



# The Perceived Value of College Education and Experience to Police Work in Slovenia

Jason Rydberg, Mahesh K. Nalla, Gorazd Meško

## **Purpose:**

This paper examines the distribution of officer demographic characteristics on dispositions across the perceived value of both college education and experience to police work in the post-independent Slovenia.

## **Design/Methodology/Approach:**

Using the responses of 995 Slovenian police officers, the present analysis utilizes bivariate tests of significance to examine how characteristics such as education level, experience, and occupational role are related to the perceived value of college education and experience to police work.

## **Findings:**

Overall, the officers in the sample perceived experience to be far more beneficial to their work than college education. In terms of specific officer characteristics, college educated officers and female officers perceived college education to be beneficial to their work, relative to high school educated, male colleagues. In terms of experience, less experienced officers, younger officers, and those with lower salaries perceived experience to be more beneficial than their more experienced, older, well-compensated counterparts. There were also differences among occupational groups, with patrol officers finding experience more beneficial.

## **Research limitations/implications:**

Given that the data were not drawn from a study specifically focused on the perceived benefits of education or experience, the dependent measures could be improved.

## **Originality/Value:**

Though much research in the United States has sought to examine the effect of gaining a college education on police attitudes and behaviors, little research has examined the extent to which police officers themselves perceive college education and experience to be beneficial to their work, particularly in Eastern Europe.

**UDC:** 378:351.74/76

**Keywords:** Slovenia Police, college education, experience, police attitudes





## 1 INTRODUCTION

The goal of the present study is to identify police officers' perceptions of the beneficial relationship of higher education and experience to police work, and to empirically assess the correlates of the perceived value of college education and experience using officer demographic characteristics and dispositions in Slovenia. Such an examination will be useful in determining the similarities and differences between the officers who believe that either is indeed useful to their work, perhaps reiterating the split between college education and experience, or demonstrating that from the point of view of the officers themselves, these are not incompatible means of improving the quality of police work.

## 2 HYPOTHESIZED BENEFITS OF COLLEGE EDUCATION TO POLICING

Since the earliest attempts to link college education to police work, higher education has been posited as a means of improving the quality of police work or at least changing the manner in which it is done. The role of higher education in police reform has changed over time; in each era of reform it has taken on a set of assumed benefits geared towards the sought-after changes. In other words, it will be argued that the perceived value of education to policing has been based more so on the historically-situated desires of reformers rather than knowledge of the effects of higher education. The following section will examine the hypothesized benefits of higher education to policing, broken down by historical period.

### 2.1 Early Twentieth Century

In the early twentieth century, college education was forwarded as a means of improving the law enforcement function of policing (Wilson, 1968). These earliest pushes for college education in policing were driven by figures such as Berkeley Police Chief August Vollmer, who felt that the overall quality of police recruits was low because the profession had not achieved a prestigious status. Requiring a college degree of officers would bring policing in line with other professional occupations, such as law or medicine, as there was little question that those occupations required rigorous academic preparation (Carter, Sapp, & Stephens, 1988). To this extent, Vollmer's goal was that of "professionalism" – a malleable concept typically characterized by training and efficiency (Hawley, 1998). The new police profession was to be defined by efficiency in administering the law enforcement function of police work (Carte, 1973; Wilson, 1968), in other words, shaping the police to resemble a paramilitary operation (Walker, 1977). In order to accomplish this goal the police would require practical knowledge in new technological advancements – two-way radios, for example. This knowledge, Vollmer posited, could not be attained in the process of police work but rather only through an academic education (Carte, 1973).





In addition to the lack of technological capacity held by officers, the 1931 National Commission on Law Enforcement and Observance (The Wickersham Commission) Report on Police, co-authored by Vollmer, raised concerns over other deficits in the quality of police personnel. The report contrasted the immense demands the authors perceived as being required of a quality officer with the overall lack of quality among existing police personnel. The moral shortcomings, political corruption, and intelligence of the police were considered inadequate to meet these demands. For instance, the report highlighted the low educational attainment of the Los Angeles Police Department and cited evidence from intelligence testing to draw the conclusion that nearly 75 percent of the department was unfit for service.<sup>1</sup> A minimum college education requirement was forwarded as one of many means for improving upon these deficiencies, and what David Monroe considered as the only way the police could “ever hope to successfully cope with the crime situation” (National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, 1931: 85).

In this period then, college education was believed to provide the police with particular benefits associated with Vollmer’s model of professionalism – practical skills to aid the use of new technologies, moral and ethical fortitude, prestige, and the intelligence necessary to perform police duties adequately (Carte, 1973; Fogelson, 1977; National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, 1931; Regoli, 1976). What the report does not make clear is how a college education is supposed to ameliorate these problems. While the authors follow their discussion of the inability of officers to meet standards with one of low education levels and intelligence, there is little explicitly said about how college education was going to deliver fixes to these problems. The connection between college education and improved quality of policing appeared to be assumed.

