitigating the requirements discriminatory effect. (Carter & Sapp, 1991, p. 15)

With this legal precedent and the results of recent research that demonstrate the benefits of higher education for police officers, it should not be extremely difficult to establish that a college requirement is significantly related to the employment responsibilities of police officers. It would be beneficial for police administrators who do have this concern to examine police agencies that have successfully implemented college requirements for entry-level law enforcement officers.

The Need for Research

The issue of liability alone supports the need for research in this area. The Rodney King case in Los Angeles and the Malice Green case in Detroit are examples of how the misuse and allegations of the misuse of physical force by police officers cannot only divide a police department, but an entire city. Incidents such as the above cause citizens to distrust the police. This distrust builds the barriers between the police and the community that many police professionals are trying to tear down.

The 1989 national study of police higher education conducted by Carter, Sapp, and Stephens (1989) found that 98% of the responding police departments indicated that officers with two or more years of college received fewer citizen complaints than their counterparts who had less education. Their study further found that 96% of the police departments indicated that officers with two or more years of college had fewer disciplinary problems. Several studies that have found a positive relationship between higher education and fewer citizen complaints against police officers will be cited in the following chapter.

Continued research is needed so police professionals can demonstrate the positive correlation that seems to exist between higher education and fewer citizen complaints. This, combined with the ability of police professionals to articulate that a college education is a Bona Fide Occupational Qualification for the position of police officer, will provide the means to raise the minimum education standards and eventually reduce the liability of individual police departments and the police profession as a whole. "The police profession cannot afford to continue to ignore the fact that the highly educated individual has become the central resource of today's society" (Mahan, 1991, p. 473).

The Purpose of Current Research

This study is similar to past studies in that it is an attempt to determine if there is a relationship between higher education and police officer performance. Specifically, this study is designed to analyze the relationship between higher education and complaints initiated against police officers. The data for this project were obtained from the internal affairs section of a large Midwestern state police agency. The types of complaints initiated against the officers in this study include: ethics, force, insubordination, property, substance, traffic, verbal, weapons, and other. Unfortunately the data base for this project does not include the disposition of each initiated complaint. Therefore, the researcher has no way of knowing whether the initiated complaints were founded or unfounded. However, the researcher hopes that the analysis of this data will be useful to those who are involved in the debate over the minimum education requirements for potential employees of law enforcement agencies.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This chapter will concentrate on a review of the literature and research that has been published pertaining to higher education and police officer performance. Topics that will be discussed include: indirect measures of police officer performance, direct measures of police officer performance, the court case of *Davis v. City of Dallas*, and a 1989 national study of police higher education.

Indirect Measures of Police Officer Performance

The research, reviewed in this section, is that which measured police officer performance indirectly. The studies use the actual actions of police officers to measure performance. Rather than attempting to decide which aspects of police work should be considered when rating performance, the designers of the following research considered the issue of liability to indirectly measure performance. In general, the following literature looked for relationships between higher education and mistakes made by officers that would be a liability for the departments and communities in which these officers were employed.

A study by Cascio involved the combined efforts of the Dade County Public Safety Department and the Police Foundation and was designed to examine the relationship between formal education and police officer performance (1977). Police personnel involved in this study developed a measure to use in rating police officer performance based on observable

on-the-job behavior. A data base was also created that recorded predictor information at the time of each officer's date of hire. This predictor information included physical characteristics, prior arrests, employment and military disciplinary records, pre-employment test and interview scores, training academy performance data, and all subsequent personnel-related information (Cascio, 1977). The data were then analyzed to determine relationships and differences between minority and majority groups as well as relationships between higher education and police officer performance.

Cascio's study found a positive relationship between higher levels of formal education and fewer injuries to officers, fewer disciplinary actions from accidents, fewer sick times per year, and fewer physical force allegations (1977). This study was completed nearly twenty years ago, yet it is an excellent example of the type of analysis that can be done on the topic of higher education and police officer performance when the proper data are available.

A 1981 study examined the use of deadly force by officers and attempted to determine the impact of higher education on this issue. The authors studied 239 officers of the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department who had fired their weapons from 1972 through 1979 and an equal number of randomly drawn officers who had not fired their weapons during that same period (Sherman and Blumberg, 1981). One area that the authors examined that is directly related to officer liability was the education level of officers who shot with and without justification. The authors found no significant relationships between higher education and police officer use of deadly force in any of the areas that they examined including the area of justified and non-justified shootings (Sherman and Blumberg, 1981). The authors concluded that during the time of their study there were probably an insufficient number of college graduates in most police departments to conduct meaningful multivariate analyses of the effects of higher education on police officer behavior (Sherman and Blumberg, 1981).

