

**GRADUATES' PERCEPTIONS OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE DEGREE AS  
PREPARATION FOR A CAREER IN LAW ENFORCEMENT**

A Dissertation

by

GEORGE ROBERT FRANKS, JR.

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2009

Major Subject: Educational Administration

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**ABSTRACT**

Graduates' Perceptions of the Criminal Justice Degree as  
Preparation for a Career in Law Enforcement. (August 2009)

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There continues to be much debate in the criminal justice academic community about the value of the degree in the practice of law enforcement. Most of the debate centers on earlier research that was both non-discipline specific and did not include direct data collected from persons holding the degree and serving as police officers. Unfortunately, there is little identifiable research into whether criminal justice graduates perceive their degree as having a positive impact on their career in law enforcement. This research is an exploration of the relationship between criminal justice higher education and the majoring graduate's success in a law enforcement career. The research is vital in understanding the perceived relationship between the criminal justice degree and the law enforcement career from a program graduate/law enforcement practitioner perspective.

The study utilized qualitative inquiry and interpretive phenomenological analysis to develop major themes of the graduates' perceptions of how their criminal justice degree has contributed to their success in a law enforcement career.

The findings of the study indicate that most graduates perceive the degree as having direct links between college course curriculum and the academy training programs for law enforcement officers. There is also an indication that strong criminal justice related writing requirements improve career opportunities. In addition, the study supports the inclusion of required internship programs in the criminal justice curriculum, and the use of regular and adjunct faculty with career experience in law enforcement.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The final period of the dissertation body was placed at 3:17 a.m., on the computer in my office at Stephen F. Austin State University. As I realized that I had just placed the final period before submitting my work to the Committee, I was overwhelmed. I stared at the computer screen for more than ten minutes. In those minutes, I relived the past five years.

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If I were to create a list of all the persons deserving thanks for having helped me in life, the listing would be a long one. God has made me fortunate in life. He continues to bless me, often in ways I do not at first understand. He guides me, always with a loving hand. For all the blessings and the people through whom they have been delivered, I am thankful.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
I	INTRODUCTION..... 1
	Identifying Historical Measurements ..... 1
	Statement of the Problem ..... 3
	Purpose of the Study ..... 5
	Research Questions ..... 5
II	REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE..... 7
	Introduction ..... 7
	Section One: Professionalizing Police and the Birth of an Academic Discipline ..... 8
	Section Two: The Great Debate – Does Higher Education Improve Policing? ..... 17
	Section Three: Limited Exploration – Does the Study of Criminal Justice Improve Police Performance? ..... 24
	Section Four: A Summary of the Literature..... 25
III	METHODOLOGY ..... 27
	Introduction ..... 27
	Selection of the Qualitative Research Model ..... 27
	The Use of Interviews ..... 31
	Population..... 33
	Instrumentation..... 34
	Procedure..... 35
	Analysis of Data ..... 42
	The Analytic Process..... 45
	Criteria of Evaluation and Reflexivity ..... 47
	Trustworthiness and Rigor ..... 49
	Summary ..... 53
IV	ANALYSIS OF DATA AND FINDINGS..... 54
	Introduction ..... 54
	Section One: The Interview Process and Synopsis Development ..... 55
	Section Two: The Criminal Justice Programs and Participant Interviews..... 57

CHAPTER	Page
Section Three: Theme Development.....	142
Section Four: Summary.....	155
V SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	156
Introduction .....	156
Summary of the Study .....	156
Findings Related to the Literature.....	167
Conclusions and Recommendations for Practice .....	168
Recommendations for Further Study .....	171
REFERENCES.....	173
APPENDIX A .....	181
APPENDIX B .....	183
VITA .....	184



**LIST OF TABLES**

TABLE		Page
1.	Participant Background Information .....	44
2.	Institution A Participant Information .....	59
3.	Institution B Participant Information .....	84
4.	Institution C Participant Information .....	112

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Criminal justice, as an academic discipline, was conceived and came of age during the last century. Much of the early development of criminal justice higher education programs resulted from a move to professionalize law enforcement in the United States. As a result of the 1967 report from the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, federal programs were developed to promote the development of higher education programs and to provide financial assistance to law enforcement officers pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Another product of legislation that resulted from the Commission's 1967 report was the availability of research funds for the exploration of factors related to policing. This opportunity spawned research into the relationship between higher education and improvement in police performance. Research produced proponents for and against the argument that higher education played a positive role in the ability of a police officer to perform the duties assigned them.

#### **Identifying Historical Measurements**

The literature review will show that researchers generally did not focus on the discipline of an officer's college credit, nor were their efforts directed towards determining the perceptions held by the degreed officer. Instead, most research was

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The style and format for this dissertation follows that of the *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*.

directed towards determining the perceptions of agency administrators as to the value the degree contributed to the police officer's effectiveness. Some researchers attempted to quantify the value of the degree through comparative analysis of rates of citizen complaints against officers, officer involved shootings, and officer's use-of-force reports. Many of these studies produced conflicting results.

The literature review will include a discussion about the fact that neither type of research, supervisor perceptions or quantitative measurement, addressed the specific educational value of a criminal justice education. In addition, such research design allowed for other opportunities of error, some obvious and others evidenced from extensive experience in the law enforcement profession. In addition to those already stated, and in part based on my own observations during the literature review, others include:

- Much of the research was done concurrently with the rapid growth of criminal justice as an academic discipline (Carter and Sapp, 1990; Shrink, Roy & Ransburg, 1999).
- During the last century, it was extremely uncommon to find police supervisors having higher education (Travis, 1995).
- Until the last decade, it was very common to find police supervisors and undereducated peer officers harboring bias towards those holding college degrees (Goode, 1957; Bucher and Strauss, 1961; Azzaretto, 1992; Kennard, 1995; Polk and Armstrong, 2001; Bumgarner, 2002).

- Officer involvement in shootings, use of force, and citizen complaints increase in higher crime areas yet none of the researchers indicate an effort to determine the degree of officer's assignment.
- The number of officers holding college degrees was significantly low during the major research period (Carter and Sapp, 1990; Travis, 1995; Kennard 1995).
- Factors relating to other influences impacting the officer's actions were unaccounted for in the research (Baro and Burlingame 1999).

The lack of relevant research of the relationship between criminal justice higher education and law enforcement officer performance is the principal impetus of this study. Criminal justice programs have no real basis for determining whether the educational effort is contributing in a positive way to the effectiveness of law enforcement. Indeed, some researchers argue that it is counterproductive (Bromley, 1999; Griffin, 1980; Wilson, 1968).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The majority of research into criminal justice education has focused on the quality of faculty based on credentials, professional reputation, and record of research and publication, usually measured by the quantity of papers written and the prestige of the journals in which they are published; the reputation of the program among other scholars; and the reputation of the university in which the program is housed (Myers, 1994). As Myers observes, these factors do not necessarily relate to effective teaching.

Many of the researchers exploring the connection between general higher education and law enforcement officer performance have also observed the shortcomings of any effort to explore criminal justice education specifically (Travis, 1987). Still, this research has contributed to law enforcement agencies increasingly requiring some level of college education for job candidates to be considered.

Schrink, Roy and Ransburg (1999) observed that the need to do more research directly targeting the relationship between criminal justice education and preparation for a criminal justice career has increased by the continuing calls for accountability. In 2006, U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings generated a flood of attention when she responded to the report issued by the Commission on the Future of Higher Education with her comments and a response plan. Four of the five points in her plan, which she reportedly referred to as urgent, directly relate to academic accountability. The four points include:

- An effort to interface high school standards with those of higher education;
- The creation of a federally operated database to track the academic progress of students;
- Basing funding on the willingness of institutions to share learning outcomes;
- The initiation of a movement towards having accrediting groups place more emphasis on learning assessments (Field, 2006).

The latter point is not a new one for this discipline. The evaluation of learning outcomes is considered by some to be especially important for criminal justice programs

for two key reasons: The relative newness of the discipline, and the lack of comprehensive and coordinated planning for the growth process (Ransburg, 1994).

However, the work of Schrink et al. (1999), like that of Ransburg's in 1994, did not specifically address the relationship between criminal justice higher education and law enforcement officer performance (Schrink, Roy, & Ransburg, 1999). This specific research is severely lacking. If criminal justice is to continue as a viable option for students desiring to enter a law enforcement career, there must be extensive research and monitoring of graduate outcomes to assure the degrees are meaningful in the workplace.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship of criminal justice higher education and their work as law enforcement officers as perceived by criminal justice higher education graduates. Through the utilization of the interviewing methodology of data collection, this study will determine the graduates' perceived value of the criminal justice degree as a part of the preparation for a career in law enforcement.

### **Research Questions**

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do criminal justice graduates perceive the value of their criminal justice higher education studies on their work as law enforcement officers?

2. Can criminal justice graduates identify, and describe how, discipline-specific education has a positive influence on their ability to perform as a law enforcement officer?
3. Are there specific areas of criminal justice higher education that need to be enhanced to provide a better educational background for graduates entering law enforcement service?
4. Would criminal justice graduates working in a law enforcement career recommend a criminal justice higher education degree to others wishing to enter the field?

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter contains four sections. The first section is a review of the literature relating to the development of criminal justice as an academic discipline and the development of law enforcement as a profession. The second section is a review of the literature exploring the relationship of higher education to improved policing. The third section is a review of the limited literature relating to the direct relationship between criminal justice higher education and police performance. The final section is a summary of the literature review.

Readers will note that much of the literature in this review appears dated. There are two principal reasons: First, in discussions of the development of law enforcement as a national profession an attempt was made to go to the original sources. This helps to ensure accuracy of the material and avoid errors found in multiple levels of interpretation. Secondly, Schrink, Roy and Ransburg (1999) write about the significant gap in funded social science research following the end of the Law Enforcement Assistance Programs, discussed in the literature review. During the last decade, we have experienced another gap in research funding for social sciences creating a shortage of current literature relevant to this study.



### **Section One: Professionalizing Police and the Birth of an Academic Discipline**

The historical literature commonly identifies one individual, August Vollmer, as the founder of higher education programs for police. He has the distinction of being the father of both a new academic discipline and the movement to professionalize policing. According to Carte and Carte (1975), Vollmer was the first person to be elected town marshal of Berkeley, California in 1905, a position he held until 1909, when the city established a police force and made Vollmer the town's first chief of police. They cite two books that Vollmer studied in order to better his policing skills and design the new police department: *Criminal Psychology*, by Hans Gross, and *Memoirs of Vidocq*, by Eugene Francois Vidocq. These and his experience from serving in the U.S. Marines became the foundation of his beliefs about policing. It is noted that Vollmer was somewhat perplexed by his discovery of the limited material available about policing, detecting, and crime solving.

According to Eskridge (1989), once Vollmer was empowered to build a police department, he was able to act on his belief that education was integral to being a good police officer. Vollmer, taking the next step toward professionalizing policing, recruited his officers from the students and graduates of the University of California at Berkeley. In 1908, Vollmer established a police school that offered vocational training and education in the social sciences. Vollmer believed that the greater an officer's understanding of people and societal issues, the better prepared he was to handle the complex situations officers routinely face.

Vollmer spearheaded the creation of a criminal justice program at the University of California at Berkeley in 1916 (Carte and Carte, 1975). He then started requiring police recruits in his department to have either finished or be pursuing their college degrees, which leads to the common discipline-wide acknowledgement of him as the “Father of Modern Policing” (Eskridge, 1999).

This program focused on educating individuals already employed in policing, however, this first effort at providing a specific higher education program for individuals pursuing careers in law enforcement was short-lived (Morn, 1995). The onset of World War I created logistical and funding shortfalls that could not be overcome and the program ended. However, Vollmer was not through with the idea, and neither were some of the men involved in the school with him.

Bopp (1977) identifies three important outcomes from this early effort. The first was that Vollmer became more convinced police officers needed to be educated in the social sciences. Second, Vollmer developed followers who agreed with his ideas about educating police officers. Third, Vollmer continued teaching courses at the University of California and greatly influenced one of his students, Orlando W. Wilson. Wilson graduated with his degree from the University of California at Berkeley in 1924. In addition to studying under Vollmer, Wilson worked during his school years for the Berkeley Police Department, and would become the most prominent of Vollmer’s protégés.

### **Vollmer's Ideas Come of Age – The Wickersham Commission**

Vollmer's hopes received a boost in 1929 when President Herbert Hoover appointed George Wickersham to chair the National Committee on Law Observation and Enforcement, which became popularly known as the Wickersham Commission. The commission was charged with investigating the inability of the police to enforce Prohibition. There was some hope that the Commission would address the issue of Prohibition by recommending the repeal of the unpopular law. Instead, the members developed fourteen separate reports concerning a long list of law enforcement issues, most not directly related to the issue of Prohibition, but to the professionalization of law enforcement. One of these reports, simply titled *The Police*, was authored by commission member August Vollmer. Vollmer used this opportunity to promote his views of what law enforcement should look like in the United States. In his discussion of the Commission, Strecher notes that Vollmer and the Commission did not specifically list education as one of their ten recommendations, but it did propose higher education throughout the report. He cites examples of this by noting that the report observes that it is only through education that the police will be able to deal with current and future crime trends (Strecher, 1988).

Following the issuance of the report, *The Police* became one of the more quoted pieces of Commission work. The Rockefeller Foundation provided money to the University of California at Berkeley's Bureau of Public Administration and Political Science Department to revive the criminal justice program. Vollmer was appointed a professor of police administration in the Department of Political Science in 1932. He set

about developing an interdisciplinary approach to educating police. Two of the men assisting Vollmer were A.M. Kidd and Paul Kirk. Vollmer retired from UC-Berkeley in 1937. Following Vollmer's departure, Kidd, with the backing of the university president, transformed criminology into a separate discipline free-standing from any other department (Morn, 1995).

O.W. Wilson, who had studied under and worked as a policeman for Vollmer, returned to the University of California-Berkeley in 1939 (Ward and Webb, 1984). In the interim years, Wilson had served on the Wickersham Commission and had been a Harvard professor. Kidd, Kirk, and Wilson developed a multidisciplinary curriculum for the Department of Criminology. By 1950, the department had grown and developed to become the School of Criminology. Throughout the 1960s, there was such an increasing degree of internal political disharmony that the school was closed in 1970 as one of the major goals of Governor Ronald Reagan (Nemeth, 1989).

Although the UC-Berkeley School of Criminology suffered closure, many other similar schools were developed by its graduates and continued operations. Nemeth (1989) offers a laundry-list of similar programs that were developed across the country by graduates known as *V-men*, meaning they were followers of Vollmer. Nemeth notes that these schools in turn produced graduates that created others, establishing a fairly substantial network across the United States.