## 2.2 Civil Rights Era

As noted elsewhere, the recommendations of the Wickersham Commission received little follow through from the police departments across the United States (Roberg & Bonn, 2004). It was not until the turbulent years of the 1960s that the relation of college education to policing became nationally relevant once again. In this period several national commissions, most notably the 1967 President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, the 1969 National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, and the 1973 National Advisory Committee

---

1 *The National Commission on Law Enforcement and Observance - Report on Police (1931) authors (in this case, David G. Monroe) utilized the Army Alpha intelligence test designed by Yerkes (1921) to assess the intelligence levels of the Los Angeles Police Department. The Alpha Test used a letter grade system to designate intelligence levels, and the authors of the commission report concluded that only individuals scoring a ‘B’ (superior intelligence) or above “should be qualified as policemen” (1931: 59). Given that the department scored so poorly on the test, if Los Angeles was to be used as a baseline for the country it was concluded that “over 75 per cent of the members of the police force of this country are not mentally endowed to perform the duty assigned” (pg. 61). It should be noted that elsewhere Gould (1996) –has offered a devastating critique of Yerkes’ methods, making it highly likely that the analysis in the Wickersham Commission Report on Police is both invalid and unreliable.*





on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, spent considerable effort reconsidering the role of the police in a changing society (Hawley, 1998; Sherman, 1978). A serious issue under the President's Commission's consideration was the brutal reaction of the police to protesters in various forms around the country. More specifically, during the 1960s the police engaged in highly publicized violent clashes with student protesters, anti-war demonstrations, and civil rights protesters (Barkan, 1984; Hahn, 1971; Jacobs & Magdovitz, 1977; Smith, Locke, & Walker, 1967).

In light of the brutal response by the police, the President's Commission was facing the notion that the police represented a threat to democracy by becoming overly militaristic, and disconnected from the communities they supposedly represented (Hawley, 1998). Specific concerns were directed towards the attitudes typical of the police, including rigidity, authoritarianism, and conservatism (Jacobs & Magdovitz, 1977), all considered key parts of the police officer's working personality (Skolnick, 1994). It was here that the President's Commission considered the role of college education in police reform once again. As society became more complex, it subsequently demanded more of the police in terms of the roles that they must fulfill in the delivery of service (Bell, 1979; Dalley, 1975):

Sworn personnel, who, in various unpredictable situations, are required to make difficult judgments, should possess a sound knowledge of society and human behavior. This can be best achieved through advanced education (President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, 1967: 126).

In this period, obtaining a college degree was considered as a double-barreled means to improving the quality of police service. First, as society became more complex and diverse, the police needed to adapt appropriately. Higher education would deliver to recruits a superior understanding of this changing society, providing them with the *knowledge* needed to properly inform the discretion they wielded (cf. Bittner, 1970; cf. Weiner, 1976).<sup>2</sup> Secondly, obtaining a college education was thought to inculcate officers with values making them more liberal (Wilson, 1975), less authoritarian (Dalley, 1975; Smith, Locke, & Fenster, 1970), and less dogmatic (Roberg, 1978) - typically the opposite of the values fostered by the police officer's working personality. To this extent, it appears that the hope of the President's Commission was that higher education could penetrate the police habitus, disrupting values traditionally associated with policing and institute a program of cultural evolution aimed at reforming the relationship between the police and the communities they served. In light of these perceptions of the value of higher education to policing, the President's Commission went so far as to recommend that all police personnel in the law enforcement capacity should eventually hold a baccalaureate degree (President's Commission, 1967: 109).

---

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to contrast this point, forwarded by 1967 President's Commission, with the contention raised by the 2004 The National Academics Panel on Police Policy and Performance indicating that modern researchers have been unable to differentiate the effects of the educational experience from those of "the selection and screening involved in getting into a college program (such as intelligence, initiative, wealth, family background, and knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired before college)" (Skogan & Frydl, 2004: 141). The contrast furthers the notion that early calls for education requirements for police were grounded more so in rhetoric and exuberance than empiricism (Carter & Sapp, 1990; Shernock, 1992).





## 2.3 Community Policing Era

The perceived value of college education to policing evolved once again with the advent and implementation of community policing, beginning in the late-1970s. A discussion of the specific tenets of the community policing philosophy is unnecessary for this particular discussion, but can be found elsewhere (e.g. Goldstein, 1979, 1987; Skogan, 1990; Trojanowicz, 1994). Suffice to say, during this period the primacy of the law enforcement function of the police was called into question, instead emphasizing a multi-faceted, problem-oriented approach geared towards the quality of life in communities (Skogan, 1990; Trojanowicz, 1994; Xu, Fielder, & Flaming, 2005).