In 1989, Carter and Sapp conducted a study using the research population from a national survey. This study specifically dealt with the issue of higher education as it relates to police liability cases. They found that:

. . . liability suits pose a significant threat to police resources. In addition, monetary limits on damage awards have been virtually eliminated and vicarious liability suits against police departments and their parent jurisdictions have become the norm in order to take advantage of the 'deep pocket.' (Carter and Sapp, 1989, p. 153)

A content analysis of police liability cases was conducted by examining consistent trends in allegations and remedies, and by reviewing the research on police education. Some of the most typical police liability issues, that the authors examined, were associated with poor officer judgement resulting in civil rights complaints and officers who were ill-prepared to perform the wide array of police duties in a responsible and professional manner (Carter and Sapp, 1989).

The authors provided numerous arguments, with the use of indirect evidence, to substantiate the claim that higher education may reduce liability risks. The following were among the arguments provided: college educated officers are more likely to understand the constitutional framework of legal restrictions imposed by court decisions and are less likely to violate these restrictions; college educated officers are more likely to be tolerant of people of different races and lifestyles and therefore less likely to resort to force, unlawful means, or disrespect when dealing with people of different cultures and belief systems; and, having a minimum college requirement for employment could mitigate complaints of failure to train by allowing the employing department to use the officer's education to demonstrate his or her knowledge and skill level (Carter and Sapp, 1989).

Kappeler, Sapp, and Carter conducted a study on a medium sized municipal police department and found a relationship between founded complaints against officers and the

level of education of the officers over a five year period. The researchers collected data from official departmental records including personnel records and internal affairs investigative reports. The researchers also collected data on the type and number of founded complaints filed against the officers. Their findings revealed that officers without college degrees generated approximately 42% of the total founded complaints while only accounting for about 29% of the total officer population (Kappeler, Sapp, and Carter, 1992).

Direct Measures of Police Officer Performance

The following two sections contain a review of research that specifically addresses the area of higher education as it relates to police officer performance. A problem that is common to the following research is that of measuring police officer performance. There is no one, agreed upon, method of measuring police officer performance. In each of these studies, the researchers attempted to measure the performance of police officers directly by using supervisor evaluations and other evaluation instruments to rate each officer's performance.

A 1978 study by Roberg used the International Association of Chiefs of Police performance evaluation system to measure the performance of 118 non-supervisory patrol officers of the Lincoln, Nebraska, Police Department. This performance evaluation was designed specifically for patrol work and was completed by the direct supervisors (sergeants) of the officers (Roberg, 1978). One hypothesis that Roberg tested was: the higher the educational level of patrol personnel, the higher their job performance. Roberg classified the educational levels of the patrol officers as follows: (1) high school, (2) underclass (including college freshmen and sophomores), (3) upperclass (including college juniors and seniors), and (4) college graduates (1978). The classification of higher education, based on the number

of years of college attended, is a common practice in the research of higher education and police officer performance.

Another hypothesis that Roberg tested was: the higher the educational level of patrol personnel, the less dogmatic their belief systems. Roberg used the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale to measure differences in belief systems. This scale was developed to measure individual differences and the extent to which belief systems are open or closed. An open or closed belief system is relevant in that it affects one's ability to evaluate and act on pertinent information unencumbered by irrelevant factors of a particular situation (Roberg, 1978).

Roberg's study found that there was a positive relationship for each of the above hypotheses. Specifically, Roberg concluded that:

1. Those officers with higher levels of education had more open belief systems and performed in a more satisfactory manner on the job than those patrol officers with less education.
2. Those patrol officers with college degrees had the most open belief systems and the highest levels of job performance, indicating that college-educated officers were better able to adapt to the complex nature of the police role. (Roberg, 1978, p. 344)

Roberg's findings are unique. He found a positive relationship between higher education and police officer performance and was also able to demonstrate specific reasons why a college education is beneficial to police officers.

A study conducted by Fischer, Golden, and Heininger attempted to determine the value of education as it relates to the progress educated officers have made within the ranks of police departments in the state of Illinois (1985). The designers of this research used a survey questionnaire to determine the extent to which college educated officers have achieved positions within the administrative ranks of their departments. This questionnaire was completed only by officers who were above the rank of patrol officer or who had more than

eight years of service. This study found that higher ranking officers did not have a higher proportion of college degrees than lower-ranking officers, but did find that the possession of a master's degree was reported at higher levels for those ranks above captain (Fischer, Golden, Heininger, 1985).

In 1987, Copely conducted a study on thirty-five recruits hired as police officers in a suburban Colorado police department from 1982 to 1984. These recruits had an average level of 14.6 years of education. Copely found that the level of the officer's education upon hiring was the best indicator of an officer's success after two years of service, based on supervisor evaluations (1992).