### **A Protégé in the Wings – The Influence of O.W. Wilson**

Bopp (1977) identifies O.W. Wilson, Vollmer's old UC-Berkeley student and Berkeley PD officer, as the first among the V-men and attributes much of the

development in advancing higher education and professionalization of law enforcement between 1930 and 1950 to his efforts. He notes that it was Wilson who most emulated Vollmer's expectation of the professional policeman and criminal justice professor. Wilson mixed his teaching with work as a consultant and frequent guest of working police departments. He became a close ally of Federal Bureau of Investigation Director J. Edgar Hoover, who had become a strong supporter of the belief that higher education, training, and professionalism were needed in law enforcement (Bopp, 1977).

The literature relating to historical development of educational programs specifically designed for police officers reflects some of the problems reported with establishing uniformity across the nation. The literature contains discrepancies discovered even in the act of reporting on programs. For example, there appears to be a discrepancy between the number of programs discovered by Nemeth (1989) and those identified by Palmiotto (1981). Nemeth (1989) determined that in 1968 there were sixty-four schools offering some form of criminal justice education. Palmiotto (1981) identified seventy-seven in 1960, and one hundred twenty-five by 1965. Careful reading reveals that Nemeth counted only programs housed in four-year colleges and universities. Palmiotto included those and the programs that had developed in community colleges. Both attribute the growth in program numbers to the maturing of law enforcement as a profession. Many of the community college programs included a mix of education and applied training activities not usually accepted as academic, such as firearms training.

## **A Decade of Presidential Influence**

The theme of the 1960s was that better educated police officers made for better delivery of police services (Dorsey, 1993). Most of the literature of that period proffered that educating police officers was a sensible way to accomplish police reform. However, reports that any changes between police and community relations as a result of educating police officers had been miniscule brought a change of attitude in the 1970s.

Six presidential commissions, in addition to the Wickersham Commission, called for more higher education for police officers (Polk and Armstrong, 2001). Thirty-six years after the Wickersham Commission first identified the need for higher education for police officers, the President's Commission of Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice readdressed the need for higher education in its 1967 report. Subsequent commissions followed suit in 1968, 1969, 1972, 1973, and 1978 (Samaha, 2006).

The 1967 document contains the most forthright statement of any of the reports (Weiner, 1976). The exact language used in the report was "The ultimate aim of all police departments should be that all personnel with enforcement powers have baccalaureate education and/or degrees (p. 317)."

However, Jeremy Travis (1995) deemphasized the impact of the 1967 report. In an address to the Forum on the Police and Higher Education at the Center for Research in Law and Justice, held at the University of Illinois - Chicago, on February 10, 1995, he noted that the statement was merely issued as an *ultimate goal*, not an immediate one. Travis was speaking as the Director of the National Institute of Justice in the U. S. Department of Justice.

Travis (1995) summed the collective statements of the six aforementioned commissions as recommendations that:

- There should be some level of college required for police recruits to receive their appointments.
- There should be an increased level of higher education required for promotion to a higher rank.
- The requirement for higher education should be made a matter of policy.
- Higher education should be viewed as an occupational requirement.

Regardless of the impact of the language in the 1967 report pertaining to college requirements, there was a series of legislative responses to the commission findings. The premier response was the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 that, in part, established the Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP) (Carter, Sapp, and Stephens, 1989). The theory behind the initiation of this program was the belief that educated police officers would offer well-thought-out policing with more understanding of social factors and better decision making.

While some authors emphasize the success the program had in providing higher education to police officers, others explore another impact (Foster, Magers, and Mullikin, 2007). They point out that while LEEP provided grants and loans to active law enforcement officers, there were strings attached for the institutions. For universities and colleges to take advantage of the student loans and grants, they had to offer classes relating to criminal justice. Their research indicates that there were 485 institutions receiving students in 1969, the first year of funding.

The huge number of law enforcement officer/students taking advantage of the program led to another development (Foster, Magers, and Mullikin, 2007). LEEP officials began working with colleges and universities to develop criminal justice programs to meet the intended outcome of the program. This eventually led to the creation of the Office of Criminal Justice Training and Education.

Dr. J. Price Foster (1979) has a unique perspective on the success of the LEEP program generally and the Office of Criminal Justice Training and Education. In 1975, Foster, then an employee of LEEP, was chosen to serve as chair of the Task Force on Criminal Justice Education and Training. The task force was charged with developing policy to guide the operations of the several initiatives operating under the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, which among others included both LEEP and the Educational Development Program.

Foster, writing with Magers and Mullikin (2007), recalls a conversation he had in the final days of LEEP, with officials from the U.S. Department of Education. President Carter, concerned over the default rate of student loans in all federal educational assistance programs, ordered the U.S. Department of Education to operate all of them. In preparing for the transfer, Foster recalls that he shocked the Department of Education officials by sharing with them the fact that the default rate for LEEP was less than five percent.

During the Carter Administration, the Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) became somewhat controversial among police agency heads. The dissatisfaction centered on the Justice Department's imparting of certain requirements to be eligible for



agency assistance grants. One requirement was that college graduates receive priority hiring over non-graduates. A second requirement, more unpopular in southern states, was that African Americans be proportionally represented in the agencies, based on their representation in the census of the jurisdiction. Dr. Lee Colwell, former Associate Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation witnessed the end of the program in person (Franks, 1994). Colwell was called to the White House and met privately with President Carter. Carter was extremely upset that the sheriff of his home county in Georgia had been told he had to hire African Americans to work as deputies in order to qualify for the LEAP grants. According to Colwell, Carter became so upset he scribbled a directive to cut all LEAP-related funding from the budget. Colwell's is the only explanation found for the program's sudden ending. The abrupt and vague closure of the Law Enforcement Assistance Program and related components is supported in the literature. Several authors include statements related to the quick and largely unexplained cessation of what was once deemed a valuable effort to promote law enforcement professionalization (Foster, Magers, and Mullikin, 2007; Carter and Sapp, 1990; Polk and Armstrong, 2001).

There are several important outcomes relating to higher education and law enforcement (Carter and Sapp, 1990). First, the LEAP programs increased the total number of police officers holding degrees and, second, the end of the programs did not deter the growth of criminal justice education. LEAP did not require officers to seek criminal justice degrees, only that their education be related to law enforcement. Dr. Foster believes that LEAP was successful if only for increasing the number of criminal

justice-related higher education programs in the United States (Foster, Magers, and Mullikin, 2007).

### **Section Two: The Great Debate – Does Higher Education Improve Policing?**

The literature exposes a significant gap of research into the issue of higher education and law enforcement from the end of the 1970s until near the end of the 1980s. Numerous authors include comments about this period of limited research and tend to point to the end of LEAP and the educational research grant programs they offered as the root cause. Others only mentioned the fact without commenting. Nevertheless, the end of the 1980s opened a new effort to understand the importance of having educated police officers.

One aspect of LEAP was the adoption of minimum standards in hiring by most states (Foster, Magers, and Millikin, 2007). Higher education requirements were intended to be an important component. Some proposals included a stair-stepped adoption, so that the requirements increased over time to include an undergraduate degree. Despite the hoped for higher education requirements, states tended to require either completion of a GED or High School. There was still a reluctance to mandate higher education as a minimum standard and most states avoided the issue altogether (Carter and Sapp, 1990).

According to Polk and Armstrong, the number of law enforcement officers in the United States having some college education is more than half, even though the number of agencies requiring higher education is low. They also observe that an increasing number of agencies require some level of higher education attainment in order to enter

the police ranks. They note that many law enforcement agencies are offering incentives for officers with college education. According to their research, most of the incentive programs include a stair-stepped reward system based on credit hours attained (Polk and Armstrong, 2001).

### **Defining Professionalism**

Many researchers assert that the national effort to professionalize police has been thwarted to some degree by the police themselves. These researchers do not downplay the role of higher education in their observations. Instead, higher education is central to the issue and therefore relevant to this discussion. They point to the fact that law enforcement officers tend to define professionalization in terms that do not include higher education, and then legitimize their definition. Most of these researchers point to the mechanism used in the historical effort to improve professionalization of police, federal programs and grants, as discussed previously (Fogelson, 1977; Skolnick and Fyfe, 1993; Kappelar, Sluder, and Alpert, 1994; Kraska and Cubellis, 1997; Baro and Burlingame, 1999).

Baro and Burlingame (1999) indicated that the US Census Bureau does not recognize police officers as professionals, and lists them in the category of service providers. Calhoun and Finch (1982) observe that the U.S. Department of Education historically classifies policing as a craft, and categorizes law enforcement training in the grouping for trade and industrial programs.

Kennard (1995) believes that the practice of categorizing police officers as non-professionals will continue as long as there is a reluctance to move to more action in

promoting higher education and establishing minimum levels for employment. Kennard believes that police attitudes towards education are the reason they do not receive the professional recognition they desire. He observes that other professions are based on higher education standards, self-regulation, and licensing.

The literature contains extensive discussions relating to Kennard's observations. Many of those writing about police professionalism seem to support the view that professional status is not related to higher education. Some authors identify variables related to the status of professional used to justify the inclusion of law enforcement. These variables include certification, peer recognition, standards for training and conduct, specialization, and controlled membership (Goode, 1957; Bucher and Strauss, 1961; Azzaretto, 1992; and Bumgarner, 2002).

### **Seeking an Answer – Does College Education Improve Police Performance?**

There has been a great deal of research into the relationship of college education and police performance in several areas. Most of these studies were performed in the 1970s through grants from the Department of Justice. These studies found that college educated police officers enjoyed better relationships in their interactions with citizens in the communities they patrol and higher performance ratings from their superiors (Cohen and Chaiken, 1973; Finnegan, 1976; and Casico, 1977). Post-LEAA research has consistently reaffirmed these earlier studies (Carter and Sapp, 1989; and Kappeler, Sapp, and Carter 1992).

Research consistently indicates that college-educated police officers have better verbal communication skills (Carter and Sapp, 1989; and Worden, 1990). Another

apparent factor is that college-educated officers tend to view ethical behavior as being of higher value than others in the profession (Shernock, 1992).

Eskridge (1989), on the other hand, argues that college education contributes negatively to an officer's career in two ways. He believes that officers tend to report higher levels of boredom on the job. Second, he notes there is evidence of varying degrees of hostility from non-educated police officers. Eskridge reported that many officers experience this hostility when they enter the academy, finding themselves singled out by instructors. He notes that this sometimes continues into the workplace. In such cases, hostility increases in frequency when an officer is granted promotion where educational attainment is a key factor in the decision. This should not be construed to mean that the problem is college education; rather the problem may be professional envy from those without degrees.

More recently, Baro and Burlingame (1999) have taken an alternative approach to most of their fellow researchers. They argue against the need for college education for police officers. These researchers suggest that higher education is unneeded in law enforcement because police agencies operate within a military-style organizational structure. They also point to the extensive pre-service academy and continued in-service training police officers receive as another reason higher education is not necessarily needed.

Paoline and Terrill (2007) address these negative-view theorists by asserting that most of the researchers arguing against the value of higher education promote the idea that experience is the key factor in determining police performance. In performing their

own literature review they found that none of the studies included consideration of the possible compounding benefit of combining experience and higher education. Paoline and Terrill conducted their study on the relationship between higher education and the use of force. Like the researchers previously discussed, Paoline and Terrill do not distinguish among the disciplines in which degrees were earned.

#### **Four Years or Two – Is Liberal Arts Required?**

Bumgarner (2002) explored how college graduates viewed their professional status. In his study, he divided the graduates between two-year and four-year criminal justice programs. Bumgarner noted that most two-year programs tend to be taught in an applied style, usually instructed by either former or current police officers. He found most four-year programs to be taught in a more traditional liberal arts style, with professors who may have had a role in the field of law enforcement, but were also highly educated and research oriented. Bumgarner found the graduates of two-year programs viewed police work with a greater tendency toward professionalism than did the liberal arts graduates. Bumgarner asserted that his findings do not relate to the value of education in a law enforcement career.

Carter and Sapp (1990) used data from studies in 1960, 1970, and 1974, to compare with their own study produced in 1988, in an effort to model the growth of higher education among police officers in the United States. In 1960, there were 2.7 percent of police officers with an undergraduate degree. By 1988, the number had risen to 22.6 percent. In addition, they found that another 22.1 percent had completed at least two years of college and an additional 20.5 percent had some college, although less than

two years. This reflects a total of 65.2 percent of police officers reporting some level of college education. Interestingly, Polk and Armstrong (2001), in a comparative study of the national average to Texas police officers, found that Texas lagged behind the national average by a slight margin with only 63 percent of the police officers reporting completion of some level of college work.

Ironically, the established case law relating to increased standards in law enforcement officer selection comes from *Davis v. Dallas* (1985). In this case, Davis sued the City of Dallas because of the police department's educational requirement. Davis lost the case in U.S. District Court. The U.S. Fifth Circuit issued a finding that included a clear message to police agencies. The court held that higher education requirements mean more qualified officers to handle the difficult decisions the police make in their interactions with society. Davis appealed the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court but was denied a hearing, effectively securing the Fifth Circuit Courts' ruling as the standard.

Exactly how many law enforcement agencies require college education differs. Baro and Burlingame (1999) report that less than one-percent require a four-year degree. They also report that less than twenty-five percent have a formal promotion policy relating higher education to increased opportunities for rank. One might expect college police forces to serve as role models in promoting the college degree as a basic requirement for employment; however this is not the case. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (1997: 48), the situation is just notably better for campus police

departments. Nationally, less than two percent of universities require the completion of a four-year degree for employment as a campus police officer.

However, Carter, Sapp, and Stephens (1989) report that the number of agencies requiring two-year associate degrees was just over nine percent, with four percent requiring the completion of a four-year degree. Their study did not indicate a hiring preference for candidates holding a degree in criminal justice over other disciplines.

The discrepancies between these two observations may be based on the simple factor of reporting. Both studies relied on police agencies to complete and return questionnaires, and their hypotheses were different. Carter, Sapp, and Stephens were attempting to show that higher education improves police performance. Baro and Burlingame were arguing that higher education is not only unneeded, but may even be counterproductive to good policing.

In 1999, Bromley argued the same point as Baro and Burlingame. Bromley cited several previous studies that indicated the effectiveness of a police officer, particularly during the early years of service, may be reduced by their having a college degree. One of these studies was a 1968 study by Wilson indicating that younger college educated police officers were resistant to formal authority. He also reported studies that the performance of such officers suffered during their early years. Bromley joined other critics in arguing that if higher education is going to be a requirement for employment, there should be a standardized requirement for curriculum content.