During this period, proponents of higher education requirements for the police advocated that community policing stood to benefit from the skills and knowledge of college educated officers.

Under community policing, line-level officers are given broader responsibilities and are charged with performing their jobs in more creative and innovative ways. Officers are urged to be proactive in program development and are given even broader discretion.

Given the mandates of this policing philosophy, the issue of college education becomes even more critical. The knowledge and skills officers are required to have under community policing appear to be tailored specifically to college education, because it appears that a college education makes an officer a more effective decision maker, a better service provider, a better communicator, and one who is more responsive to the police mission (Carter & Sapp, 1992: 10-11).

To this extent, Carter and Sapp (1992) posit that college education imparts officers with particular skills that are particularly conducive to the execution of community policing functions. More specifically, they hypothesize that college education provides the police with knowledge of democratic processes, knowledge of criminal justice system functions, tolerance for alternative lifestyles, empathy for minorities, and the ability to cope with stress (Carter et al., 1988). They concede, however, that while these points may be derived from the growth in empirical literature on the effect of college education on policing (Carter & Sapp, 1990), the evidence for each is not particularly strong (Carter et al., 1988).

## 3 HYPOTHESIZED BENEFITS OF EXPERIENCE TO POLICING

As noted earlier, the a discussion of the perceived benefits of increased experience to police work requires less detail than that of college education, partially because there is less literature on the topic, and potentially because the benefits derived from experience are seen to be natural and self-explanatory. The benefits that officers are considered to derive from their experience revolves around repeatedly encountering similar, yet situationally contingent, circumstances (Paoline & Terrill, 2007). Though the situations that officers find themselves in will always be somewhat distinct from previous encounters, “[patrolmen] maintain that some of the seemingly spur-of-the-moment are actually made against a background of





knowledge of facts that are not readily apparent in the situations (Bittner, 1967: 712). Bittner maintains that experience thus furnishes officers with a knowledge base applicable to future situations, and questions the extent to which a college education in the social sciences could possibly furnish officers with such essential knowledge (1970: 86).<sup>3</sup> In fact, Bayley and Bittner (1997) maintain that learning to become an effective police officer can only be achieved through the accumulation of experience in the context of repeated situational encounters. Similarly, Skolnick (1994) hypothesizes that the continual exposure of officers to the contingencies of their work allows them to develop a perceptual “short-hand” to inform discretion.

## 4 PREVIOUS EXAMINATIONS

There have been very few direct examinations of police officer’s perceptions of the benefit of higher education to their work. The studies that have been conducted to date have been restricted to officer’s perceptions of the relevance of criminal justice education to police work. A reason for this is that while proponents of college education requirements for the police used the liberal arts educated officer as an ideal type (President’s Commission, 1967), many police officers sought their post-secondary education in topics related to policing, such as police science or criminal justice, at community colleges with the classes being taught by other police officers (Sherman, 1978). To this extent, critics were led to wonder how such an education was qualitatively different from police academy training (Farrell & Koch, 1995; Sherman & Blumberg, 1981). These examinations served as an evaluation of the relevance of criminal justice education to policing.

The first such study found that was that of Barry (1978). In this particular study, Barry surveyed 1,274 individuals who had previously received a college degree in a criminal justice-related area, and were employed in full-time positions in the criminal justice system, including approximately 620 police officers. The survey covered a variety of topics, including the relevance of having a college degree to salary, promotion, and job performance. Most relevant to the current inquiry, Barry’s (1978: 349) analysis showed that the majority of the police officers in his sample (67 %) answered “Definitely” to the question, “has your education affected your ability to perform your job?” A quarter answered with “Somewhat”, and only eight percent felt that their education had “little or not at all” of an impact on their job performance. Adding depth to his findings, in a set of interviews with a sub-sample of survey respondents, Barry (1978) noted that the majority perceived their colleagues to hold positive attitudes towards employees with degrees, and those who felt a negative reaction cited the “older guys” as feeling threatened and resistant to new ideas and change” (1978: 351).

3 More specifically, Bittner states “In particular, making the college degree a requirement for admission to police work should not be misunderstood: four years of a liberal arts education of any kind will not prepare a young man for police work. And it would be absolutely pernicious to encourage the belief, either in the minds of the new recruits or of existing personnel, that a B.A. in sociology or psychology equips a person to do peace keeping or crime control” (1970: 86).







Subsequent studies have focused more precisely on the areas that police personnel (mostly administrators) feel are improved by acquiring a college degree. Chronister, Gansneder, LeDoux, and Tully (1982) learned that police agencies valued college education for their officers because it improved their knowledge of both law enforcement functions and societal nuances. In a survey of police administrators, Johnston, Cheurprakobkit, and McKenzie (2002) noted that college education was valued to the extent that it provided police with practical knowledge including writing skills, police practices, and ethics.