Davis v. City of Dallas

Higher education as a minimum requirement for police officers was addressed in the case of *Davis v. City of Dallas* 777 F.2d 205 (5th Cir. 1985, Certiorari Denied to Supreme Court May 19, 1986). The Dallas appeals court found that the Dallas Police Department's minimum education requirement of forty-five semester hours of college credit with a minimum grade point average of 2.0, was lawful. The following is an excerpt of the Court's finding:

Defendant's experts established the relationship between college education and performance of police officers. A study by one expert relied upon factual data from two large metropolitan areas that took two years to complete, showing significantly higher performance rates by college-educated officers. A persuasive point was made that a high school diploma today does not represent the same level of achievement which it represented 10 years ago. The Court agrees with the Defendant's expert conclusions that 45 hours of college today represents [a] considerably lower level of achievement than it would have in the early 70s. (*Davis v. City of Dallas*, 1985)

The Dallas Police Department was able to show that forty-five hours of college credit is a Bona Fide Occupational Qualification. ". . . [R]equirements for employment by any

agency must be job related, and the employing agency must be able to meet the challenges and be prepared to prove the requirement is a Bona Fide Occupational Requirement" (Mahan, 1991, p. 285).

The Bona Fide Occupational Qualification is designed to require that employment practices be related to the legitimate needs of the employer's business or service. In order to avoid a finding that the occupational qualification is discriminatory the employer must show the qualification is necessary for the efficient and safe operation of the organization's purpose. (Carter and Sapp, 1991, p. 17)

A police department that plans to implement higher education as a condition for employment must be able to articulate that a college education is a necessary requirement for police officers. "Police departments planning policy actions in the area of higher education should develop a policy paper establishing higher education as a Bona Fide Occupational Qualification" (Carter et al, 1989, p. XXV). The research is available to support a policy document or position paper in favor of higher education as a minimum requirement for police officers. This was clearly demonstrated by the court ruling in *Davis v. City of Dallas*, and this ruling obviously provides a legal precedent for the establishment of college credits as a minimum employment qualification.

A National Study

The 1989 national study of police higher education conducted by Carter, Sapp, and Stephens discusses the controversies that surround the idea of higher education for police officers. Their findings provide valuable information about the status of higher education in law enforcement today.

This study found that 98% of the responding police departments indicated that officers with two or more years of college received fewer citizen complaints than their counterparts

who had less education. Their study further found that 96% of the police departments indicated that officers with two or more years of college had fewer disciplinary problems (Carter et al, 1989). They state that:

The education experience itself is expected to broaden the officer's outlook and ability to deal more emphatically with a wider range of people. It is also expected to improve the officer's communication skills, which are very important to the successful police officer. (Carter et al, 1989, p. 2)

Carter, et al, have further inferred that college educated officers are more responsible and better decision makers than their less educated counterparts, and the college educated officers are more effective and efficient at performing their duties. Specifically they found that police executives reported that college educated officers:

- communicate better with the public
- write better reports
- perform more effectively
- receive fewer citizen complaints
- show more initiative in performing police tasks
- are more professional
- use discretion more wisely
- have fewer disciplinary problems
- are better decision makers. (Carter et al, 1989, p. XVIII)

A further 1990 study, conducted by Carter and Sapp, revealed that the police executives responding to their survey had a strong preference for college educated officers because they "... believed that college-educated officers had a wider range of performance skills, which were more effective than those of non-college-educated officers" (Carter and Sapp, 1990, p. 82).

Carter and Sapp have additionally shown in their national survey of police agencies that the educational levels of police officers have increased in the last twenty years. The percentage of police officers with no college education in 1960 was 80% and in 1988 this number was reduced to 35%:

This finding appears to be the result of the increasing level of education in the general population, organizational incentives for officers to continue in school, organizational environments (and ideology) supporting higher education, and the proliferation of college criminal justice programs. (Carter and Sapp, 1990, p. 78)

Carter and Sapp found that: "Despite the call for college-educated officers and despite the general view of their value, the standard of a high school education for police candidates remains" (Carter & Sapp, 1990, p. 70). Carter, Sapp, and Stephens found that only 13.7% of the agencies responding to the survey actually have a requirement for higher education as a condition of employment (1989). Additionally, many administrators acknowledge that college has become a de facto requirement for employment and that they rarely hire candidates with only the minimum educational requirements (Carter and Sapp, 1990).

Summary

There is a common difficulty that arises when attempting to determine if a relationship exists between police officer performance and higher education. This problem is caused by the wide variety of tasks included within the position of police officer. Today's police officer must be able to perform:

. . . a myriad of duties with skill and success- information processor, community organizer, crime analyst, counselor, street corner politician, arresting officer, school liaison, and community leader. (Vodicka, 1994, p. 92)

There are so many elements to police work it is difficult to come to an agreement concerning which elements should be considered when attempting to measure performance.