One such study caught the attention of Heather Wyatt (2000). Griffin (1980) observed that officers with a college education performed at lower levels in the



beginning. However, Griffin argued that, as years of service and education combined, their performance ratings surpassed those with years of service only. Using this information and further study, Wyatt proposed combining higher education with the training required to be a police officer. Wyatt argues that the changing paradigm of policing, where the patrol officer is required to function as a police generalist, would benefit from such an approach. In support of her proposition, Wyatt found that five states had established policies to accept academic credit in lieu of certain portions of basic police training: Alaska, Colorado, Minnesota, Mississippi, and Texas. She also found that these same five states have one or more training academies that are a part of an institution of higher education.

In summary of the current status, there is still great debate within the discipline of Criminal Justice as to whether law enforcement is a profession, whether higher education is needed to professionalize police, and even whether higher education is beneficial or detrimental to the officer. There are apparently few researchers looking directly at the relationship between criminal justice education and a law enforcement career. There are fewer still proposing the type of programs described by Wyatt.

### **Section Three: Limited Exploration –**

#### **Does the Study of Criminal Justice Improve Police Performance?**

The search for literature resulted in only one study that was directly in context with this study. In a 1994 program assessment research project, Ransburg identified eighteen competencies as key to preparing graduates for a career in criminal justice.

While his work is one of the few that focuses on criminal justice as a preparatory discipline, it did not specifically address law enforcement. The specific program Ransburg was evaluating was established in 1972. The particular program evaluated was a department of criminology. The survey instrument created, using the eighteen key competencies, was developed from information collected from the program curriculum, criminal justice practitioners, and criminal justice faculty members from a variety of universities. Unfortunately, the results were not stratified by degree, thus associates, bachelors and masters were considered inclusively. The results indicated that a majority of the respondents identified seventeen of the eighteen competencies as being important. Further, a majority of the respondents reported being well prepared by their education in only eight of the competencies (Schrink, Roy, & Ransburg, 1999).

#### **Section Four: A Summary of the Literature**

As evidenced in this literature review, previous research has been limited to exploring whether higher education in general is a positive factor in law enforcement officer performance. The review makes clear that this very basic question has not been satisfactorily answered. Moreover, the deeper question of whether criminal justice higher education specifically contributes to the graduate's career in law enforcement, and/or to improved policing has not been addressed in the research. This is not to say that researchers have completely ignored the question. In fact, the few that have written about the relationship between criminal justice education and law enforcement preparation have seemingly assumed that the issue needs to be addressed.

Based on earlier findings, which are included in this literature review, John Memory attempted to identify a successful methodology for teaching patrol officer problem-solving skills in the college classroom. He noted that other higher education programs, such as engineering, medicine, and law, include the development of such skills in their classrooms. One aspect that he identified as having hindered the development of patrol officer problem-solving skills models for the classroom has been the lack of faculty experience in the field of law enforcement. He notes that the other professional education programs require the faculty to have experience in the field. Rapid growth of criminal justice as a discipline and the increasing demands for terminal-degreed faculty has meant that few departments have field-experienced faculty. His research involved asking students to rate the need for such skill-based courses. Further, his study included a very small population of only fourteen students having experienced a problem-solving skills course (Memory, 2001).

In an article published in the November 2003 *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, Payne, Sumter, and Sun recommended improving criminal justice education as a preparatory degree for the criminal justice career through the introduction of field trips, ride-alongs, and guest speakers. Their work was essentially a literature review of pedagogical research and best practices from classroom experiences, but points to a general understanding that there needs to be improvement (Payne, Sumter, & Sun, 2003).

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter provides detailed information about the selection of a research paradigm, determining the population, collection design, collection of data, and analytical process used in determining outcomes. The data for this study were collected by the author under a research agreement with the Department of Government at Stephen F. Austin State University. The research design and protocol were approved by the Stephen F. Austin State University Institutional Research Board. In addition, the data collection and evaluation processes were reviewed and approved by the Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board.

#### **Selection of the Qualitative Research Model**

In developing a research project, every researcher must choose between two fields of data: Quantitative or qualitative. However, there are researchers exploring the use of mixed methods in pursuing answers to their questions. In developing this research project consideration was given to the fact that the available literature, even that which was loosely associated with the research emphasis, overwhelmingly relied on the use of quantitative data.

The use of quantitative data by other researchers exploring relationships between the successful and satisfactory completion of various law enforcement functions and

higher education have provided nothing more than controversy. Most researchers using quantitative data for police performance studies acknowledge that there are too many variables to measure, such as: time, years of service, age of complainants and offenders, location, assignment, influences of alcohol or drug, and a myriad of other factors. In an attempt to avoid these issues and to have a better understanding of the first-hand knowledge the respondents to the study possess, the qualitative approach was determined to be best for this research project. As previously stated, this research project is unique in that it is the first discoverable attempt to utilize the perceptions of college graduates with criminal justice undergraduate degrees to determine how or whether their education has contributed to their success as law enforcement practitioners.

The study of the individual's perception of reality is important in developing an understanding of the value of a criminal justice education to preparing a person for a successful career in law enforcement. Perception is the reality in which each individual understands their position. Guba and Lincoln (1989) discuss the concept of and identified four levels of reality that are philosophically expressed as: objective, perceived, constructed, and created. They describe perceived reality as one that can be appreciated "only from particular vantage points" (83). This research project utilizes naturalistic inquiry to collect the perceived realities of active-duty law enforcement officers holding undergraduate degrees in criminal justice, in an attempt to pierce the perceived realities to glimpse at what Guba and Lincoln describe as "real reality". The "particular vantage points" of this study are unique to each individual. Because law

enforcement agencies are as individually unique as the people employed there, each agency would also represent a “particular vantage point”.

Each law enforcement agency represents a paradigm where criminal justice education may or may not play a significant role in the graduate’s career. Some law enforcement agencies have no minimal education requirements. Other agencies require some minimal number of college hours, but less than a degree. More common are those agencies requiring at least sixty hours of college or an associate degree. Very few non-federal law enforcement agencies require a bachelor degree. However, many local agencies offer special incentives for higher education. In reviewing agency requirements for this research project, none were found that specifically require criminal justice education. Understandably, the value of an undergraduate degree in criminal justice would be relative to the agency requirements and very probably to the types of degrees held by the agency’s formal leadership.

Similarly, each program of higher education represents a distinctive reality. No two criminal justice higher education programs are the same: some utilize faculty with purely academic backgrounds, while others pursue faculty holding the necessary academic credentials in addition to having applied field experience. Although the American Academy of Criminal Justice is promoting the establishment of curriculum and program standards, there is currently little evidence of standardization within the academic discipline. Even within this research project, there are vast differences in the design, curriculum, and faculty of the university programs included.

Discovering the “real reality” is complicated by multiple factors, including the assumption that higher education programs change as faculty come and go, as do law enforcement agencies over time and with personnel attrition. Therefore, the specific approach in this research project is that described by Guba and Lincoln (1989) as perceptual realism. The framework of perceptual realism is that, “no one person – or, indeed, a group of many persons – can know all of reality at any point in time (83).” This research project was designed to discover the individual reality of each participant, and then compare them collectively to determine viable conceptual answers to the research questions.

A positivist approach was determined to be an ineffective manner of exploring the research questions. This determination was made based on two factors. First, previous positivist research projects studying somewhat similar issues have left gaping holes in their findings and have resulted in a controversy pitting two sides against each other. One side professes correlation between higher education and positive law enforcement officer performance. The other is composed of two subgroups, one who finds no correlation and another claiming that there is a negative correlation. A contributing factor to this confusion may be due in part to the fact that the positivist approach has been the model used for collecting and analyzing the data of the studies. This view is the result of previous personal experience in participating in various research projects attempting to determine job satisfaction, ethical climate, best practices, and other perception based studies. Everyone has had the experience of attempting to accurately complete a survey instrument, even one using a relatively broad Likert-like

scale, and felt frustration because of the constrictions imposed by the lack of opportunity to deviate from the question, or explain an answer.

The positivist approach precludes the researcher from discovering important data directly related to the inquiry area. The naturalistic approach allows the researcher to use the findings to discover meaning and truth that define the subjects' perceptions. The naturalistic inquirer pursues an understanding of the respondents' values, feelings, and judgments related to the research project (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

The naturalistic approach is especially appropriate in this research effort because there is no attempt to argue the value of the criminal justice degree as a prerequisite for a successful law enforcement career, or to argue the opposing view discovered in some of the literature regarding higher education in general. The intended purpose of this approach is to attempt to develop a model of perceived value in the possession of a criminal justice bachelor degree, and to attempt to discover if there are specific higher education topics within the discipline that holders feel contributed to their career success.

### **The Use of Interviews**

This research project relies entirely on personal interviews of active duty law enforcement officers holding bachelor degrees with a major study in criminal justice. Some members of the academic community express concern about the use of the interview as a research tool. These concerns usually focus on the issue of reliability. Babbie (2002) asserts that the reliability of interviews is lower because they reference a



small number of people and form an in-depth description of a narrow topic. Berg (2004) argues that the small population of interviews makes it difficult to extrapolate the results to a larger population or to generalize.

However, Berg (2004) counters his concerns by observing that the lessened degree of reliability is offset by the high measure of validity. He notes that dialogue allows the respondents to have ambiguous questions clarified, which in turn allows the interview to explicitly address the intended topic area of the researcher. He further notes that validity is greatly enhanced when there is a good relationship between the researcher and respondent. From a personal standpoint, this research benefited from the fact that the researcher is a retired law enforcement officer and currently serves on the criminal justice faculty of a university.

Lofland and Lofland (1984) believe that the researcher stands to enjoy greater access if they utilize contacts with previously established relationships to the inquiry group. These “gatekeepers” are often able to remove barriers the researcher would encounter if they are perceived as interlopers. They caution that if the researcher is unfamiliar with the subject and jargon being used, additional questions are required and the respondent may view the activity as wasting time. As Lofland and Lofland observe, doing advanced research for information and becoming familiar with terminology can assist in avoiding the perception that the respondent’s time is being wasted. In this study, the researcher’s personal experience in law enforcement, together with a familiarity with criminal justice education, helped to dissolve potential barriers and

incorporate the jargon as meaningful dialogue. The researcher's career experience permitted him to act in the additional role of gatekeeper.

### **Population**

This research project utilizes graduates of criminal justice higher education degree programs from three regional institutions of higher learning, located within the tri-state area of Arkansas, Texas, and Louisiana. The population for the study was selected based on limited criteria: The individual had to hold a bachelor degree in criminal justice from one of the three regional universities; must have graduated more than two years and no more than seven years before the study; and is currently employed as a full-time law enforcement officer. From this thirty participants were selected for interviewing.

The institutions were chosen because they have established criminal justice programs with similar numbers of faculty, discipline majors, and graduates. The participant criteria relating to restriction on more than seven years past graduation was to ensure the information relating to the higher education experience was relevant. Programs can change dramatically over time and graduates from the same program may have had demonstrably different learning experiences as a result. The participant criteria relating to requirement of at least two years past graduation was to allow the graduate to have invested some time in the career and gain practitioner status and perspective.

### **Instrumentation**

The research was conducted using both face-to-face and telephone interviews. Babbie (1998) observed that the interview is the best method of acquiring qualitative data concerning the respondent's perceptions. This method seemed to be especially appropriate in determining law enforcement officer's perceptions. The process of asking questions and making notes about the answers is a common job task in law enforcement. Patton (1990) observes that the interview is a method of discovering what is happening and then verifying the discovery.

The interviews were semi-structured interviews containing a mixture of open-ended, with specific follow-up, questions. Patton (1990) observes that qualitative interviewing utilizes open-ended questions that allow for individual variations. Patton identifies three types of qualitative interviewing: informal, conversational interviews; semi-structured interviews; and standardized, open-ended interviews. For this study, the semi-structured interview was the obvious best choice. Were the researcher investigating a single degree program, or a single law enforcement agency, a standardized interview would have sufficed. However, this study included graduates of three programs, now employed in twenty-five different agencies. The fact that each agency maintains its own standards, requirements, and policies relating to educational requirements and benefits means that a standardized interview would have proven ambiguous. An informal interview was not considered as a viable method due to the sheer time required for collection of data.

## **Procedure**

### **Selection and Initial Contact**

Initial selection of participants was made somewhat restricted by the conciseness of the criteria and the difficulty of tracking alumni of the programs. Fortunately, the target of thirty participants, evenly divided across the three programs, was attained. However, an original goal of dividing each of the three groups equally by gender was not possible. One of the programs had only one female graduate employed as a law enforcement officer. None of the programs had an abundance of potential participants. In cases where more than ten potential participants were available, an attempt was made to divide the study group composition evenly between males and females.

Potential participants were initially contacted by telephone. The research project was explained to each individual, along with the confidentiality plan. The researcher introduced himself, offered personal background information, and explained the educational purpose of the study. The potential participant was asked to participate in the study. Of the initial thirty-one potential participants contacted, thirty agreed to be interviewed. The first person contacted was being deployed as a member of the National Guard and would be unable to participate.

### **Confidentiality**

Samaha (2006), writing about police socialization, notes that law enforcement officers are taught from their first days in the academy to follow a strict code of confidentiality. Delattre (2006: 484) refers to this as the “blue veil”, which he describes as a “passion for secrecy.” Both note that this passion for secrecy is inherent to the

requirements for the profession. As Samaha notes, it is important for the police to keep certain details secret from the public. Delattre offers examples of this same need: Secret service agents being protectively quiet about their knowledge as to Presidential movements; homicide investigators withholding certain portions of evidence to protect the investigation. With these observations, and personal knowledge, the need for a strong confidentiality assurance was front-loaded into the research project.

Each participant was asked to sign a statement agreeing to be interviewed. The agreement includes provisions allowing for: The use of a digital recording device during the interview; an opportunity to review the collected statement and notations relative to their own interview; the use of non-identifiable quotations of observations made during the interview; and the assurance that a copy of any written productions, including the resulting data, will be available to the participant on request. The agreement also includes provisions assuring complete confidentiality: The participants' names will not be given to other participants, their agency, individuals associated with their college program, or any other person; no copies of digital recordings or interview notes will be made or provided to any other person; digital recordings will be destroyed as soon as the information is transcribed, and no transcription will contain identifying information; no person will be permitted to view the completed agreement, except in the case of the individual participant entering into litigation against the researcher; all data materials will be destroyed three years after completion of the project.

In those cases where face-to-face meetings were utilized, the participant was given an opportunity to read the consent form, ask questions, and sign before being

asked any of the interview questions. In those cases where the interview was conducted by telephone, the participant was e-mailed and asked to read the consent form attached as a PDF. Telephone contact was made and the participant was given an opportunity to discuss any issues or ask question they had about the form and process. The participant was then asked to sign the form and return it by FAX, or scan the completed form into a PDF file and return it as an attachment in e-mail. In either case, no interview questions were asked until the completed form was returned.