The most recent study of this nature was conducted by Carlan (2007). In this study Carlan was concerned with examining officer perceptions of the benefit of their college degrees, while highlighting the differences between criminal justice and non-criminal justice majors. Using a sample of 299 officers from Alabama, the analysis showed that the vast majority of officers with criminal justice degrees felt that their education had improved their knowledge of the law and the criminal justice system. Smaller proportions of officers perceived their critical thinking, human relations, and communications skills as being improved in some way as well. Carlan (2007) noted that these findings were important in that they demonstrated that police officers derived benefits from criminal justice degrees that were not limited to knowledge of criminal justice systems and processes.

There are no empirical studies on police officers' attitudes towards their training and work experiences in Slovenia regarding these issues. Contributions of Pagon, Virjent-Novak, Djurić, and Lobnikar (1996), Rančigaj, Šumi, and Lobnikar, (2009) and Lobnikar and Rančigaj (2010) put the Slovenian police training and criminal justice studies into a context of recent developments in the country which is now a fully fledged member of the EU. Their research suggests that Slovenian police has to decide which model of training and education should be fully applied – internal basic training and internal education in the Police Academy (Higher Police School), internal training in the Police Academy and external educational programmes at Slovenian universities (e.g., at the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, Faculty of Public Administration, Faculty of Law) or internal basic training in the Police Academy and joint educational programmes with higher educational institutions, specialized in social control issues.

## 5 THE PRESENT STUDY

The aim of the analysis presented here is to describe and compare the demographic characteristics and attitudes of police officers who perceive police academy training (basic and advanced) and experience as beneficial to their work. Even as former republic of the then Yugoslav Republic, Slovenia introduced dramatic changes in its police organization. Some of these changes included decentralization of police stations which were established by the communes relative to the Republic Secretary of the Interior exercised power and discretion in the appointment of police commanders, deputy commanders, and commanders of police divisions (Gorenak, 1996). Since its independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, Slovenia had introduced radical reforms to shift from a centralized socialist political and economic





philosophy and adopted free market policies. Some of the accompanying changes include economic liberalization, creation of private enterprises, and establish a legal framework with emphasis on rule of law (Winiecki, 2003). This required putting in place many reforms that included inclusive citizenship, separation of powers, free and fair elections, and civilian control of armed and police forces among others (Kaldor & Vejuoda, 1997). This brought about major shifts in institutional cultures including police organizations (Gasič & Pagon, 2004), resulting in numerous transformations in the social and political system that were in sharp contrast to the “social ownership” common to the political system of socialism in former Yugoslavia. Additionally, democratization of these institutions included police organizations’ commitment to shifts in police culture. Gorenak (1996) outlined numerous organizational changes by the Slovenian police since 1991 at the central, state, and local levels on par with normative values of the Western European police traditions. Even the border security functions were given to civilian police who carry out the control of passenger traffic across the state borders along with some tasks related to the protection of the Constitutional order (Gorenak, 1996).

Changes in police training and education started in the late 1990s with the abolishment of the police cadet system of education (a four year high school). Since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Slovenian Police cadets are given basic training soon after they finish high school. The training lasts eighteen months consisting six months of training in the Police Academy, six months of training in a police station, and the final six months on until graduation in the Police Academy. The Police academy offers also an advanced two year training in police academy. This program is only internally recognized. Graduates of this program have an option to continue their studies at the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Ljubljana in a BA program in Policing and Security. A small number of graduates who work in the police finished other BA programs such as law, social sciences, psychology, social education etc. Police officers who work in police stations in any of the three studies groups have finished either the police cadet school (before 2000) or the Police academy basic training (after 2000).

In the context of Slovenia, an emerging democratic nation in Eastern Europe, this inquiry will assess the extent to which the perceived value of education and experience are related to the values of democratic police reform (Jacobs & Magdovitz, 1977), or perhaps what Kury, Meško, Mitar, and Fields (2009) have referred to as a homogenous, authoritarian police culture persisting in Slovenia. To this extent, the position of present day Slovenia is much like that of the police in the United States in the late 1960s. While there has not been a similar movement for a college education requirement among Slovenian police, the analysis here can speak to whether officers who see college education as relevant to police work are consistent with, or antithetical to democratic reform.