Even if one does choose a specific area of focus, it is difficult to determine what aspects of that area represent high or low performance. One example is the area of arrests. It is safe to assume that everyone can agree that making arrests falls within the duties of police

officers. However, the difficulty arises when one attempts to analyze arrest reports or arrest rates to determine high or low performance. The problem with analyzing arrest reports is not only the availability of such information, but the subjectivity that would be involved with determining high or low performance. Making an arrest may not always be a sign of good performance; it may be the result of an officer letting a situation escalate out of control or making a bad decision. There are many other possible reasons that an officer may make an arrest that does not represent high performance, so the mere analysis of arrest rates is not a valid measure of performance. The same can be said with traffic enforcement and the issuing of citations.

One possible solution to the above difficulties is to measure performance indirectly. This can be accomplished by examining the issue of liability, or more specifically the complaints initiated against police officers.

The most typical police liability issues are associated with poor officer judgement resulting in civil rights complaints; officers who are ill-prepared to perform the wide array of police duties in a responsible, professional manner; and/or inadequate departmental responsiveness to either anticipate or control improper officer behavior. (Carter and Sapp, 1989, p. 154)

Access to information and data concerning complaints initiated against police officers may not always be easy or even possible. The advantage to using complaints rather than examining positive areas of performance is that the information will likely be found in one location like the internal affairs division or similar division within a particular police agency. Also, it is much easier to identify and agree upon areas of liability as compared to areas of high performance.

The reduction of liability for police agencies not only addresses the monetary issue of reducing law suits, but the issue of public relations and the image of police officers that has received more than its fair share of damage in recent years. This research project is intended

to measure police officer performance indirectly by examining complaints initiated against police officers.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

In this chapter the methodology utilized for this research project will be discussed. The various items that will be detailed include the following: the source of the data, operational definitions, the level of education of the officers, the types of complaints initiated against the officers, the race of the officers, the sex of the officers, and the officers' years of experience. The chapter will conclude with a discussion on the types of data analyses that were performed.

Source of Data

The data for this project were drawn from the data base of the internal affairs division of a large Midwestern state police agency. The data consist of all internal affairs investigations initiated against officers from January 8, 1987 through August 9, 1988 (20 months). In 1987, the department employed 1,270 officers and in 1988 it employed 1,184 officers. Statistics provided by the Internal Affairs Division indicate that 52% of the initiated investigations are sustained (founded) and that the officers who are investigated represent 10% of the department's enlisted personnel. At the time the data were obtained for this research project the Internal Affairs Division data base was being updated. Unfortunately, the data obtained for this project does not include whether each case was founded or unfounded.

Operational Definitions

The data base, from which the data for this project were obtained, includes the date that the complaint against the officer was filed, the date the officer was employed, the level of education of the officer, the type of complaint initiated against the officer, and the race and sex of each officer. The researcher used the date reported and the date employed to determine the years of experience within the department for each officer. Level of education was divided into the following categories: unknown, high school (including GED), college experience, college degree, graduate degree, and doctorate degree. The types of complaints included: discrimination, ethics, force, insubordination, property, substance, traffic, weapons, verbal, and other. Race was divided into black, white, Hispanic, and unknown; sex was divided into female, male and unknown.

Characteristics of the Sample

Level of Education

The sample for this project was the 351 internal affairs investigations initiated against officers of the above police agency from January 8, 1987 through August 9, 1988. The level of education was not known for 56 (16%) of these officers. Analysis concerning level of education was done, using the remaining 295 cases. Of these remaining 295 cases 82 (27.8%) of the officers had a high school diploma or GED, 152 (51.5%) of the officers had some college experience, 57 (19.3%) of the officers held a college degree, and 4 (1.4%) of the officers held a graduate degree, as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Level of Officer Education

| Level of Education | Number | Percentage |
|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| High School / GED | 82 | 27.8 |
| Some College Experience | 152 | 51.5 |
| College Degree | 57 | 19.3 |
| Graduate Degree | 4 | 1.4 |
| Total | 295 | 100 |

Complaint Type

The complaints initiated against officers are divided into the following ten categories: discrimination, ethics, force, insubordination, property, substance, traffic, verbal, weapons, and other. The sample consisted of 30 (8.5%) discrimination cases, 55 (15.7%) ethics cases, 68 (19.4%) force cases, 9 (2.6%) insubordination cases, 16 (4.6%) property cases, 10 (2.8%) substance cases, 17 (4.8%) traffic cases, 92 (26.2%) verbal cases, 8 (2.3%) weapons cases, and 46 (13.1%) other cases, as shown in Table 3.2

Table 3.2
Complaints Initiated

| Complaint Type | Number | Percentage |
|-----------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Discrimination | 30 | 8.5 |
| Ethics | 55 | 15.7 |
| Force | 68 | 19.4 |
| Insubordination | 9 | 2.6 |
| Property | 16 | 4.6 |
| Substance | 10 | 2.8 |
| Traffic | 17 | 4.8 |
| Verbal | 92 | 26.2 |
| Weapons | 8 | 2.3 |
| Other | 46 | 13.1 |
| Total | 351 | 100 |