### **The Interview**

A follow-up telephone contact was made with each of the persons agreeing to serve as a participant. Face-to-face interviews were performed with the majority of participants, with the remaining interviews being conducted by telephone. Telephone interviews were utilized when it was the preference of the participant or the travel distance from Nacogdoches proscribed the alternative. Three of the participants lived distances greater than 500 miles, and these represent the only telephone interviews used.

The interview questions were designed to collect data that would assist the researcher in addressing the principal research questions of this project. Again, as put forth in Chapter I, the research questions being addressed included:

1. How do criminal justice graduates perceive the value of their criminal justice higher education studies on their work as law enforcement officers?
2. Can criminal justice graduates identify, and describe whether and/or how, discipline-specific education has a positive influence on their ability to perform as a law enforcement officer?

3. Are there specific areas of criminal justice higher education that need to be enhanced to provide a better educational background for graduates entering law enforcement service?
4. Would criminal justice graduates working in a law enforcement career recommend a criminal justice higher education degree to others wishing to enter the field?

During the initial interview, participants were asked fairly open-ended questions designed to collect data relating to their perception of the value of their criminal justice degree measured with their career success as a professional law enforcement officer. In addition, other follow-up questions were included to clarify answers or assist the researcher in collecting the relevant data. These questions were specific to each interviewed participant, although they were not asked in a way to alter the intent of the original ones.

For clarification purposes, some of the questions were designed to elicit the graduates' perceptions relating to whether or not they perceived themselves as having an advantage because of their criminal justice degree. As one reviewer noted, the concept of what constitutes an advantage may be subject to interpretation. The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship of criminal justice higher education and their work as law enforcement officers as perceived by criminal justice higher education graduates. The study produced no evidence of participant confusion over the relationship between having a career advantage over other officers and that representing value.

Before addressing the specific questions, information was collected about the participants' college graduation date and degree major, attendance of a law enforcement training academy, years of service, and duty assignments. This questioning served the multiple purposes of establishing a higher level of rapport with the participant, relieving any interview anxiety, and criteria checking. The interview questions were:

1. Given a broad conceptual view of your law enforcement career, do you perceive your degree course specific to criminal justice as allowing you a career advantage over other officers without a degree, or with a degree in a different discipline?  
Follow-up: Why or why not? (As appropriate).
2. Can you identify any particular discipline-specific courses of your criminal justice major that clearly prepared you for your career? Follow-up: What are they? (As appropriate).
3. Can you identify particular instances in your law enforcement career where having a degree in criminal justice provided you with a career advantage over other officers not holding the degree? Follow-up: Will you discuss these? (As appropriate).
4. Can you identify particular instances in your law enforcement career where having a degree in criminal justice provided you with a disadvantage compared to other officers not holding the degree? Follow-up: Will you discuss these? (As appropriate).
5. Considering the criminal justice curriculum of your degree program, can you identify any specific courses or academic skills that should have been included and were not?  
Follow-up: What are they? (As appropriate).



6. In the event a high school student wanting to pursue a career as a law enforcement officer were to come to you for preparatory advice, would you recommend your own degree program to them? Follow-up: Why or why not? (As appropriate).

Following the completion of the interview, the researcher reviewed the field notes with the participant to ensure the observations accurately reflected the intended responses. The participant was offered the opportunity to review any of the digitally recorded responses to interview questions. In addition, a participant was allowed to restate or explain responses for clarification.

One reviewer posed the question of how the interview questions relate to the participants' work in law enforcement. The study represents an effort to develop understanding about the participants' perceived value of the degree in relation to their career, not necessarily any particular aspect of the work. There is a later discussion of the fact that no effort was made on the part of the researcher to determine from another source whether the participant was an exceptional officer or not. The study relied on the participants' perception of whether the career was successful and if the degree was helpful.

### **Recording the Data**

The interviews were recorded with a digital recording device. In addition, the researcher made notes about the interviews and observations of the participants. The decision to tape the interviews was made after careful consideration of two views discussed in the literature relating to naturalistic inquiry. Patton (1990: 348) describes the use of a tape recorder for interviews as "indispensable." Lincoln and Guba (1985:

241) do not recommend recording “except for unusual reasons.” However, further reading of Lincoln and Guba reveals their recommendation to be partly based on the possibility of the recording device failing. Their observations were based on recording devices in use in the 1980s. The modern digital recording devices are much improved over the reel and cassette tape recorders and new instrumentation provides immediate warnings of malfunction.

A second concern expressed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) relates to the “intrusiveness factor”. Modern law enforcement officers are well versed on the presence of recording devices. The vast majority of law enforcement agencies utilize audio and video recording devices in patrol cars, interview rooms, booking centers, and other locations where police are in contact with individuals. In addition, many law enforcement officers utilize their own audio recording devices during personal contacts. Recording the interview provides the distinct advantage of capturing data more accurately than hastily written notes, and allows the researcher to focus more attention on active listening during the interview.

## **Analysis of Data**

### **The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis Method**

As previously noted, the intended purpose of the qualitative approach in this research project is to determine the relationship of criminal justice higher education and their work as law enforcement officers as perceived by criminal justice higher education graduates. For these reasons, the determination was made to utilize the interpretative phenomenological analysis method of data analysis.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a qualitative method used to gain understanding of how the participants perceive a phenomenon. Typically, the researcher utilizes either the interview or focus group approach to gather the qualitative data. For this project the interview approach was used. The participants' responses are then interpreted by the researcher to construct themes that are relevant to the researcher's questions. IPA was developed specifically for the purpose of finding answers to the types of research questions used in this project, relating to perceptions of individuals (Smith et al., 1999).

IPA requires reflexivity from the researcher (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). They describe reflexivity as the "awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of remaining 'outside of' one's subject matter while conducting research" (p. 228). As a faculty member in a criminal justice higher education program, and a twenty-five year veteran of a law enforcement career, the researcher in this project would find it impossible not to engage in the construction of meanings in the data.

IPA is closely related to both grounded theory and phenomenology. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 204) describe grounded theory as developing theory from the data, rather than before the data are collected. This research project began with no defined theory of the outcome, other than that the final product would be an interpretation of the data.

Phenomenology is an approach based on philosophy and studies conscious awareness of the world as experienced from the subjective or first person point of view. The phenomenological researcher has an interest in the participants' experiences of the world and becomes immersed in the private world of each participant as a phenomenological insider. The phenomenological researcher views experience as a product of cognition and perception (Smith et al., 1999).

IPA was originally adopted as a method appropriate to health psychology. However, in recent years it has become increasingly popular as both a social science and educational research method because it makes use of the participants' perceptions, cognition, experiences, and stories. Another appealing aspect of IPA is that it acknowledges the researcher's personal engagement with the process of collecting and interpreting data (Willig, 2001).

### **The Participants**

As noted earlier, the participants were recruited from the alumni of three regional state universities, representing Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. Three universities from different states were included in order to gain a wider perspective of criminal justice education and to avoid a specific program evaluation. The criteria were that the participants would have completed the requirements of and graduated with a criminal

justice bachelor degree no fewer than two years prior to the interview and no more than seven. This was to insure the study was relevant to the degree received. The criteria also included a predetermined number of at least ten participants from each of the three programs. This resulted in thirty participants, double the typical number used for IPA studies.

In order to improve the readability of the findings, while protecting the identities of the individual participants, the law enforcement agencies, and the universities, gender-related pseudonyms were assigned. Law enforcement agencies were not identified in any specific way. Participant pseudonyms were chosen that begin with either A, B, or C. Each letter represents one of the three universities in the study. As an example, Anna is a female participant and graduate of university A. Table 1 provides background information about the 30 participants.

**Table 1 Participant Background Information**

Participant Name	Gender	Agency Type	Years Since Graduation	Years in Law Enforcement	Additional Higher Education
Aaron	M	State	6	5	None
Abby	F	Local	4	2	6 Graduate Hours
Adam	M	Local	3	2	None
Alan	M	State	7	5	MS/CJ
Albert	M	Local	7	5	MS/CJ
Alec	M	Local	5	2	None
Alice	F	Local	2	1	None
Andrew	M	Local	6	3	9 Graduate Hours
Anna	F	Local	3	2	12 Graduate Hours
Anton	M	Local	5	4	None
Baker	M	Local	6	5	30 Graduate Hours

Table 1 *Continued*

Participant Name	Gender	Agency Type	Years Since Graduation	Years in Law Enforcement	Additional Higher Education
Barry	M	State	5	2	MS/CJ
Becky	F	State	5	4	None
Ben	M	State	7	7	JD
Betsy	F	State	3	2	18 Graduate Hours
Beverly	F	State	5	3	MPA
Bill	M	Local	6	5	None
Brad	M	State	4	4	None
Brandi	F	State	3	2	12 Graduate Hours
Brenda	F	Local	3	3	None
Caleb	M	Local	7	4	None
Calvin	M	State	5	4	6 Graduate Hours
Cam	M	Local	4	3	12 Graduate Hours
Cara	F	Local	6	3	MS/CJ
Carl	M	State	6	4	MPA
Carter	M	State	6	6	6 Graduate Hours
Celia	F	State	6	4	MS/CJ
Chantal	F	Local	5	5	None
Chloe	F	State	5	2	MPA
Claire	F	State	7	3	MSW

### **The Analytic Process**

During the interview, notes were taken and reviewed with the participant. As soon thereafter as possible, the researcher prepared an interview synopsis. The technique of note-taking during the interview and development of the interview synopsis were taken from professional training received by the researcher at the Federal Bureau of

Investigation National Academy and following years of applied interview experience. The resulting synopsis of each interview is provided in Chapter IV.

The digitally recorded interview of each participant was reviewed several times. The researcher prepared a transcript of each interview and each was thoroughly reviewed numerous times in order to develop as much familiarity as possible with the participants' accounts. Each reading resulted in notes about key phrases, preliminary interpretations and connections or contradictions with each participant's account being made in the left hand margin. Notes identified emergent themes associated with key words that captured the essential meaning of passages.

A separate sheet of paper was used to list all the emergent themes from the collective group of participants. This aided in identifying connections or contradictions between the accounts. When deemed appropriate, developing themes were clustered together to create what Willig (2001) and others refer to as superordinate themes. Categorizing developing themes together required rechecking the source material in order to ensure the superordinate themes were consistent with the participants' statements. This refinement led to the development of a table of master themes for each transcript. The master themes were then cross-compared in order to identify connections or contradictions.

This process produced the final superordinate themes of the study, which were then rechecked for consistency with the source material. The superordinate themes were then ordered into a coherent narrative account. Those themes which did not fit well into the logical structure of narrative were set aside. These are reserved for further study and

future publications, but did not directly correspond to the research questions. They are contained in a separate section in Chapter IV, and are reflected in Recommendations for Further Study in Chapter V.

### **Criteria of Evaluation and Reflexivity**

To reiterate a key component of the IPA approach, researchers recognize that the data analysis is characterized by subjectivity. The central task is to present the researcher's interpretations of the participants' interviews. This study may have been influenced by the researcher's personal experiences as a criminal justice instructor in a regional university. This influence may have been compounded by the additional facts that the researcher is a retired police officer with more than twenty-five years of service, and that there continues to be close connections maintained with the law enforcement community. The IPA approach views the researcher's personal assumptions and explanations as a necessary precondition for making sense of the participants' thoughts and feelings (Willig, 2001).

An additional consideration is that participants' statements may have been influenced by the researcher's presence during the interview process, since they were previously made aware of the dual association to the subject matter being investigated. This could account for the fact that most participants seemed to be quickly at ease in expressing their views and more than willing to share hardship stories relating to their degree status.



Overall, the conclusions are a product of the interaction between the participants and the researcher. The research findings, therefore, should be considered as tentative and limited to the specific group of people involved in this study (i.e. participants and researcher).

Many researchers utilizing qualitative methodologies adhere to the view that human knowledge and experience fails to conform to objective reality. They view reality as being shaped by personal subjective experiences and accounts (Yardley, 2000).

This perspective uses different criteria for the evaluation of qualitative studies than the criteria used in evaluating quantitative studies. Still, critical subjectivity was a goal and interpretations of participants' interviews were discussed with two senior faculty members, both serving as peer debriefers: The researcher's departmental chair, a noted scholar in social research, and another tenured faculty member with a distinguished social research publication record. Neither has experience in law enforcement, nor are they part of the criminal justice program faculty. In compliance with the recommended guidelines of Elliot and others, the superordinate themes, sub-themes, and interpretations were checked to assure they were grounded in the data (Elliot et al., 1999). During the theme development and analysis, their feedback occasionally resulted in modifications. The end results are based on three different perspectives of personal and professional experience.

Transcripts quotes contained in Chapter IV will allow individual readers to assess the consistency between the data and interpretation (Elliot et al., 1999). Some quotations will have obviously been modified for clarity, to ensure confidentiality, or to indicate

hesitation in continuing answers. Readers may view empty brackets as indicating material has been omitted; in cases where the researcher has added material for the purpose of clarification, the information will be contained in square brackets; and a series of three dots are used to indicate a pause in the participant's speech.

### **Trustworthiness and Rigor**

Much has been written about trustworthiness and rigor in naturalistic inquiry. Lincoln and Guba (1985) established certain criteria for trustworthiness: Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Subsequent to the Lincoln and Guba publication, other researchers have adhered to these criteria and produced much discussion about how these are established (Cranton, 2001; Koch & Harrington, 1998; van Manen, 1997; Sandelowski, 1986). This study relies on a variety of measures to ensure these four criteria are addressed.

#### **Credibility**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that studies achieve trustworthiness by making use of practices and “activities that make it more likely that credible findings and interpretations will be produced” (p. 301). Koch (1996) notes that a central issue of establishing credibility is that the steps taken to ensure trustworthiness have been established. Just as Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended member checks as a useful tool in establishing credibility, Koch and Harrington (1998) suggest that data be returned to participants for verification.

In this study, the recordings were reviewed with participants immediately following the interview. The investigator identified specific relevant data noted in field notes, and discussed these with the participant. In analyzing the data, the investigator contacted some participants and discussed emerging themes with them. This process allowed participants to validate the material they had provided the researcher, check the understandings identified during active listening, and verify themes found in the data.

Lincoln and Guba (1998) and Koch (1996) point to the increased credibility of a study wherein the investigator has prolonged engagement and high levels of familiarity with the subject matter. In this study, the investigator has more than twenty-five years of law enforcement experience, developed and served as Commandant of a major state law enforcement agency's recruit training program, and has taught higher education criminal justice courses for more than nine years.

Another form of prolonged engagement with the subject matter discussed by Koch (1996) is the data in the study itself. The researcher is a trained investigator, with special training from the Federal Bureau of Investigation in interviewing and active listening. The interviews were tape recorded and the researcher engaged in active listening. The tapes were replayed with the participant present and their responses discussed. The researcher personally transcribed the interviews. The resulting transcripts were reviewed against the recordings, and then read and reread numerous times in developing themes. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify prolonged engagement in the material as a method of increasing the probability of creditable findings in a study.