## 5.1 Method

### 5.1.1 Data and Sample

The data for the current inquiry were drawn from a larger study conducted on Slovenian police officers in June of 2006. A survey instrument was developed in English and then translated into Slovene. The Slovene questions were subsequently reverse-translated back into English to check for validity of the translation (Nalla, 2009). The survey was administered to 11 police directorates across Slovenia, stratified by size, including two large directorates (cities of 86,000 to 250,000 residents), four mid-sized directorates (cities of 22,000 to 38,000 residents), and five small police directories (cities of 6,000 to 13,000 residents). Data collection was conducted by Slovenian graduate students who attended training sessions within each directorate. Participation in the survey was completed on a voluntary basis. Overall, 1,100 surveys were distributed at the various directorates, resulting in 995 completed surveys – a response rate of 90.1 percent.

For the purposes of the current inquiry, the survey items were framed to take Slovene culture and practices into account. The current inquiry focuses on two key questions - one as a measure of the perceived value of college education, and the other for experience. The perceived value of education measure is taken from the reverse coding of the following survey item, *“experience is more important than university degrees”*. As a drawback, the survey instrument was not designed with this particular research question in mind. As such, the reverse coding of this item is the best measure of perceived value of education available in the dataset. A better question would have originally asked whether the officer perceived university degrees to be somehow beneficial to police work, and then asked for elaborations. It is suggested that future inquiries in this area pursue the question in such a way. The second variable, the perceived benefit of experience, was measured by the following item, *“I have learned more on the job compared to what I learned at the Police Academy”*. Ideally, this question would have compared on the job experience to college education, but as such a measure did not exist in the dataset, this question is meant to approximate the benefit of experience over that of a formal learning environment. As each of these variables are single item measures, their values range from 1 ‘absolutely disagree’ to 5 ‘absolutely agree’.

Salaries in 2006. Slovenia adopted Euro on January 2007. In Oct.2010 1€ = 240 Slovenian Tolars.

*Sample Characteristics:* The respondent’s demographic characteristics are displayed in Table 1. Of the 995 returned surveys 86 percent respondents had high school while the remaining had some college or higher education. A little over half of the respondents (59 %) had served for 15 years or less and nearly a third of them (37 %) were 36 years and older. The sample consisted of only 12 % female officers (15 % of the Slovene police officers in 2006 were female) and an overwhelming majority (81 %) made an annual income of 211,000 or less. The occupational role of the officers suggests that the sample consists of patrol officers (39 %), Investigators (32 %), and state border officers (29 %). These data indicate that the sample does not feel strongly about the benefits of college education to police work, with 56 %





of the responses (N = 563) indicating some form of disagreement, and only 10 % (N = 98) in agreement. However, about a third of all the respondents (34 %) were neutral suggesting some ambivalence about the perceived benefit of education. On the other hand, nearly 80 % of respondents (N = 785) agree or strongly agree that their experience on the job has yielded more knowledge than a formalized learning environment. This is not surprising given previous ethnographic research on police culture in the western democracies has pointed to the primacy of experience over education (Muir, 1977; van Maanen, 1974).

		N	%
Education Level	High school	858	86.2
	Some college and higher	137	13.8
Years of Experience	15 Years or less	584	58.7
	16 Years or more	411	41.3
Age	35 and younger	630	63.3
	36 and older	365	36.7
Gender	Male	875	87.9
	Female	120	12.1
Salary (Tolars)*	211,000 or less	803	80.7
	211,001 and more	192	19.3
Occupational Role	Patrol Officers	389	39.1
	Investigators	319	32.1
	State Border Officers	287	28.8
Perceived Benefit of Education	Absolutely Disagree	263	26.4
	Disagree	299	30.1
	Neutral	335	33.7
	Agree	75	7.5
	Absolutely Agree	23	2.3
Perceived Benefit of Experience	Absolutely Disagree	6	0.6
	Disagree	44	4.4
	Neutral	150	15.1
	Agree	334	34.6
	Absolutely Agree	451	45.3

**Table 1.**  
Descriptive  
Statistics  
(N = 995)

### 5.1.2 Results

Table 2 displays the comparison of statistically significant mean differences between respondent views on the importance of education and experience. One would have expected that officers with some college and higher will be more positively than those with high school education. The findings do suggest the direction of these findings but the findings suggest that officers with some college or more are less negative of the perceived benefit of education (mean = 2.5) compared to those with high school (mean = 2.26). The mean differences are statistically significant. This





## The Perceived Value of College Education and Experience to Police Work in Slovenia

finding suggests that more educated officers more close to being ambivalent and unsure of the importance of education in their police work.