Officer's Race

The sample was divided into the following categories by race: white, black, Hispanic, and unknown. The unknown cases were not included in the analysis, leaving 321 cases for analysis. There were 268 (83.5%) white officers, 48 (15.0%) black officers, and 5 (1.6%) Hispanic officers represented in the sample. The percentages provided are the percentages of the 321 valid cases used for analysis dealing with the race of the officers, as shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3
Officer's Race

| Race | Number | Percentage |
|--------------|---------------|-------------------|
| White | 268 | 83.5 |
| Black | 48 | 15 |
| Hispanic | 5 | 1.6 |
| Total | 321 | 100 |

Officer's Sex

The sample included 321 (92%) males, and 28 (8 %) females. Two of the cases did not indicate the sex of the officer and were not included in the analysis concerning the sex of the officers, as shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4
Officer's Sex

| Sex | Number | Percentage |
|--------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Male | 321 | 92 |
| Female | 28 | 8 |
| Total | 349 | 100 |

Years of Experience

Years of experience for the officers in this study ranged from less than one year to thirty-nine years. The most frequently occurring number of years of experience was nine. There were twenty-one cases in which the years of experience were not recorded. Tables 3.5 and 3.6 represent the remaining 330 cases.

Table 3.5
Years of Experience

| Range | Mean | Median | Mode | Standard Deviation |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| <1 - 39 | 12.0 | 10.0 | 9.0 | 7.5 |

Table 3.6
Years of Experience

| Years of Experience | Number | Percentage |
|----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Less than one year | 1 | .3 |
| 1 | 27 | 8.2 |
| 2 | 14 | 4.2 |
| 3 | 21 | 6.4 |
| 4 | 7 | 2.1 |
| 5 | 8 | 2.4 |
| 6 | 5 | 1.5 |
| 7 | 2 | .6 |
| 8 | 10 | 3.0 |
| 9 | 39 | 11.8 |
| 10 | 36 | 10.9 |
| 11 | 10 | 3.0 |
| 12 | 6 | 1.8 |
| 13 | 10 | 3.0 |
| 14 | 13 | 3.9 |
| 15 | 16 | 4.8 |
| 16 | 4 | 1.2 |
| 17 | 11 | 3.3 |
| 18 | 17 | 5.2 |
| 19 | 9 | 2.7 |
| 20 | 12 | 3.6 |
| 21 | 13 | 3.9 |
| 22 | 14 | 4.2 |
| 23 | 9 | 2.7 |
| 24 | 2 | .6 |
| 25 | 4 | 1.2 |
| 26 | 1 | .3 |
| 27 | 2 | .6 |
| 30 | 1 | .3 |
| 31 | 5 | 1.5 |
| 39 | 1 | .3 |
| Total | 330 | 100 |

Analysis of Data

The dependent variable for this research project is a nominal level variable and is labeled "complaint type." The independent variable is an ordinal level variable and is labeled "level of education." Due to the nature of these variables and the number of categories of each variable a crosstabulation was calculated. The probability of chi-square was then examined to determine if these variables are statistically independent or not statistically independent.

For purposes of analysis the variable "level of education" was collapsed from the original four categories of high school diploma, some college experience, college degree, and graduate degree into the categories of no college degree and college degree, as shown in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7
Level of Education Collapsed

| Level of Education | Number | Percentage |
|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| No College Degree | 234 | 79.3 |
| College Degree | 61 | 20.7 |
| Total | 295 | 100 |

The above variable was collapsed because of the vagueness of the label "some college" and to determine the impact of a college degree on the hypothesized relationship between level of education and complaints initiated against police officers.

The variable "years of experience" was collapsed into several categories and was subsequently controlled for as a rival causal factor. These categories are shown in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8
Years of Experience Collapsed

| Years of Experience | Number | Percentage |
|----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1 - 5 | 77 | 23.4 |
| 6 - 10 | 92 | 28.0 |
| 11 - 15 | 55 | 16.7 |
| 16 - 20 | 53 | 16.1 |
| 21 - 24 | 38 | 11.6 |
| 25 -39 | 14 | 4.3 |
| Total | 329 | 100 |

The significance of the above categories will be discussed in Chapter IV. The following chapter will also present the research questions addressed in this project.

Limitations of Study

As mentioned earlier one limitation of this study is the fact that the data base from which the data were obtained did not include whether or not the complaints were founded or unfounded. Another limitation is the lack of information available concerning the entire population of the agency under study. The researcher was unable to determine the educational levels, the years of experience, the proportion for race, or the proportion for sex of the entire agency, during the twenty months that were examined. The addition of this information would enable the researcher to determine how representative the research population is to the agency population.