This chapter contains a previous discussion acknowledging the researcher's propensity to have preconceived notions relating to the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe the use of the reflexive journal as a tool in establishing credibility. They note that the reflexive journal provides insight into the methodological decisions made by the investigator, but also into the thoughts and views experienced during the study (p. 327). The peer reviewer can use the journal to check the relationship between the reflexive entries and consciousness of the investigator. Throughout this study, the investigator maintained a journal of activities, thoughts and methodological decisions. This was shared with the peer reviewer and discussions helped ensure the investigator maintained a focus on reporting the results obtained from the participants.

### **Transferability**

As discussed by Lincoln and Guba (1985: 316), demonstrating transferability in the traditional sense of quantitative methods is an impossibility. Streubert and Carpenter (1995) suggest that transferability is a demonstration that the research outcomes would credibly be expected in comparable situations. This study benefits from the fact that graduates of universities in three states were interviewed, and that the participants hold law enforcement positions in a wide variety of agencies in seven states: Alaska, Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas.

The decision to sample graduates from three higher education institutions in different states was made early in the project design as a measure of purposive sampling. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 40) describe purposive sampling a component of

transferability. The diversity of the employment locations was an unexpected bonus, but clearly contributes to the transferability of the findings.

### **Dependability and Confirmability**

According to Merriam (1997), the question of dependability is not determined by whether another researcher could replicate the results, but on whether the conclusions reached are consistent with the data and make sense. Lincoln and Guba (1985) put forward the idea that dependability and confirmability are interrelated and must be examined concurrently, but established independently. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that dependability looks at the inquiry process and confirmability examines the findings. They observe that “a single audit, properly managed, can be used to determine dependability and confirmability simultaneously” (p. 318).

The audit of this study was conducted by a peer debriefer who regularly engages in naturalistic studies and is very familiar with the process and procedures to be followed by the researcher. The peer debriefer reviewed the researcher’s reflexive journal, research notes, raw data, transcribed data, data evaluation process, and conclusions. In addition, the researcher presented the data and conclusions to two significantly published researchers who are also faculty members and they were in agreement with the outcomes.

As previously noted, the names of the participants; statements revealing people, agency, or place names; and any other potential identifiers have been changed to protect participants’ confidentiality and anonymity.

### **The Reflexive Journal**

Lincoln and Guba (1985: 327) state that the use of a reflexive journal contributes to credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. They note that the journal contains credible information about the researcher keeping it, and the method of research. They compare the value of the reflexive journal to the records of data maintained in a quantitative study. Throughout this study, the researcher has maintained a journal containing thoughts, perceptions, ideas, notes about participants and interviews, and other information that may or may not be truly relevant to the research questions. During peer debriefings, the journal was shared and discussed.

### **Summary**

This chapter has summarized the methodology used for the study. Because of the researcher's personal experience as a practitioner in law enforcement and educator in a higher education Criminal Justice program, this study utilized interpretative phenomenological analysis. The chapter also included a chart of the participants, using pseudonyms to identify each one, letter labels to identify the universities from which they graduated, but actual information for the remaining demographics. In addition, the chapter set forth the criteria utilized to assure credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **ANALYSIS OF DATA AND FINDINGS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter contains a report of the results from the interviews conducted for this study. Section One of this chapter reviews the use of interview notes and discusses the researcher's decision to include the use of the interview synopsis as a reporting instrument for this chapter. These issues are discussed here because the explanation of the note taking process is intended to assist the reader in better understanding the development of the synopsis. A synopsis development process is included to assist the reader in developing a deeper appreciation of the data collected during the interviews.

Section Two provides a short introduction of each participant associated with a brief synopsis of the interview. The purpose is to provide material needed to develop thick descriptions, as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). This information helps to fulfill the researcher's obligation to provide a sufficient base of understanding for readers to transfer the findings to similar settings (p. 359). The participants are introduced in three subsections, one for each of the institutions from which participants were selected. Each subsection begins with a brief overview of the Criminal Justice undergraduate program at the time of the interviews.

Section Three contains a discussion of the major themes identified during the analysis of the interviews. Themes may contain overlapping information and some may find connections that are not noted in the discussion. The research indicates that the

Criminal Justice undergraduate curriculum is distinct for each program. While there are some commonalities, there has only recently developed a standard established for Criminal Justice Programs. In October 2005, the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS) Executive Board approved the standards for undergraduate and graduate programs (ACJS, 2005). The original version of the standards was introduced in May 2005, but the issue was a controversial one and the October version includes changes made by delegates to the ACJS National Conference. Even with the changes, programs have been slow to seek and complete the certification process. As of the time of this writing, ACJS has certified only one graduate program. In September 2007, ACJS certified the graduate program at Washburn University. There are currently no undergraduate programs certified by the Academy (ACJS, 2009). Because of the lack of consistency in programs, the researcher recognizes that overlaps, connections and distinctions will be identified by readers when comparing these findings to programs not included in the study.

### **Section One: The Interview Process and Synopsis Development**

During the interviews, the researcher asked a question and listened to the response. The response was digitally recorded, but also written with additional information as deemed appropriate. Following the completion of the questions, these notes were reviewed with the respondent/participant for accuracy. Within a few hours of the interview, the researcher listened to the recording and compared the information to the written notes. The researcher then prepared a written synopsis of the interview. The



researcher then transcribed the digital recording. In a further effort to ensure accurate interpretation of the data, a peer reviewer reviewed the transcription against the synopsis. The technique of note-taking during the interview and development of the interview synopsis were taken from professional training received by the researcher at the Federal Bureau of Investigation National Academy and following years of applied interview experience.

John Reid is one of the most noted authorities in investigative interviewing and well known in the law enforcement community for the development of the Reid Technique of Interviewing. Writing with Fred Inbau, Joseph Buckley, and Brian Jayne (2004), they note that the process of asking an interview question, listening to the response, and then writing the response sets the pace for the most effective information gathering interview. They observe that research indicates the process allows the person being interviewed to think about their response reflectively and then formulate any corrections deemed appropriate to understanding the information they have provided (p. 72-73). In addition, they note the pace should be established with the first question and followed throughout the interview. This process also promotes active listening on the part of the interviewer (p.72).

During interviews, Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation follow guidelines contained in the Manual of Investigative Operations and Guidelines (MIOG). Likewise, the provisions of the MIOG form the basic framework of instruction provided at the National Academy. Section Seven of the manual specifically addresses the process of investigative interviewing and details the purpose of the interview synopsis (USDOJ,

2005). The synopsis allows the interviewer to review the statements made by the respondent for meaning. The synopsis additionally provides an opportunity for the interviewer, and others reading the responses, to interpret meaning without the distractions created by accent, speech pattern, word usage and dialect (FBINA, 1998).

As previously stated, these techniques were adapted to this research study with the understanding that the interviews were investigative and the researcher was making an attempt to derive meaning from participant statements in much the same way as a trained law enforcement interviewer does. An important note to be considered is that many lay individuals, not trained in the law enforcement investigative techniques, confuse the interview with the interrogation. In fact, Inbau, Reid, Buckley, and Jayne (2004) observe that untrained law enforcement professionals often confuse the two. The authors note that it is in the interrogation that the interviewer becomes accusatory (p. 7). They note that “purpose of an interview is to obtain information” (p. 6). Similarly, the Lincoln and Guba description of an interview is to obtain information (1985: 268-273).

## **Section Two: The Criminal Justice Programs and Participant Interviews**

This section contains three subsections, each beginning with a brief description of the Criminal Justice undergraduate programs at the three institutions from which participants were selected. Following the program description, there is a synopsis of the interview for each participant. As previously noted, the participants are identified by a gender correct pseudonym. The first letter of the pseudonym identifies the program from which the participant was selected. Within each subsection, the participants from the

particular program are grouped together. There is no particular correlation between the order in which they are presented in relationship to the order of the actual interviews. Each subsection contains an index of the participants identifying their pseudonym; gender; whether they are employed in a state or local agency; years since graduation; total years in law enforcement; any additional education received beyond the undergraduate level; and the beginning page number of the participant interview synopsis.

### **Criminal Justice Program A**

The university housing Program A originated as a state teachers college and expanded programs rapidly between 1950 and 1970. The Criminal Justice Program was launched in the late 1970s and was originally a part of the Department of Sociology. In the mid 1980s, the Program was housed in a newly created department and has continued to operate as such. The curriculum includes courses covering the spectrum of Criminal Justice, but there are no specialization areas offered. Faculty members were historically selected from applicants with applied backgrounds in law enforcement and corrections, and most possessed the Masters Degree, Jurist Doctorate, or a Doctor of Education. However, in the 1990s a move was made to select only persons holding a Doctor of Philosophy without regard to whether the applicant had applied experience. Today, the Program utilizes a majority of the latter type of faculty, supplemented by adjuncts from the local Criminal Justice community.

The Department Chair estimates that about a third of graduates enter law enforcement careers, another third works in corrections, and the remaining third enter

some other field of work or pursue some advanced education. The Chair offers that the Program goals include a complete self-reliance in classroom teaching within the next five years. This is explained as an effort to completely discontinue the use of adjuncts.

The following table provides participant information and serves as an index for the interview synopsis:

**Table 2 Institution A Participant Information**

Page	Participant Name	Gender	Agency Type	Years Since Graduation	Years in Law Enforcement	Additional Higher Education
59	Aaron	M	State	6	5	None
61	Abby	F	Local	4	2	6 Graduate Hours
64	Adam	M	Local	3	2	None
66	Alan	M	State	7	5	MS/CJ
68	Albert	M	Local	7	5	MS/CJ
71	Alec	M	Local	5	2	None
74	Alice	F	Local	2	1	None
76	Andrew	M	Local	6	3	9 Graduate Hours
78	Anna	F	Local	3	2	12 Graduate Hours
80	Anton	M	Local	5	4	None

### **Aaron – State Law Enforcement Officer**

Aaron has been employed for five years in law enforcement. He graduated six years ago and has engaged in no coursework beyond the undergraduate degree. Aaron has been working as a state trooper for a little more than three years, having served approximately two years as a city police officer. Aaron's goal from his earliest remembrances was to be a state trooper, and he has followed a career plan he developed

during his last year of high school. The only deviation is that he made it into the state police on his first application, and he hadn't expected to accomplish that feat.

Aaron seemingly approached the interview process with an eagerness to share his insight into the earning of his degree. He entered college specifically to pursue a degree in Criminal Justice and looked for a program that focused on the applied aspects of law enforcement. Aaron views the specific major as having a very positive personal impact on his career. However, he views the advantage from the perspective of others as being greater in the state law enforcement agency than in the city one. From his personal perspective Aaron feels the major provided him with a higher level of confidence in the academy courses. He specifically noted that in the legal courses he had the advantage of having already been exposed to the use of case law. He felt he also had an advantage in topics relating to crime and patrol theories, and in subjects relating to Criminal investigation and forensics.

Aaron identifies five Criminal Justice courses that he feels clearly helped prepare him for his career, but notes that other course work was specific to management and that he has not had the opportunity yet to promote that knowledge in the state agency. He identifies the introductory course as providing him a broad background in understanding the total system of Justice. He says an introduction to policing course taught him that patrol functions come in many forms and for different purposes. He says the course helped him to understand the various roles police play in society. A legal course gave him a good background in how case law impacts the patrol officer and put him far ahead of others in the law enforcement academy.

Aaron believes that getting a good reputation in the law enforcement academy helped him in getting a good job with a local agency. He says that being recognized in the state law enforcement agency academy as an excellent student helped him to land a choice first duty assignment. He also feels his degree has helped him in providing a good background understanding of the social side of policing. Aaron notes that some of his major professors were former police officers and that their story telling in the classroom has helped him. He also feels that he has an advantage over college graduates from other disciplines simply because they view him as better prepared.

Aaron has no current plans to pursue further education; he participates in available training and concentrates on being a good patrol officer and being a good parent. He says that he intends to raise his children with the plan for them to attain a degree in something that contributes to society, which he identifies as teaching, Criminal Justice, or a health field related program. Aaron says that he has already recommended his former degree program to students wanting to become police officers. He adds that he encourages anyone wanting to enter a law enforcement career to pursue their degree first.

#### **Abby – Local Law Enforcement Officer**

Abby has been employed for two years in law enforcement. She graduated four years ago and has completed six-hours of graduate coursework. Abby has returned to college on a part-time basis to work on a graduate degree now that she is employed in the local law enforcement agency. She says that working for the county allows her a little more latitude in having the opportunity to schedule classes. Abby plans to work and

enroll in two graduate courses per semester until she is done. Her agreement with the sheriff is that she will not enroll in courses during the summer months, since activity increases during that period.

Abby attributes her college degree to having the opportunity to work at the sheriff's office. She observes that there can be little question of the value of the degree to her getting the position. She notes that the sheriff specifically stated that he chose to hire her because she had a degree in Criminal Justice.

Abby shared that she had not pursued the degree with any intention of working in a law enforcement career. She says that she simply couldn't decide what to do in college and took an introductory course in Criminal Justice, loved it, and decided to major in that and minor in sociology. She shares that she graduated and worked for a little more than a year as an admissions recruiter for the university where she graduated. She had been offered the position because she worked in the office as a student employee. She says she applied at the sheriff's office and the state child protection service, but withdrew her application from the latter when offered the deputy position.

Abby says that she can identify pieces of every Criminal Justice course she took as being helpful to her career, including the original introductory one. She feels she has a much better understanding of how her role as a deputy sheriff fits into the overall system than some of the others with whom she works with. She identifies the "others" as deputies with no degree. Abby says that she replaced a deputy that had a degree in another discipline and that the sheriff said he would only hire Criminal Justice majors in the future. She says there are two other deputies with college degrees that work with her.

Abby could not identify a time when she felt her degree had put her at a disadvantage. She believes she has a great advantage over deputies not having degrees and notes that two of them are enrolled in courses at the local community college.

Abby says that she is now attending a lot of training courses designed to develop her forensic abilities and enable her to become a crime scene specialist. She says that she wishes her Criminal Justice program had required her to take more science courses, and have included some specific coursework specific to forensic investigation. However, she quickly notes, with a smile, that this might just as well have caused her to seek another major. She concludes that she wouldn't change a thing, except that she might have studied harder; then she shares that she graduated with a 3.4 grade-point average.

Part of Abby's work for the sheriff's office includes doing public relations types of programs. She serves as the coordinator of the sheriff's Explorer's Post, for the Boy Scouts of America. Abby says that she encourages the Explorers she works with, and the high school students she speaks to, to pursue a Criminal Justice degree if they are interested in law enforcement as a career. She offered that one of her Criminal Justice professors has asked her to come to his class and share her experiences in the sheriff's office.