**Table 2.**  
Bivariate  
Statistics for the  
Perceived Value  
of Education  
and Experience  
across Officer  
Characteristics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Perceived Value of Education Mean/Std Dev</i>	<i>Perceived Value of Experience Mean/Std Dev</i>
<i>Independent Samples T-Tests</i>		
<b>Education Level</b>		
High school (N=858)	2.26/1.01	4.21/0.89
Some college and higher (N=137)	2.50/1.02	4.11/0.88
t-value	-2.52*	1.24
<b>Years of Experience</b>		
15 Years or less (N=584)	2.31/1.01	4.27/0.89
16 Years or more (N=411)	2.27/1.02	4.09/0.89
t-value	0.64	3.00**
<b>Age</b>		
35 and younger (N=630)	2.28/1.01	4.28/0.87
36 and older (N=365)	2.31/1.02	4.05/0.92
t-value	-0.34	3.83***
<b>Gender</b>		
Male (N=875)	2.25/1.01	4.20/0.89
Female (N=120)	2.59/1.01	4.20/0.90
t-value	-3.47***	-0.05
<b>Salary (Tolars)</b>		
211,000 or less (N=803)	2.29/1.02	4.22/0.89
211,001 and more (N=192)	2.29/0.97	4.07/0.90
t-value	-0.07	2.02*
<i>Analysis of Variance</i>		
<b>Occupational Role</b>		
Patrol Officers (N=389)	2.26/1.02	4.29/0.86
Investigators (N=319)	2.32/1.03	4.13/0.90
State Border Officers (N=287)	2.28/0.99	4.15/0.92
F-value	0.34	3.27*

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Mean Scores Range 1-5 with 1 = absolutely disagree and 5 = absolutely agree.

Experience and age appear to have no impact on the importance of perceived value of education. Given the recent analysis of Kury et al. (2009) demonstrating that a strong, traditionalist police culture still exists in Slovenia, we may expect that more experienced officers will be less likely to see college education as beneficial to police work, relative to their lesser experienced colleagues. Officers with 15 years of or less slightly less negative (mean = 2.31) than those with experience of 16 years of more. However, these mean differences were not statistically significant.





Interestingly however, officers who were in the age group of 36 and older were less negative (mean = 2.31) than 35 years and younger officers (mean = 2.28). Once again the mean differences were not statistically significant. Compared to males (mean = 2.25) female officers were more likely ambivalent than negative (mean = 2.59). The mean differences were statistically significant. Salary did not have any impact in influencing officers' perceptions of the value of education (both groups mean = 2.29) as both groups expressed lack of support for education. Finally, all three occupational groups did not support the value of education for police work. The mean differences among the groups was marginal (Patrol officers = 2.26; Investigators = 2.32; State Border Officers = 2.28) and statistically non-significant. Given that one would assume from experiences from Western democracies and different experiences by rank, we would have expected to see that education and job assignment would have some impact on officers' perceptions of the perceived value of education. However, we did not find any support in the predicted direction.

Compared to officers' perceived value of education, there appeared to have been an overwhelming support for experience. Mean scores for all groups are over 4.0 with statistically significant mean differences by years of experience, age, salary, and occupational role. Officers who have been working for 15 years or less valued experience more (mean = 4.27) than those who have been working for 16 years or more. A similar finding was noted for officers aged 35 and younger (mean = 4.28) compared to those who are 36 and older. The degree of perceived value of experience was apparent among those whose annual salaries are 211,000 compared to those who earn more. Finally, among the occupational groups patrol officers valued experience more (mean = 4.29) compared to State Border Officers (mean = 4.15) and Investigators (4.13).

## 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings from this exploratory analysis suggest that overall Slovene police officers value experience more than education. More specifically,

- The degree of ambiguity is greater among female officers' perceptions of perceived value of education relative to their male colleagues.
- Compared to high school educated officers, college educated officers appear more ambivalent of the value of education over experience.
- The degree of perceived value of experience is greater among younger officers (35 years and less) and less experienced (15 years and less) compared to older officers (36 years and above) and more experienced (16 years and above) though generally both groups believe that experience is valued more.
- Officers with an annual salary of 211,000 Tolars have a higher degree of value placed on experience compared to those who earn more than 211,000 Tolars though generally both groups believe that experience is preferable to education.

Compared to investigators and state border officers, patrol officers appear to value experience more though all three groups agree that experience is more valued than education.





It is unclear however, that their lack of perceived importance of education should be interpreted as negative attitudes and that they prefer one over the other attribute as significant for their work. Perhaps, it may have something to do with the nature and type of education officers receive before they become police officers. In the police academy, officers are exposed complexities of police work with emphasis on physical and social skills as well as legal knowledge and report writing skills rather than on analytical and critical thinking. This may bring attention to the curricular issues in the academy. That is, curricular offering that center around greater integration of theoretical and practical aspects of police, a form of blended approach that is more common in many criminal justice curricula in the U.S. and other developed Western democracies may have a greater appeal to officers during their academy. Further, this may warrant design of professional development programs by encouraging officers to pursue bachelor degrees in criminal justice related social sciences majors.