Qualifications of Study

Liability can result from conditions beyond the lack of higher education. These conditions can be attributed both internally and externally to a particular agency. A certain policy or lack of policy can be the cause of liability for an agency.

The very nature of police work creates a high potential for liability. One of the duties of police officers discussed in Chapter II was that of making arrests. An element of making an arrest is the use of force. The use of force against another obviously creates a high potential for liability, particularly in our very highly litigious society.

The purpose of this study is to examine one factor that may contribute to liability. The researcher is not attempting to claim that higher education is a panacea that will eliminate an agencies liability. The following chapters will report and discuss the results of the analyses conducted on the variables presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The research questions and results of the analyses concerning those questions will be presented in this chapter. The following research questions were analyzed: (1) Is there a relationship between an officer's level of education and complaints initiated against officers? (2) Is there a relationship between an officer's level of education and complaints initiated against an officer, when controlling for the variable years of experience as a rival causal factor? (3) Is there a relationship between complaints initiated against officers and the officer's years of experience within the agency under study? (4) Is there a relationship between complaints initiated against officers and the officer's years of experience within the agency under study, when controlling for the variable level of education as a rival causal factor?

A crosstabulation was conducted for each of the above research questions. The results of the analyses on the above research questions will be displayed in tables, followed by a short narrative that will further describe the results. Chapter V will discuss the meaning and conclusions that can be drawn from the results presented in this chapter.

Research Question # 1

Is there a relationship between an officer's level of education and complaints initiated against officers? The results of this analysis are shown in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2.

Table 4.1
Analysis of Relationship between Level of Education and Complaints Initiated

| Complaint Type | No College Degree Number Column % | College Degree Number Column % | Row Total Number Percentage |
|------------------------|--|---|--|
| Discrimination | 15 6.4% | 7 11.5% | 22 7.5% |
| Ethics | 36 15.4% | 7 11.5% | 43 14.6% |
| Force | 43 18.4% | 14 23.0% | 57 19.3% |
| Insubordination | 7 3.0% | 2 3.3% | 9 3.1% |
| Property | 9 3.8% | 4 6.6% | 13 4.4% |
| Substance | 8 3.4% | 1 1.6% | 9 3.1% |
| Traffic | 12 5.1% | 3 4.9% | 15 5.1% |
| Verbal | 63 26.9% | 17 27.9% | 80 27.1% |
| Weapons | 6 2.6% | 2 3.3% | 8 2.7% |
| Other | 35 15.0% | 4 6.6% | 39 13.2% |
| Total | 234 79.3% | 61 20.7% | 295 100% |

Table 4.2
Results of Analysis of Relationship between Level of Education & Initiated Complaints

| Chi-Square | Degree of Freedom | Significance | Cramer's V |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 6.712 | 9 | .667 | .151 |

As observed from Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 the variables of complaint type and level of education are statistically independent. The probability of chi-square of .667 is greater than alpha, and indicates that the two variables are not significantly related.

Research Question # 2

Is there a relationship between an officer's level of education and complaints initiated against an officer when controlling for the variable years of experience as a rival causal factor? The results of the analysis performed are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3
Results of Analysis when Controlling for Years of Experience

| Years Experience | No College # % | College # % | Chi-Square | Sig. | D.F. | Cramer's V |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 1-5 | 49 65.3% | 26 34.7% | 8.557 | .479 | 9 | .338 |
| 6-10 | 62 82.7% | 13 17.3% | 2.708 | .951 | 8 | .190 |
| 11-15 | 42 89.4% | 5 10.6% | 17.897 | .022 | 8 | .617 |
| 16-20 | 36 85.7% | 6 14.3% | 2.741 | .907 | 7 | .255 |
| 21-24 | 24 82.8% | 5 17.2% | 11.629 | .040 | 5 | .633 |
| 25-39 | 7 77.8% | 2 22.2% | 2.25 | .689 | 4 | .500 |

As observed in Table 4.3 there are two suppressed relationships that are revealed when the variable years of experience is controlled for as a rival causal factor. The category of 11 - 15 years has 8 degrees of freedom, a chi-square value of 17.897, and a probability of chi-square of .022. The value of Cramer's V for this category is .617, representing a fairly strong relationship. The category of 21 - 24 years has 5 degrees of freedom, a chi-square value of 11.629, and a probability of chi-square of .040. The value of Cramer's V is .633, this also represents a fairly strong relationship. Analysis was not conducted for the category of less

than one year of experience, because there is only one case within this category.