Abby is planning to graduate in two years with a Master of Science in Criminal Justice. She is specializing in law enforcement management. When asked if she plans to remain at the sheriff's office, she replies that she wouldn't mind doing that and maybe one day being the first female sheriff of her county.



**Adam – Local Law Enforcement Officer**

Adam has been employed for two years in law enforcement. He graduated three years ago and has engaged in no coursework beyond the undergraduate degree. Adam is not as pleased as Aaron with his degree – it has not benefited him in the way that he had hoped. In the initial part of the conversation, Adam seemed disappointed in the content of the degree, but in the end he made it plain that his concern was that the degree had not gotten him where he wants to be. Adam wants badly to be a state patrol officer, and he has not made it through the selection process in three attempts.

As we visited, Adam seemed to change his mind about the value of the degree as contributing to his career goals. He stated that he didn't perceive himself as having been very successful as a law enforcement officer. Later, he revealed that he had just that day received a letter notifying him that he was no longer in consideration for a position in the upcoming state police academy session. As he spoke about the experience of earning the degree, Adam shared that he could not identify any specific courses that helped him. He reasoned that all of the courses seemed to merge together in his academy experience and later as he worked in the local enforcement agency.

Adam credits his academic experience with helping him to do well in the law enforcement academy. He then reflects back on his previous comments and notes that two courses did help prepare him: One was criminal law and the other a law enforcement theory course. He credits the former as having given him a good understanding of how to read and apply the Criminal code, and the other with helping him understand the use of the code through the experiences shared by the professor. He identifies the professor

as having an extensive law enforcement background and a teller of stories related to his experiences.

Adam then identified several courses, some of which were in the discipline of Criminal Justice, which gave him another clear advantage. Adam observed that his writing abilities developed in these courses have helped him in the academy and in his work as a police officer. Adam also notes that the writing in Criminal Justice classes was particularly useful in developing his ability to properly cite law references. He shares that his supervisors often have him assist them in preparing reports.

When asked about any disadvantages in having a degree, Adam noted that there were times in the academy when he would be singled out by a particular instructor. He feels that the instructor was particularly hard on college graduates, but more so on female students. He shared some crude comments that he remembers the instructor using towards female students with college degrees, but he says the individual basically believed women did not belong in the career field. Adam said most students disliked the instructor and that even his coworkers would make jokes about his attitude. He said that he understands the person is no longer on the academy staff.

Adam believes the one skill he wishes he had developed in his degree work was learning something about time management. He says that a couple of the professors shared street experiences in the course of the class discussions, but he never developed a real sense of the time management skills needed to be a police officer. Adam shares that he is married and has a one-year old son. He lives on his grandparents' farm and assists

them with planting and harvesting crops. He believes he is a poor manager of his time and could do a better job if he had developed those skills in college.

When asked about why he would pursue state police employment and have to leave his current lifestyle, Adam shares that he doesn't plan to be gone more than the time it takes to go through the academy. His state applications are made with the provision that he wants to return to his home area. He says that he understands that he is limiting his selection opportunities, but he believes his degree should afford him that opportunity. He attributes his failure to be hired more to the fact that he believes the state is targeting former military veterans rather than college graduates.

Adam observed that before the interview began he would have answered that he didn't believe a Criminal Justice degree would be an advantage in a law enforcement career. However, after sharing his experiences he believes there is nothing wrong with the degree. Adam says he will reconsider his long-term goals before he applies for the state position again.

#### **Alan – State Law Enforcement Officer**

Alan has been employed for five years in law enforcement. He graduated seven years ago and has also completed a graduate degree. Alan represents a very determined, well-organized and professional law enforcement officer. In the beginning of the interview, he offered very short answers that sometimes seem to be a bit arrogant. However, after the first couple of questions he became more open and talkative about his experiences and how his degree has helped him.

In response to the first question, concerning his view of the value of the degree to his career, Alan offered, "I doubt I would have stayed around and pursued my masters if I didn't think it was going to help me." When asked to focus on his perception post graduation, Alan answered that his degrees and military veteran status were the reasons he was able to leave college and go directly in to the state police. He shared that he had graduated in May and the state police academy didn't start until August, so they gave him a paid internship and free lodging at the academy until it started.

When asked to reflect specifically on his undergraduate coursework, Alan says that he believes that three classes made significant and identifiable contributions to his career. He identifies these as criminal law, criminal procedure, and a policing course. Alan explains that the criminal law course required a good deal of writing about law, and that this has helped him in writing concisely about his patrol activities. He identifies criminal procedure as having helped him to develop a very strong understanding of the need to follow the proper procedures in order to preserve his casework. Alan shares that the policing course provided him with a theoretical base to frame the various styles of policing into practice. Alan adds another comment about a very helpful course, though he does not remember the exact title, but remembers that it was in his last semester. The course, as described by Alan, incorporated a capstone approach that required the student to develop an assigned program and utilize policing theories and strategies from other courses to create the response.

Alan believes that studying Criminal Justice helped him to focus his life towards becoming the state police officer he dreamed of being. He says that because he was

associated with former and current officers serving as faculty, and some current officers studying for their degrees, he had access to what he termed, “police talk”. Alan says that he would visit with his professors that were former officers, and he would always try to get to know and visit with officers taking classes. Alan says the combination of majoring in Criminal Justice, and getting to know persons engaged in the work, gave him access to ride-along opportunities and even a paid internship in a local law enforcement agency.

Alan says there is only one thing he would recommend for a change in the Criminal Justice program where he studied. He believes that all Criminal Justice faculty should have some field experience in the area they are teaching. He shares that one of his professors, whom he describes as his least favorite, had completed all of his degrees without a break for experience. Alan was disappointed when he learned that the experience claimed by the professor was actually a semester long internship. Alan says he didn’t value much that the professor had to offer, and that he had no experiential stories to help students understand his lectures.

Alan says that he has a younger brother who is serving as a state game warden. He says that he would certainly recommend the path he took to younger students interested in entering the profession. He notes that he can support that statement by the fact that he was the one that advised his younger brother. He adds that he has a cousin, who wants to be a state police officer, in the same degree program he completed.

### **Albert – Local Law Enforcement Officer**

Albert has been employed for five years in law enforcement. He graduated seven years ago and has also completed a graduate degree in Criminal Justice. Albert brings to

his law enforcement career a background of six years active duty in the Marine Corps, followed by an enlistment in the Reserves program, with a year of redeployment in Iraq. He was a nontraditional student in the undergraduate program, but went directly into a graduate program when he finished. Albert says he began classes on the Monday following his undergraduate graduation. During his graduate work, Albert worked in an internship program with the large metropolitan police department where he now serves as a patrol sergeant.

Albert says that it is difficult for him to distinguish between the “multiple advantages he has enjoyed”. He describes these as including his military training and background, his minority race classification, and having both undergraduate and graduate degrees. However, he feels that there are elements of his career opportunities that came from the undergraduate experience. He also points out that his graduate degree is not in Criminal Justice, but rather it is in educational psychology. Albert explains that his graduate program allowed him some electives and he chose to do the Criminal Justice internship because of his undergraduate experience. He goes on to explain that this resulted in his being recruited for the department and in the recognition of his own desire to be a police officer. Albert feels his background experiences, his education in Criminal Justice, and his graduate work all combine together to establish his preparation for the career he now enjoys.

Albert says that when he entered college, he chose not to participate in a program that would have given him some college credit for his military training and experience. The program would have resulted in his not having what he considered a traditional

degree. He said he believes that it would have also not sent him in the direction of this career. Albert explained that he loved a course he took in law enforcement. He remembers that the course covered the history, evolution, and various theories related to patrol tactics. At graduation, Albert believed he would have had little chance to start a career with a good police department, mainly because of his age, and so he entered the graduate program thinking he might want to be a school counselor. He says the remembrances of that class caused him to pursue the internship opportunity.

Albert believes that the days of viewing a degree holder as negative are over for larger departments. He thinks that it may still be seen as a negative in some smaller departments, or by police officers that have retired from one agency and are now working in another. Albert says that the majority of the people in his academy class had a bachelor's degree, and many of those were in Criminal Justice. He notes that the department requires at least two years of college for hiring.

Albert believes that an internship should be a required component of the Criminal Justice degree program. He recognizes that this may pose a significant hardship on the program to place everyone, but he thinks this could be worked out through collaborative agreements with larger departments. He thinks the internship synthesizes the theory and practice, allowing the participant an opportunity to become engaged in the career experience. Albert also believes there should be a course developed that would help younger students to become better prepared for the hiring process. He shares that this is something he has come to realize in the last six-months, sitting on interview boards. Albert doesn't believe any of the programs they hire from are doing this, and he

thinks it would be a great advantage for graduates from his old program to have this opportunity.

Albert believes the Criminal Justice program is a great one, far superior to the larger ones with which he is familiar. He shares that during the last interviews, he felt like he was being biased in his judgment of the applicants. He says that a much better known program had several graduates apply for the department. He said he was honestly disappointed in the responses to questions and felt that the applicants felt they would be selected based on their university. Albert says that after a discussion between the three board members, he realized it wasn't a biased judgement because the other members felt the same way.

Albert says that he wouldn't hesitate to recommend his program to a high school student wanting to be a law enforcement officer. He goes on to say that he would recommend the completion of a four-year degree in Criminal Justice before entering the career.

#### **Alec – Local Law Enforcement Officer**

Alec has been employed for two years in law enforcement. He graduated five years ago and has engaged in no coursework beyond the undergraduate degree. Alec works in a small-sized local police department, situated near a larger metropolitan area. After completing college, Alec attempted to earn a living as a professional bull rider. He quickly notes that he was never able to progress into the major competition circuits, due to a continuing series of accidents. He then worked on a ranch and assisted with the operation of a riding school, but realized he needed something more substantial for a



career. Alec had a friend that assisted him in getting the opportunity for employment in the department where he now works. He adds that he could not be happier with the opportunity to put his degree to good use.

In Alec's view, the Criminal Justice degree provided him with the confidence to attend and succeed in the law enforcement academy. He notes that many of his peers in the training course were not college graduates. He remembers that most of the degree holders had Criminal Justice degrees, but specifically remembers that two did not. He believes that they felt somewhat behind from the start and recalls that they would often ask some of the Criminal Justice majors to study with them. He summarizes by saying that he believes there are many advantages to having a degree in the career, but specific ones for Criminal Justice majors, mainly related to confidence and familiarity with terminology and concepts.

Alec chuckles when asked about whether discipline specific courses can be identified as preparatory to his career. He says it has been too many years and "too many falls" to remember specifics. He then goes on to recall that his favorite classes were the ones taught by the professors with a policing background. He relates a few examples from the introduction to law enforcement course. He remembers that the class was taught by a police officer that would often bring video clips of recent traffic stops to share with them. He also remembers that the officer would note instances where the textbook deviated from his experiences. Alec says that he kept the textbook, with all of his notes written in the margins, and carried it with him to the police academy. He

couldn't identify any other courses that specifically helped him, but said that all of the coursework helped him in some way.

Alec says that his degree helped him specifically in one way, that not having it could not have done. He relates that when he decided to look for career options, he went to his old college and visited a couple of professors. One of them recommended this department to him and noted that he had a former student working already, and knew the chief of the department. The professor called the chief and recommended him for a position, then called the former student to arrange some additional assistance. When the two former students met, they remembered each other from classes and renewed their friendship.

Alec seemed surprised by the question of whether his degree had ever been a disadvantage for him. His response was a question of how anyone could ever be disadvantaged by having the degree. He concluded his consideration of the question by observing that someone would have to have been looking for an excuse to find a disadvantage.

When asked about recommended changes to the curriculum of his old program, Alec took an entirely different approach. He suggested that Criminal Justice programs should be built around a complete experience like a military academy. He believes that the applied training of an academy should be incorporated into the university experience. Alec says that he believes policing is such a unique career that there should be isolation from other degree programs.

Alec said that he would recommend that anyone wanting to become a police officer should enter the military, then attend college and earn a degree in Criminal Justice – a plan he says that he now wishes he had followed. He believes his degree program is one of the best for persons wanting to enter law enforcement.

### **Alice – Local Law Enforcement Officer**

Alice has been employed for one year in law enforcement. She graduated two years ago and has engaged in no coursework beyond the undergraduate degree. Alice works for a major metropolitan police department. She looks younger than her age and is a little nervous during the first part of her interview. She expresses her nervousness and says that she is a little surprised by the experience of being interviewed for a research project. As the interview proceeds, she becomes much more relaxed and talkative about her experiences.

Alice shares that she never intended to be a police officer, or even to major in Criminal Justice. She attended college initially to become a registered nurse, but found that she couldn't pass the level of science and math courses required for admission into the program. She says that a professor suggested she look at Criminal Justice as an option and arranged a meeting with a faculty member. The professor she met with had served twenty-years with the same police department where she now works.

Alice believes that her Criminal Justice degree proved an asset over other degrees from the beginning of the academy. She says that most of the instructors there had college degrees, some from the same college that she attended. She believes the degree field played a greater role in her instructors accepting her than the fact that she

attended the same college as some of them. She remembers that during some portions of the training a few of the instructors would chastise those with degrees in fields other than Criminal Justice. When asked to provide an example, she shares that one class member had a degree in English and would be accused of wanting to become a police officer so he could write a novel.

Alice couldn't identify a particular Criminal Justice course that she thought clearly prepared her for her career. She stated instead that she viewed it more as a conceptual development. She identified a course related to general law enforcement as her favorite and says that it was during that course that she decided to become a police officer. The professor, the same one that she had originally spoken to about the program, would share experiential stories that helped her understand the course material better. She suddenly brightens and seems excited at a thought that she shares. She says that the same professor assisted her in getting a summer internship in the police department where she now works. She views the internship course as one that clearly played a major role in preparing her for her career.

Alice says that she would not add any courses to the program, but she does feel that the internship should be a requirement and not an elective. She adds that, although it wasn't asked, she believes that statistics should be dropped from the required coursework. She notes that it was an extremely difficult course and that she neither used it in the academy, uses it now, or remembers much about what she learned. She goes on to say that she felt it was a course that was there to "weed people out of the program."

Alice believes that she graduated from the best Criminal Justice program available for someone wanting to become a police officer. She shares that even in the short time of her career; she is doing the same activity she thought nursing would give her, helping people. She says that she would recommend the program to anyone wanting to become a police officer, because the experiences of the faculty helps students develop a better understanding of what they will be doing.