A second reason for the disparity in valuing experience over education may also come with fairly protected environment in which police officers go through educational experiences in the academy. Police Academy trainees spend a fair amount of time in the class room and deployed for small periods of time as interns at police stations. Even during these short spells, police students are not exposed to serious police issues. Thus, when they are actually deployed as full time officers in the field students may feel the relative lack of experience overwhelming. While this is not clear, further research should address the factors relating to experiences police academy trainee experience as they enter the field. Clearly, given these findings, more research is needed to blend the need for education and experience. This is more important with the new emphasis on community policing and enhancing police citizen relationships in light of the importance placed on democratic policing, rule of law, and human rights that came along with membership to the European Union.

## REFERENCES

- Barkan, S. E. (1984). Legal control of the Southern civil rights movement. *American Sociological Review*, 49(4), 552-565.
- Barry, D. M. (1978). A survey of student and agency views on higher education in criminal justice. *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, 6(3), 345-354.
- Bayley, D. H., & Bittner, E. (1997). Learning the skills of policing. In R. G. Dunham, & G. Alpert (Eds.), *Critical issues in policing: Contemporary readings* (3rd ed., pp. 114-137). Prospect Heights: Waveland.
- Bell, D. J. (1979). The police role and higher education. *Journal of Police Science and Administration* 7(4), 467-475.
- Bittner, E. (1967). The police on Skid-Row: a study of peace keeping. *American Sociological Review*, 32, 699-715.
- Bittner, E. (1970). *The Functions of Police in Modern Society*. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office.





- Carlan, P. E. (2007). The criminal justice degree and policing: conceptual development or occupational primer. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Managements*, 30(4), 608-619.
- Carte, G. E. (1973). August Vollmer and the origins of police professionalism. *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, 1, 274-281.
- Carter, D. L., & Sapp, A. D. (1990). The evolution of higher education in law enforcement: Preliminary findings from a national study. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 1(1), 59-85.
- Carter, D. L., & Sapp, A. D. (1992). College education and policing: Coming of Age. *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, (Jan.), 8-14.
- Carter, D. L., Sapp, A. D., & Stephens, D. W. (1988). Higher education as a bona fide occupational qualification (BFOQ) for police: A blueprint. *American Journal of Police*, 7, 1-28.
- Chronister, J. L., Gansneder, B. M., LeDoux, J. C., & Tully, E. J. (1982). *A Study of Factors Influencing the Continuing Education of Law Enforcement Officers*. Washington: US Department of Justice.
- Dalley, A. F. (1975). University and non-university graduated policemen: a study of police attitudes. *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, 3, 458-468.
- Farrell, B., & Koch, L. (1995). Criminal justice, sociology, and academia. *The American Sociologist*, 26, 52-61.
- Fogelson, R. M. (1977). *Big City Police*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Gasič, D., & Pagon, M. (2004). Organizational Commitment in the Slovenian Police
- Force. In G. Meško et al. (Eds.), *Policing in Central and Eastern Europe: Dilemmas of Contemporary Criminal Justice* (pp. 287-299). Retrieved 12th November 2010 from <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/Mesko/207973.pdf>
- Goldstein, H. (1979). Improving policing: A problem-oriented approach. *Crime & Delinquency*, 25, 236-258.
- Goldstein, H. (1987). Toward community-oriented policing: Potential, basic requirements, and threshold questions. *Crime & Delinquency*, 33(1), 6-30.
- Gorenak, V. (1996). Organizational Changes in Slovenian Police in the Period Between 1989 and 1996. In M. Pagon (Ed.), *Policing in Central and Eastern Europe: Comparing Firsthand Knowledge with Experience from the West*. Ljubljana: College of Police and Security Studies. Retrieved 12<sup>th</sup> November 2010 from <http://www.ncjrs.gov/policing/org229.htm>.
- Gould, S. J. (1996). *The Mismeasure of Man*. New York: Norton.
- Hahn, H. (1971). Cops and rioters: Ghetto perceptions of social conflict and control. In H. Hahn (Ed.), *Police in Urban Society* (pp. 135-153). Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Hawley, T. J. (1998). The collegiate shield: Was the movement purely academic? *Police Quarterly*, 1(3), 35-59.
- Jacobs, J. B., & Magdovitz, S. B. (1977). At LEEP's end?: a review of the Law Enforcement Education Program. *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, 5(1), 1-18.
- Johnston, C. W., Cheurprakobkit, S., & McKenzie, I. K. (2002). Educating our police: perceptions of police administrators regarding the utility of a college education,







