

Lisa Citta

Module 3- Assignment 3.1 Dual Perspectives on a Contemporary Public Safety Issue

## An Array of Contemporary Public Safety Issues

Assignment 3.1- Dual Perspectives on a Contemporary Public Safety Issue

Lisa Citta

University of San Diego

LEPSL 500: Contemporary Issues in Law Enforcement

Professor Erik Fritsvold

### **The Importance of Education in Law Enforcement**

Education today is essential- if you want to be successful in this profession (Fritsvold & Tellez). Many states or agencies do not require applicants or officers to hold an advanced degree other than a high school diploma. Studies have shown that college coursework can help officers improve their job performance, and as a whole, those officers are (The Link):

- Less Likely to Use Violence.
- More Committed to Community Policing.
- Better at Relating to their communities.
- Better at Identifying best practices.
- More likely to hold leadership positions.

As noted in President Obama's 2015 "Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing", today's police officers are faced with a variety of challenges like never seen before in our profession. Everything from terrorism to evolving technology, rising immigration, and a growing mental health crisis (DOJ). The Task Force reports for officers to effectively meet the challenges of today's policing, a higher level of education and extensive and ongoing training in specific disciplines is required.

People who seek higher education open themselves up to new possibilities, learning new leadership theories and new ideas (Fritsvold and Tellez). Future leaders in law enforcement must be willing to learn new things and adapt to continuously changing societal norms and community expectations. Those leaders who are unwilling to continue learning or unwilling to continue training to sharpen skills destined to repeat the same mistakes.

An educated officer is a better officer who is likely to have a broader understanding of what is happening in our profession and be better able to foster positive relationships with community members (Fritsvold and Tellez).

Lisa Citta

Module 3- Assignment 3.1 Dual Perspectives on a Contemporary Public Safety Issue

**References:**

Fritsvold, Erik & Tellez, Jose. Retrieved May 2022. A Firsthand Account on the Importance of Education for Law Enforcement. <https://onlinedegrees.sandiego.edu/importance-education-law-enforcement/>

The Link. November 15, 2021. Columbia Southern University- Continuing Education for Law Enforcement Officers. <https://www.columbiasouthern.edu/blog/blog-articles/2021/november/continuing-education-for-law-enforcement-officers/>

DOJ, Department of Justice. May 2015. The Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing. [https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce\\_finalreport.pdf](https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce_finalreport.pdf)

### **Policing without advanced education**

Responsibility. Integrity. Accountability. These are the basic aspects of the oath every police officer takes (Lexipol). These are the essential qualities all agencies look for in a prospective police officer. None of these qualities require any college coursework or advanced degree.

For some in law enforcement who have always had the calling to serve their communities, college might not have been an option due to many reasons, one primarily being financial burdens. Not every agency in the country offers tuition reimbursement or pay incentives. Many agencies also do not require any advanced education to promote and attain leadership roles in their agencies.

According to a national survey from June 2021, departments across the country are, on average, filling 93% of budgeted positions available (CNN). Law enforcement is facing trying times recruiting and retaining officers to fill positions. Requiring advanced college degrees at the time of hire could be keeping dedicated, compassionate, and qualified candidates from applying or entering the profession. Furthermore, requiring officers to attain a degree within a certain amount of time once hiring but offering no incentive to complete the degree is causing many officers to leave specific agencies or the profession altogether.

In 2020-2021, agencies across the country saw a 5% decrease in hiring, an 18% increase in resignations, and a 45% increase in retirements compared to 2019-2020 (PERF). If current practices don't change, the future looks bleak for recruiting and retaining police officers if current practices don't change. Agencies could pass up and let go of qualified people who would make exceptional police officers but don't have advanced education requirements.

Empathy, compassion, active listening, and good communication skills are qualities of a good police officer, none of which require a college degree. All qualities someone without an advanced degree to hold to be an outstanding servant to their community (Outside the Badge).

Lisa Citta

Module 3- Assignment 3.1 Dual Perspectives on a Contemporary Public Safety Issue

**References:**

Lexipol, Developing a Culture of Accountability: Outward Mindset and Active Bystandership. February 16, 2022. <https://info.lexipol.com/webinar-culture-of-accountability>

CNN, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022. Why Police Forces are Struggling to recruit and keep officers. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/02/us/police-departments-struggle-recruit-retain-officers/index.html>

PERF, Police Executive Research Forum. June 11, 2021. Survey on Police Workforce Trends. <https://www.policeforum.org/workforcesurveyjune2021>

Outside the Badge. Retrieved May 2022. 10 Traits and Characteristics of a Good Police Officer. <https://outsidethebadge.com/police-officer-skills/>