### **Andrew – Local Law Enforcement Officer**

Andrew has been employed for three years in law enforcement. He graduated six years ago and has completed nine hours of graduate work. Andrew is employed with a larger police department in a non-metropolitan area. He grew up in the same city and planned from his high school days to work as either a police officer or firefighter in the city. Andrew graduated with his undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice and entered the fire service. After just less than two years, he decided that he didn't care for firefighting and he resigned. He says that he didn't like the shift design – twenty-four hours on and forty-eight off, which he believes was detrimental to his marriage and contributed to a divorce. Andrew then decided he would return to college for a graduate degree. After one semester, he changed his mind and applied for the police department.

Andrew says that he has found neither an advantage nor disadvantage to having a Criminal Justice degree. He believes that he would have gotten his position with the police department even if he had no degree, through family connections.

Andrew shares that he changed majors at least three times while he was in college. He became a Criminal Justice major after he visited with someone in his dean's

office and they advised him that he could probably graduate quickest from that program. Andrew says that he enjoyed some of the classes, and didn't like others. He says his favorite courses were those directly related to law enforcement and taught by professors who had worked in the profession.

Andrew seemed distracted during the interview process, and kept looking at his watch and checking his cell phone for messages or missed calls. When asked if he was uncomfortable being interviewed, he said that he wasn't, but wanted to share some new information.

Andrew shared that he had been excited with his work and looking forward to the interview, up until earlier in the week. He had since determined that he did not want to continue in his career in law enforcement and was seeking an opportunity for alternative teacher certification in the local public school. He noted that he had been divorced again since becoming a police officer. He also shared that his nine hours of graduate credit was in education. He is currently dating a teacher and believes that being in the same career would help him in maintaining a long-term relationship.

Andrew said that he would not recommend law enforcement as a career to anyone, but if someone were determined to enter the field, he would recommend his old program. Andrew feels that the stories told by his professors, many of whom were either active or former careerists, didn't accurately reflect the career he has experienced. When asked about the relationship between this statement and his earlier stated view of his favorite classes, Andrew says that the two statements are meant to express his enjoyment

with the stories, but his understanding that they are made by individuals seeking to make the career look good, in order to encourage students to remain as majors.

After the interview, Andrew came into the parking lot to say that he wanted to make something more clear – he said that he didn't really enjoy being a police officer because he didn't like writing people he knew citations, or arresting them. He went on to add that he didn't like the fire service because he had too much time sitting at the firehouse waiting for a call, or for something to happen. He also said that both jobs left him feeling "like a servant", and that people in the community lacked respect for police officers and firefighters. Andrew went on to say that his interview responses were skewed by his dissatisfaction with the job, and that the Criminal Justice program really wasn't to blame for his not wanting to work as a police officer.

#### **Anna – Local Law Enforcement Officer**

Anna has been employed for two years in law enforcement. She graduated three years ago and has completed twelve hours of graduate coursework. Anna exhibits a very professional demeanor, appears confident in her discussion and seems very career oriented. She graduated from high school at sixteen, and found herself with a college degree almost a full year before she was old enough for employment as a police officer. Between graduation and her twenty-first birthday, Anna decided to earn credit in a graduate program. She enrolled in a program at another college to work toward her master's degree. Demonstrating her career planning, she enrolled in a program located in the metropolitan area where she wanted to work.

Anna is now enrolled in six hours of graduate courses and plans to complete her degree within the next two years. Her plans are then to enter the federal service, preferably in the Secret Service or Federal Bureau of Investigation. Given her accomplishments thus far, and the fact that she finished the police academy with first place in academics, and second place in both physical fitness and firearms qualification, one would expect she will have her choice of either.

Anna is a strong proponent of her degree experience and believes she had several very clear advantages over others with degrees in different disciplines. Anna says that the department she works for did not hire a single officer from her academy class who did not have a college degree. She described the academy experience as challenging, but notes that the legal courses she took in her Criminal Justice program prepared her to excel in similar courses in the academy. Anna also credited several course-related group and writing projects that helped her excel in the academy. She noted that one Criminal Justice professor made them write everything in the form of either a professional memorandum or technical report format. Anna believes that this helped her in the academy writing assignments.

Anna credits a law enforcement emphasis in her degree program for helping her accomplish her goals thus far. She feels the inclusion of the legal and writing enhanced courses helped her to be better prepared than people with degrees from other programs. She says that she would not change the program in any way, but believes that it is constantly improving as the quality of students improves. When asked to clarify this statement, Anna shares that the university is engaged in a continuing effort to recruit



better students and has steadily been raising the requirements for admission. She thinks this process will provide the mechanism for continued improvement in the courses being offered.

Anna says that she feels her degree is a good one and that the program she earned it from is the best for anyone wanting to enter a career in law enforcement. She adds that she believes the program benefits from maintaining a requirement that faculty must have experience in the field in addition to having the academic degree. She shares her strong belief that the students in her Criminal Justice program tended to bond closely with their faculty in mentoring relationships. She believes this is much more likely to occur in a program where faculty members are current or former practitioners. She says that she believes she would like to teach in a university in the future, and hopes she can make that a second career.

#### **Anton – Local Law Enforcement Officer**

Anton has been employed for four years in law enforcement. He graduated five years ago and has engaged in no coursework beyond the undergraduate degree. Anton works in the same police department as Andrew, but has had a totally different experience. Like Andrew, Anton grew up in the city and always wanted to be a police officer there. He completed his undergraduate degree and applied for a position in the police department. While waiting for his opportunity to begin his police career, Anton worked with his father in the family home building business. Anton also remains in contact with his former professors and the program, making return visits to speak to classes and recruit for the department.

Anton says that he has no doubt that having the four-year Criminal Justice degree is an advantage in police work. He believes that we are fast approaching a time that will end individuals entering police work without at least an associate degree. He feels the biggest difference is seen in the approach to the work that is done. Anton says that most degree holding officers approach their work as being a professional career, while he sees others approaching it as a job. He says that he believes research would show that degree holders are much more likely to be engaged in community policing projects, public awareness and service functions, and other things that promote a good relationship with citizens. He also believes his degree has encouraged his supervisors to give him opportunities that he would not have had otherwise.

Anton responds quickly to the question about discipline-specific courses that have clearly prepared him for his career. He names the introductory course on the Criminal Justice system and explains how it helps him to keep in mind how the police are a part of something bigger. He speaks of the law enforcement course, and says that he has a better understanding of the programs in which he works, because he understands the theories behind their development. He says that his Criminal Justice management courses gave him a good foundation when he started studying for his sergeant examination and interview – he is first on the promotional list and is expected to receive the rank within the next couple of months. He also mentions that the legal courses helped him in two ways: The Criminal Law and Criminal procedure provided him with an advantage in the academy, but also in reading court decisions and applying them; and, the experiences shared by the professor who taught them, a former deputy

prosecutor and criminal lawyer, helps him keep the relationship between the street and the courtroom in perspective.

Anton says that he thinks his degree gives him advantages every day in his dealings with people on the street. He believes part of this is in the form of confidence from having earned the degree. He also believes he better understands the plight of the people he polices, because he has been forced to approach discussions with an open mind – he credits a particular former professor with helping him develop this ability. On the other hand, Anton can identify no time or situation in which he feels that he has been at a disadvantage because of the degree.

Anton says there is simply nothing that he would change about his old degree program. He believes the program has to be generic enough to provide preparation for a variety of Criminal Justice jobs, and any changes he would suggest would be specifically for his department. He goes on to note that these are things that are taught to recruits in the academy and the field training program within the department.

Anton says that he regularly visits the high school and speaks to classes in career exploration, English and communications, and government. He always encourages all students to pursue a college degree if they want to enter public service. He has arranged for students interested in Criminal Justice to visit his undergraduate program and speak with professors there. He is very proud of the fact that he maintains strong connections with the program, and returns to speak to classes there. He says that he worked to convince his department that it would be a good idea to recruit from the college and that before he started, there were no such efforts.

## **Criminal Justice Program B**

The university housing Program B originated as a state teachers college and expanded undergraduate and graduate degree programs rapidly between 1950 and 1990. The university is again expanding with new forms of interdisciplinary degrees and certificate programs. The Criminal Justice Program was launched in the late 1960s as a standalone unit of the College where it is now a department. In the early 1970s, the Program was housed in a newly created department and has continued to operate as such. By the late 1970s the Program had developed and began offering a Criminal Justice Masters Degree. During the 1980s, the curriculum was developed into a series of specialized tracks, one of these being specifically designed for persons wishing to enter a law enforcement career. Early on the faculty members were required to have terminal degrees and practical experience in one of the fields associated with Criminal Justice. By the end of the 1970s, persons were no longer hired as faculty unless they had completed a Doctor of Philosophy. However, since the mid-1990s this requirement has been relaxed in some instances to recruit persons with an extensive background in an area of specialization. Still, these individuals are encouraged to complete a terminal degree. The Program teaching assignments have always been supplemented by adjuncts from the local Criminal Justice community.

The Departmental Chair estimates that about half of all Program graduates enter law enforcement careers. The remainder is equally split between those who enter the correctional field, and those who enter another field of work or pursue advanced

education. The Chair believes guest lecturers and experienced adjuncts are an important part of the Program and there are no current plans to restrict the use of either.

The Departmental Chair offers the observation that until about three years ago the majority of their students electing to pursue advanced degrees immediately following graduation entered the associated program for the Masters in Criminal Justice. However, a change has occurred and the current trend for those students interested in law enforcement careers is to enter the program for the Masters in Public Administration (MPA). Similarly, those students who graduated and entered a law enforcement career and are now returning for a graduate degree are also choosing to pursue the Masters in Public Administration. As a result of this trend, the Department of Criminal Justice is working with the faculty of the MPA and has developed specific Criminal Justice Courses to fit into a nine-hour specialization in Law Enforcement Management.

The following table provides participant information and serves as an index for the interview synopsis:

**Table 3 Institution B Participant Information**

Page	Participant Name	Gender	Agency Type	Years Since Graduation	Years in Law Enforcement	Additional Higher Education
85	Baker	M	Local	6	5	30 Graduate Hours
87	Barry	M	State	5	2	MS/CJ
90	Becky	F	State	5	4	None
92	Ben	M	State	7	7	JD
95	Betsy	F	State	3	2	18 Graduate Hours
98	Beverly	F	State	5	3	MPA
100	Bill	M	Local	6	5	None

Table 3 *Continued*

Page	Participant Name	Gender	Agency Type	Years Since Graduation	Years in Law Enforcement	Additional Higher Education
103	Brad	M	State	4	4	None
106	Brandi	F	State	3	2	12 Graduate Hours
108	Brenda	F	Local	3	3	None

### **Baker – Local Law Enforcement Officer**

Baker has been employed for five years in law enforcement. He graduated six years ago and has also completed thirty hours of graduate work. Baker graduated with his bachelor's degree, and then entered the associated graduate program with the intent of completing it before seeking a job. However, during his second semester he decided to apply for a position with the local sheriff's office and was hired. He completed the semester, but didn't take any more courses for two years. During that time he completed the academy, established himself in the position, and then began by taking one course per semester. Last year, he started taking two courses a semester and will graduate during the coming one.

Baker feels that his degree has given him opportunities associated with the reputation of the program, but he also believes that he has benefited from the fact that he has had professors who are active in the work of law enforcement. He notes that many of the law enforcement related courses in the program are taught by adjunct professors who are employed in local and state police agencies. In addition, many of courses he took had visiting lecturers from a wide variety of law enforcement agencies. He says these speakers gave him and others the opportunity to visit after class and that he was

encouraged by more than one to apply with their agency. One of the speakers was the sheriff for whom he now works.

Baker believes that the courses in his program were a blend of theory and examples relating to application. He notes that there was no opportunity in the college classroom to do many of the things that he does as a deputy sheriff, but he said many of the things he learned there help him to understand elements of the work he does now. He believes that the writing requirements of some of his courses, where he was specifically writing about Criminal Justice issues, contributes to his success in his career. He believes his education greatly contributed to his promotion to patrol sergeant.

Baker says that he has no reason to believe that his degree has any way disadvantaged him in his work. He feels as though the other deputies, those without degrees, are good officers, but they view their jobs as a non-professional career. He says that he thinks that is a major distinction between those with and without degrees. He also notes that there are those who have come to work with an attitude of entitlement because they have a degree – he thinks these individuals may find it to be a disadvantage, but it is more about them than the degree.

Baker says that he has two younger brothers that have followed him into the same degree program. He notes that one just graduated and went to work for the state police, and the other is still in college. He also has a sister that is returning to college to get her degree in Criminal Justice and wants to be a state police officer as well. Baker adds that he will not be going to work for the state because he does not want to move away from his home area and that he enjoys the work he does.

Baker believes the degree program he attended is the best in his state and one of the best in the nation. He notes that two of the persons he took classes with completed their masters and are now in doctoral programs. He adds that he believes there have been several students finish the program and pursue higher degrees. He goes on to say that he would recommend the same program to anyone that wanted to be a law enforcement officer. Baker says that he has encouraged his own family members, and he would encourage anyone else, to take full advantage of visiting with the guest speakers.

#### **Barry – State Law Enforcement Officer**

Barry has been employed for two years in law enforcement. He graduated five years ago and has also completed a graduate degree in Criminal Justice. When Barry completed his undergraduate degree, he had six hours of graduate credit from the overlap program. The overlap program allowed him to earn both undergraduate and graduate credit at the same time. As a result, he was able to complete the graduate program in two summer terms and three regular semesters. Barry worked as an investigator for the state child protection program during his last two semesters of graduate studies, and applied for the state police. Barry plans to work an additional three years and then apply for investigative work in the state police.

Barry points out that his investigative work for the child protection program was not police work, and did not require him to be certified as an officer. He says that if it did, he would have to answer that there was a definite disadvantage to having a Criminal Justice degree. Barry explains that in the child protection service the preferred degree was social work. He said that he was offered an opportunity to pursue a Master's in



Social Work at the expense of the agency, if he would sign a contract for four years employment. However, Barry says that he never felt as though his degree was a disadvantage in the state police.

Barry finished the state police academy with the highest academic score. In addition, he was the top student in firearms. Barry says that he felt at the time that more was made of his firearms scores than his academic achievement. He says that after he reported for his assignment, things changed and he was informed that he had been requested by the patrol area commander because of his academics. Barry says his assignment was one of the best in the state, and the area has an excellent reputation of having good patrol officers. He believes his introductory course gave him a good understanding of how policing fits into society and the Criminal Justice system, as well as a sense of his role. He also believes the introduction to law enforcement course provided him with a good sense of the importance of patrol. He notes that it was in this class that he first understood the importance of being a good patrol officer in relation to becoming a good investigator.

Barry says that courses in Criminal procedure and evidence helped him to better understand the reasons for things he was taught in the academy. He says that the academy instruction dealt mostly with the procedure and process of doing things, not with the reasoning behind the method. He believes having the added understanding of why things are done in a particular way helps him to better follow the procedures.