Research Question # 3

Is there a relationship between complaints initiated against officers and the officer's years of experience within the agency under study? The category of less than one year contains only one case and was not included in this analysis, as shown in Table 4.4. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.4
Years of Experience Collapsed

| Years of Experience | Number | Percentage |
|----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1 - 5 | 77 | 23.4 |
| 6 - 10 | 92 | 28.0 |
| 11 - 15 | 55 | 16.7 |
| 16 - 20 | 53 | 16.1 |
| 21 - 24 | 38 | 11.6 |
| 25 - 39 | 14 | 4.3 |
| Total | 329 | 100 |

Table 4.5
Results of Analysis of Relationship between Initiated Complaints & Years of Experience

| Chi-Square | Significance | Cramer's V | Degree of Freedom |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 79.491 | .001 | .219 | 45 |

As observed in Table 4.5 the variables of complaints initiated against officers and the

variable of officer's years of experience within the agency under study are not statistically independent. The probability of chi-square is .001 and represents a significant relationship between the two variables. The Cramer's V value of .219 shows that the relationship is fair.

Research Question # 4

Is there a relationship between complaints initiated against officers and the officer's years of experience within the agency under study when controlling for the variable level of education as a rival causal factor? The results of this analysis are shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6
Results of Analysis of the Relationship between Complaints Initiated & Years of Experience when Controlling for Level of Education

| Control Variable | Number | Chi-Square | Sig. | Cramer's V | D.F. |
|-------------------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|
| No College | 220 | 68.541 | .013 | .249 | 45 |
| College | 57 | 45.485 | .452 | .399 | 45 |

As shown in Table 4.6 the variables of complaints initiated against officers and years of experience are not statistically independent for those officers that do not hold a college degree. The probability of chi-square is .013 with a Cramer's V value of .249, again representing a significant and fair relationship. Table 4.6 also reveals that these same variables are statistically independent for those officers that hold a college degree. The probability of chi-square is .452, this is greater than alpha and indicates that the variables are not significantly related.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

This final section will discuss the results reported in Chapter IV and offer conclusions based on those results. The purpose of this research project was to determine the relationship between an officer's level of education and complaints initiated against officers. Several research questions were analyzed and several control variables were utilized to determine if there is a relationship between the above variables.

Analyses of the research questions offered in Chapter IV have identified several significant relationships. The significance of these relationships to the issue of police officer education levels and complaints initiated against officers will be discussed in the following sections. Each research question will be addressed followed by a discussion on how these questions are related to each another.

Conclusions Drawn from Research Question # 1

Is there a relationship between an officer's level of education and complaints initiated against officers? As observed from Table 4.2 the above variables are statistically independent. The probability of chi-square is greater than alpha, indicating that the variables are not significantly related. The results of this analysis support the null hypothesis that there is no difference between officers with and without a college degree when examining the issue of complaints initiated against officers. One possible reason the results of this analysis differ

from research results discussed in Chapter II is the fact that the data only include initiated complaints, not revealing whether these complaints were founded or unfounded. It is reasonable to conclude that the more active an officer is, the more vulnerable he or she is to receiving complaints. Carter, et al, found in their 1989 national survey that college educated officers showed more initiative in performing police tasks (Carter et al, 1989). Whether the complaints initiated were founded or unfounded may alter the results of this analysis.

Conclusions Drawn from Research Question # 2

Is there a relationship between an officer's level of education and complaints initiated against an officer when controlling for the variable years of experience as a rival causal factor? As observed in Table 4.3 there are two suppressed relationships revealed when the variable years of experience is controlled for as a rival causal factor. The category of 11 - 15 years has 8 degrees of freedom, a chi-square value of 17.897, and a probability of chi-square of .022. The probability of chi-square is less than alpha and represents a significant relationship. The value of Cramer's V for this category is .617, representing a fairly strong relationship. The category of 21 - 24 years has 5 degrees of freedom, a chi-square value of 11.629, and a probability of chi-square of .040, this is also less than alpha and represents a significant relationship. The value of Cramer's V is .633, also representing a fairly strong relationship.

One obvious conclusion that can be drawn from these results is that prior to an officer gaining a particular amount of work experience, that officer's lack of experience outweighs the effects of a college degree. A review of Table 4.3 shows a significant relationship between an officer's education level and complaints initiated for two of the four categories of years of experience, beyond the category of 6 - 10 years.

Conclusions Drawn from Research Question # 3

Is there a relationship between complaints initiated against officers and the officer's years of experience within the agency under study? As observed in Table 4.5 the variables of complaints initiated against officers and officer's years of experience within the agency under study are not statistically independent. The probability of chi-square is .001 and represents a significant relationship between the two variables. The Cramer's V value of .219 shows that the relationship is fair.

The results of this analysis are not surprising. It is not unreasonable to believe that an officer's experience and the complaints initiated against that officer are related. "Conformation to rules and regulations may primarily be a function of understanding the rules and regulations . . . " (Kappeler, Sapp, and Carter, 1992, p. 50). As an officer gains experience his or her understanding of the department's rules and regulations should also increase. The results of the analysis for this research question become more relevant to the premise of this research project when considered along with the results of the analysis for research question number four.