- police academy training and preferences in courses for officers. *International Journal of Police Science & Management*, 4, 182-197.
- Kaldor, M., & Vejuvoda, I. (1997). Democratization in Central and Eastern European Countries. *International Affairs*, 73(1), 59-82.
- Kury, H., Meško, G., Mitar, M., & Fields, C. (2009). Slovenian police officers' attitudes towards contemporary security threats. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Managements*, 32(3), 415-430.
- Lobnikar, B., & Rančigaj, K. (2010). Visoko izobraženi policisti, znanost o policiji in policijska profesija - realnost jutrišnjega dne ali misija nemogoče?. In *Posvet Prihodnost izobraževanja v policiji*, 31. maj 2010. Tacen: Policijska akademija.
- van Maanen, J. (1974). Working the street: A developmental view of police behaviour. In H. Jacob (Ed.), *The potential for reform of criminal justice* (pp. 83-130). Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Muir, W. K., Jr. (1977). *Police: Streetcorner Politicians*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Nalla, M. K. (2009). Democratic Policing: a Comparison of Police Officers' Perceptions of their Role and Functions in Transitional Societies, *Varstvoslovje* [Journal of Criminal Justice and Security], 11(4), 520-535.
- National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement (1931). *Report on Police*. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Paoline, E. A., III, & Terrill, W. (2007). Police education, experience, and the use of force. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 34, 179-196.
- Pagon, M., Virjent-Novak, B., Djurić, M., & Lobnikar, B. (1996). European systems of police education and training. In M. Pagon (Ed.), *Policing in Central and Eastern Europe: Comparing Firsthand Knowledge with Experience from the West* (pp. 552-574). Ljubljana, Visoka policijsko-varnostna šola.
- President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. (1967). *Task Force Report: The Police*. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Rančigaj, K., Šumi, R., & Lobnikar, B. (2009). Zagotavljanje kompetenc za policijsko delo: prepletenost internega usposabljanja in visokošolskega izobraževanja. *Varstvoslovje* [Journal of Criminal Justice and Security], 11(3), 404-422.
- Regoli, R. M. (1976). The effects on college education on the maintenance of police cynicism. *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, 4(3), 340-345.
- Roberg, R. R. (1978). An analysis of the relationships among higher education, belief systems, and job performance of patrol officers. *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, 6, 336-344.
- Roberg, R., & Bonn, S. (2004). Higher education and policing: Where are we now? *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 27, 469-486.
- Sherman, L. W. (1978). College education for police. The reform that failed? *International Journal of Police Strategies and Management*, 1, 32-38.
- Sherman, L. W., & Blumberg, M. (1981). Higher education and police use of deadly force. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 9, 317-331.
- Shernock, S. K. (1992). The effects of college education on professional attitudes among police. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 3(1), 71-92.
- Skogan, W. (1990). *Disorder and decline: Crime and decline: Crime and the spiral of decay in American neighborhoods*. New York: Free Press.





- Skogan, W., & Frydl, K. (2004). *Fairness and effectiveness in policing: the evidence*. Washington: The National Academies Press.
- Skolnick, J. H. (1994). *Justice without trial: Law enforcement in democratic society*. New York: Macmillan.
- Smith, A., Locke, B., & Fenster, A. (1970). Authoritarianism in policemen who are college graduates and non-college police. *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science*, 61, 313-315.
- Smith, A., Locke, B., & Walker, W. F. (1967). Authoritarianism in college and non-college oriented police. *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science*, 58, 128-132.
- Trojanowicz, R. (1994). The future of community policing. In D. Rosenbaum (Ed.), *The Challenge of Community Policing: Testing the Promises*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Walker, S. (1977). *A Critical history of police reform: The emergence of professionalism*. Lexington: Lexington Books.
- Weiner, N. L. (1976). The educated policeman. *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, 4(4), 450-457.
- Wilson, J. Q. (1968). *Varieties of police behaviour: The Management of Law and Order in Eight Communities*. Harvard University Press.
- Wilson, J. Q. (1975). *Thinking about crime*. New York: Basic.
- Winiecki, J. (2003). The Role of the New, Entrepreneurial Private Sector in Transition And Economic Performance in Light of the Successes in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. *Problems of Economic Transition*, 45(11), 6-38.
- Xu, Y., Feidler, M. L., & Flaming, K. H. (2005). Discovering the impact of community policing: The broken windows' thesis, collective efficacy, and citizens' judgment. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 42(2), 147-186.
- Yerkes, R. M. (1921). Psychological examining in the United States Army. *Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences*, 15, 1-890.

### About the Authors:

**Jason Rydberg** is a graduate student in the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University. His research interests include criminological theory, policing, morality, and the philosophy of science.

**Mahesh K. Nalla** is a professor of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University, Michigan, USA. He teaches in the areas of criminological theory, private police, and comparative criminal justice. His current research interests include crime and social regulation (private security and public law enforcement) in developed, emerging, transitional, and post-conflict economies.

**Gorazd Meško**, Ph.D. Professor of Criminology and the Dean at the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia. E-mail: gorazd.mesko@fvv.uni-mb.si