Conclusions Drawn from Research Question # 4

Is there a relationship between complaints initiated against officers and the officer's years of experience within the agency under study when controlling for the variable level of education as a rival causal factor? As shown in Table 4.6 the variables of complaints initiated against officers and years of experience are not statistically independent for those officers who do not hold a college degree, when controlling for level of education. The probability of chi-square is .013 with a Cramer's V value of .249, again representing a significant and fair relationship. Table 4.6 also reveals that these same variables are

statistically independent for those officers who hold a college degree. The probability of chi-square is .452, this is greater than alpha and indicates that the variables are not significantly related.

The results of this analysis specify the relationship revealed from the analysis of research question number three. Analysis of research question number four supports the conclusion drawn from question number three that years of experience and complaints initiated are significantly related. However, the results of question number four indicate that this significant relationship exists only for those officers who do not hold a college degree.

One can conclude from these results that the officer who holds a college degree does not have to rely as heavily on years of experience to gain an understanding of the laws, rules, and regulations that are necessary to avoid initiated complaints; when compared to the officer who does not have a college degree. The results of this analysis support the findings of a 1989 national study. This study reported that 98% of the responding police departments indicated that officers with two or more years of college received fewer citizen complaints than their counterparts who had less education (Carter, Sapp, and Stephens, 1989).

Overview of Study

The analysis of the research questions offered in this study have found that there is a significant relationship between an officer's level of education and complaints initiated against an officer. The hypothesis that the above variables are not statistically independent was supported in a number of different ways. Analysis of research questions three and four provided support to this project's hypothesis in a way that was not expected. In Chapter II indirect and direct measures of police officer performance were discussed. Research questions three and four are examples of indirect analysis of the relationship between an

officer's level of education and complaints initiated against an officer. By examining the possible relationship between the variables of complaint type and years of experience, while controlling for the variable level of education, questions three and four revealed a significant relationship between initiated complaints and an officer's level of education. The back door approach of questions three and four resulted in the strongest evidence supporting this project's hypothesis.

The analysis of question number four specified the relationship revealed from the analysis of research question number three. Years of experience and complaints initiated are significantly related. However, the results of question number four indicate that this significant relationship exists only for those officers who do not hold a college degree.

Policy Implications

The findings of this research project support the findings cited in Chapter II that there is a significant relationship between higher education and police officer performance. As discussed in Chapter II this project was designed to measure police performance indirectly, by examining complaints initiated against officers. The reduction of complaints initiated against police officers and the reduction of liability for police agencies is a legitimate concern for every police executive.

Carter and Sapp found in their national survey of police agencies that police executives and administrators do appreciate the value of higher education for police officers and, in fact, tend to hire candidates with higher education over those candidates with less education (Carter and Sapp, 1990). "Despite the call for college-educated officers and despite the general view of their value, the standard of a high school education for police candidates remains" (Carter & Sapp, 1990, p. 70). Carter, Sapp, and Stephens found that only 13.7%

of the agencies responding to the survey actually have a requirement for higher education as a condition of employment (1989).

Police executives can use the findings of this project and similar research to articulate the need for their organization to reevaluate current policies in order to keep pace with the demands of our changing society and to reduce their organization's liability. Police administrators also need to articulate, as the expert witnesses for the Dallas Police Department did in the case of *Davis v. City of Dallas*, that a high-school education today does not represent the same level of achievement as it did twenty years ago. This fact can be used to support the argument that if a police organization is going to be capable of continuing to provide a high level of service to its community, the new members of the organization are going to have to be as capable as the current members of the organization.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this project would be more significant with the addition of the following pieces of information. Knowing whether the initiated complaints were founded or unfounded would be very useful. As mentioned earlier in this chapter the more active an officer is, the more vulnerable he or she may be to receiving complaints. Carter, et al, found in their 1989 national survey that college educated officers showed more initiative in performing police tasks (Carter et al, 1989). This higher initiative shown by college educated officers may result in these officers being involved in a higher number of situations that could lead to initiated complaints.

Along this line of thought, knowing the education levels of the entire police agency would also be useful. As observed in Table 3.7, only 20.7% of the officers who had a complaint initiated against them from January 8, 1987 through August 9, 1988 held a college

degree. If this percentage was significantly higher or lower than the percentage of officers who held a college degree within the entire department during that same period, the findings of this study would take on new meaning.

The issue of higher education for police officers would also benefit from research that focuses on the level of education that provides the most advantages for police agencies. This project compared officers who either held or did not hold a college degree. Future research that can determine the number of years or credits of college experience needed to develop the qualities that may reduce the potential for liability would be of great value to police administrators.

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