Barry believes that it would be best if there were a program that blended the academy curriculum with the academic coursework. He says he realizes this would be

somewhat resisted by most universities and academies. However, he says that if the college degree included the academy training, a graduate would have a better understanding of how the theories and practices are merged. Barry thinks this model would be more like the military academies, and produce more professional police officers. He goes on to say that he believes there is evidence in the state police that higher education is a positive influence on good policing.

Barry says that his patrol district consistently has the highest level of activity, the lowest level of complaints, and the least amount of employee issues. He describes another patrol district, one where the commander brags about not having any college graduates. This district, according to Barry, is consistently the lowest in activity and the highest in citizen complaints. Barry says that the district is known as one that is constantly involved in some sort of personnel issues. He quickly admits that there are many variables at work, including the demographics of the patrol area. He believes research would show that the level of professionalism is significantly different.

Barry says that he would recommend his program to anyone wanting to enter law enforcement. He adds that the program is well known in the state for being the best one for persons wanting to become law enforcement officers. He says that many of his courses were taught by law enforcement officers. He says that in other courses, the professors had law enforcement officers coming in to speak to the students about current issues. Barry says that it was in one of the courses being taught by a state police officer that he was recruited for the agency. He laughs as he finishes the statement and admits

that he already wanted to be in the state police, but that the professor reassured him that it was the place for him to make a career.

### **Becky – State Law Enforcement Officer**

Becky has been employed for four years in law enforcement. She graduated five years ago and has engaged in no coursework beyond the undergraduate degree. Becky is a state police officer assigned to highway patrol. She is not wearing her state police uniform and looks surprisingly young to have been working for four years already. Becky was dating a police officer in a large city police department and expected to have a career there herself. Shortly before her college graduation, the couple's relationship broke and she decided to do something else. She moved back to her hometown and worked in her father's law office until she was hired by the state police. Becky shares that she is preparing for the sergeant's evaluation that is coming up and that she will be eligible for the promotion in a few months – she believes she will be promoted within the next year. She adds that she hopes her assignment will keep her in the patrol section.

Becky says that her degree in Criminal Justice provided her with an immediate advantage in the state police academy. She completed her coursework with the highest academic score. She believes that her Criminal Justice degree helped her by giving her confidence. She also thinks it caused others to have confidence in her from the beginning. She remembers that less than ten percent of the academy class had an undergraduate degree. She says the agency has attempted during each of the last two legislative sessions to establish a minimum requirement of two years of higher education, but legislators have prevented that from happening. She says that the

academy staff used to have a reputation of being hard on females, minorities, and college graduates, but that this was corrected before she entered. Becky does not feel that she is in a position to determine if degree holders from other disciplines would identify an advantage.

Becky believes that the courses that helped her most were those requiring significant written work relating to the topic of Criminal Justice, and those that required her to do extensive literature reviews. She says that most of these courses required her to have discussions with faculty members. She feels that she tended to learn more through the reading and discussions that followed. Becky could not recall the names of the courses, but remembered that they dealt with policing theories and required reading about patrol research. She says that she occasionally remembers something that she read in her coursework that is related to something she observes in her work. She wonders why there is not more research done on patrol as it relates to state enforcement, recalling that all of the studies she remembers were related to municipal enforcement.

Becky believes that there is a fairly commonly observed difference between state police officers having college degrees and those who do not. She says that her observations are that those without degrees tend to view their work as more of an “empowered occupation”. She explains that her meaning is that the officers view themselves as having been “elevated in the occupational structure of policing”. She thinks officers with a degree view their work as a career. She remembers that one of her faculty members spoke about this issue in a law enforcement management course.

Becky says that she wishes now that there had been a few more courses available that related directly to the police activity. She remembers her coursework as being more generic, but remembers that there were several courses available for persons wanting to enter the corrections field. Becky says that she remembers one of her professors talking about the poor level of research being done in rural enforcement, and she feels the same is true of state highway patrol study. She remembers that the focus of most law enforcement research is in metropolitan areas. She recalls and discusses some of her recollections of the Kansas City Studies. She would like to see more work done in the other areas of policing and more courses offered relating to the findings.

Becky says that she volunteers in her patrol district to attend school events and speak with students about becoming police officers. She shares her experiences from her college courses to encourage students to attend college. Becky believes she does a good job of promoting college attendance without actively recruiting for her own degree program. However, Becky says that when asked about a recommendation, she always suggests that her alma mater is an excellent choice.

#### **Ben – State Law Enforcement Officer**

Ben has been employed for seven years in law enforcement. He graduated seven years ago and has since completed a Jurist Doctor Degree. Ben graduated from a two-year military academy and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the United States Army. He served one year of active duty, and was then given the opportunity to complete his bachelor's degree. He is now an officer in the National Guard. Ben has been deployed once to Iraq for a year. Ben began working for the state police within

months of graduating from college and received an assignment to the governor's security force. Ben had requested the assignment so that he could volunteer to work straight weekends and be able to attend law school. He completed law school two years ago, and passed the bar examination on his second attempt. Six months ago, Ben was promoted to sergeant and assigned to work in the state headquarters. During the interview, Ben shared that he has applied for the Federal Bureau of Investigation and believes he will be hired within the next few months.

Ben views his degree in Criminal Justice as being advantageous in his law enforcement career, but as having disadvantages in his military service. He explains that when he was deployed to Iraq he was detached from his unit and assigned to work in one of the prisons there. He says that there are others that he is aware of that have had the same thing happen to them.

Ben believes that his Criminal Justice courses helped him in two ways. He identifies a few courses that helped him in the academy coursework and in his law enforcement duties. These courses include the introductory courses for Criminal Justice and law enforcement, which he says helped him develop a holistic view of the Criminal Justice system and understand the theories of policing. He says that a course he completed in interviewing techniques has helped him in his military, enforcement and personal life. The second dimension of his benefit comes from three legal courses he took in his undergraduate program. In these courses, Ben says that he learned to write case briefs, research cases, and read court decisions. Ben says that this experience gave

him a head start in law school and established him as a good student. He believes the key to doing well in law school is to gain an early reputation for being a good student.

Ben says that the majority of his state police class did not have college degrees. He says that his maturity, military experience and education were all assets in his academy experience. Ben says that his military academy experience was a significant advantage, because the state police officers running the academy program attempted to maintain a boot-camp atmosphere. Ben says that promotions include points for education and that a person with a degree in Criminal Justice receives additional points.

Ben reiterated that the only time he wishes that he had not had a degree in Criminal Justice is when he was deployed to Iraq and assigned to prison duty. Ben explains that he feels he was deprived of a combat opportunity and that he wanted to remain in his infantry position. Ben shares that his law degree is apparently going to cause him to be permanently reassigned to a non-combat position. Ben says that there was never any indication of a disadvantage in his law enforcement work.

Ben says that his initial reaction to thinking about modifying his Criminal Justice program's curriculum is that it should be more stringent across the coursework. He remembers that there was some leeway in the courses a person could take and earn the degree. Ben feels there should be a more defined degree, or at least an effort to equalize the coursework. Ben observes that a person can choose less challenging courses and receive the same degree as someone enrolled in the more challenging ones. Ben says that during his time in the program, he developed close relationships with some of the faculty members, and felt like he was fortunate to be able to rely on them for advice and

support. He says that the program has grown since he graduated and there are several new faculty members. Ben says that he understands that the relationship between students and faculty has changed. He thinks that needs corrected in some way to promote more communication between students and faculty members.

Ben believes the program he graduated from is the best in the state, and probably one of the best available. He says that a key component is that there is a close interaction with the faculty. Ben says that he felt another key advantage is the close relationship that the program maintains with law enforcement personnel in the area, and he notes that many of them serve as guest speakers in the classes. Ben adds that some of them teach courses, and that he was recruited by a state police officer teaching a course he was taking. Ben says that he would strongly recommend the program to high school students wanting to have a law enforcement career.

### **Betsy – State Law Enforcement Officer**

Betsy has been employed for two years in law enforcement. She graduated three years ago and has completed eighteen hours of graduate coursework. Like Barry, Betsy participated in the overlap program and completed some graduate work while still earning her undergraduate degree. Betsy received an opportunity to go to work in state law enforcement before she completed her graduate degree. She was recruited to apply by one of the adjunct professors in the undergraduate program. She explained that the academy start date was approaching and the agency had not received enough qualified female applicants to meet their goal. Betsy explains that on one hand she regrets that being female is what got her the opportunity, but on the other she realizes that many



people never got the chance because they were female. She said that she expressed this concern to the adjunct professor and he assured her that she was more than qualified to earn a place in the agency.

Betsy says that she recognized that several of the instructors in the academy were graduates of her program, or another in Criminal Justice. She says that the majority of her class was composed of recruits with college degrees, and most of them had some experience in another agency. She observes that it is an obvious conclusion that her degree in Criminal Justice gave her an advantage in becoming a part of the agency. She says that there were three other female recruits, all had completed undergraduate degrees, and all but one of them had majored in Criminal Justice. Two of the others attended the same university she did. She adds that the one that did not had never-the-less minored in the discipline.

Betsy says that of all her coursework, the legal courses helped her most. She notes that the academy legal courses were taught by representatives from the state's Office of the Attorney General. According to Betsy, the discussions were equivalent to those in her college classroom, but the recruits were not required to write briefs of the cases being reviewed. She said most of the cases reviewed in the academy were the same as those studied in her legal classes. She found that she was very familiar with the cases and was able to engage in the discussions with other recruits who had a similar educational background. Betsy said that she noticed some of the recruits appeared to be lost in the discussions. She and two other recruits from her same program were encouraged by one of the academy staff members to form a study group to help other

recruits prepare for the examinations. Betsy believes her opportunity to help others gave her a special standing in the class with her peers. She says that the academy director mentioned her and the two others by name during the graduation ceremony, and noted their effort to make sure that all recruits successfully passed the examinations.

Betsy said that prior to reporting for the academy, she had been told by some more experienced members of the agency that she should avoid standing out and not mention to others that she had a college degree. She said the stories she was told made her expect to be treated negatively by academy staff because she was a female and more so because she has a college degree. She believes both things may have been true in years past, but she says that there was never any negativity shown toward her about either fact.

Betsy says that she thinks it is important that Criminal Justice degree programs do not cross over to teaching the applied lessons of the academy. She says that she believes there is a way to do that, if an agency were large enough to support a Criminal Justice College that incorporates the academic and applied lessons. Betsy believes this would produce a wonderful learning experience and synthesize the information in a way that can never be accomplished by attending first one and then the other. Betsy says that this idea was talked about by one of her professors in one of her classes in the program.

Betsy says that law enforcement is a wonderful profession and that she enjoys her work and life. She says that she shares that with younger students when she is given the chance. Betsy says that she was recently asked to speak to a Police Explorer post and one of the questions she was asked was about college. Betsy says that she didn't hesitate

to recommend her old program. She also says that she shared with the group that one of the greatest advantages of her college experience was that the program she attended utilized guest speakers and adjunct faculty from law enforcement agencies, including the state police. Betsy reiterated that this does not mean that the relationship alone is the most important, but the information these individuals bring to the classroom is real and timely.

### **Beverly – State Law Enforcement Officer**

Beverly has been employed for three years in law enforcement. She graduated five years ago and has also completed a graduate degree in Public Administration. For most people, it probably takes less than a minute of visiting with Beverly until one realizes they are speaking with a person who is focused, dedicated, and full of energy. Beverly's father, grandfather and great-grandfather were state law enforcement officers. Her father and grandfather attended her college graduation, and two years later were present for her commissioning ceremony. Her father still works for the state police agency.

Beverly says that she never waivered from an early determination to follow in the family footsteps. Her father graduated from the same college, one of the first Criminal Justice majors, and attended under the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration program. Beverly is assigned to highway patrol and says that she loves her work. Beverly believes that her degree has given her a great advantage over those without one. Further, she believes that the appropriate degree for a law enforcement career is Criminal Justice. Her father encouraged her to do her graduate work in Public

Administration, assuring her that it would have more relevance to being a police manager than would the advanced Criminal Justice degree. Beverly believes that two disciplines are very compatible and says that she has benefited from having an understanding of the administrative side of her work.

Beverly believes there are at least two ways in which her degree has helped her as a police officer. The first she identifies as informational – the coursework and classroom discussions helped her to understand the reasons for various activities, patrol functions, rules and regulations. The second she identifies as confidence building – the interaction with professors and visiting instructors, with the knowledge that she has a degree that she knows has helped others in the patrol, gives her confidence that she is prepared. She says that she was one of only two recruits in the state academy that had a graduate degree, and this added to her confidence.

Beverly laughs a little when asked about any discipline-specific course that helped to prepare her. She explains that during the summer between her last two years of undergraduate study she enrolled in six-hours of internship. At the suggestion of her father she applied for an internship with the state police and received an assignment in the main headquarters. She was given lodging at the academy and paid a stipend for her work. She said her duties included helping review paperwork, but she also spent some time working in every aspect of the agency, including three days of ride-along on patrol. She says that there couldn't be a better example of discipline-specific course helping her. Her performance at headquarters was rewarded with a guaranteed interview, allowing her application to by-pass the initial review process.

Beverly says that she realizes it might be difficult to do so, but she thinks every Criminal Justice student should be required to do at least three credit hours of internship. She also thought that all course writing should be divided between the academic and technical styles. She notes that the academic writing helped her in her graduate studies, but the technical writing experience would have benefited her more in the applied side of policing. Beverly shares that she had taken a course in technical writing at the urging of one of her professors, specifically to help her in her work.

Beverly shares that she has recently had the opportunity to speak to several high school classes in her patrol area. She says that she is always asked by students if they need a degree to be a police officer and where she got her degree. She says that she tells the students that a degree is not required, but strongly recommended. She says that she encourages them to work towards a Criminal Justice degree. Although the university she attended is some distance from her duty station, she encourages students to attend there. Beverly says that there is no question in her mind but that the program she attended is the best for students wanting to enter law enforcement as a career.

#### **Bill – Local Law Enforcement Officer**

Bill has been employed for five years in law enforcement. He graduated six years ago and has engaged in no coursework beyond the undergraduate degree. Bill has been with the same local police department since his graduation. The agency has grown from 27 to 53 officers in the five years he has been employed as an officer. He was hired during his summer and holiday breaks from college to work as a dispatcher and relief jailer. Bill grew up in the town where he now works, and had a family association with

some members of the police department. The city has grown quickly due to its growing popularity as a suburban home area. Bill says that the department has changed significantly over the last five years as well. Bill is a sergeant who is serving in a position allocated for a lieutenant. He will be promoted at the end of his sixth year.

Bill says that he has personally experienced neither an advantage nor disadvantage from having a degree in Criminal Justice. He says that he has definitely been advantaged by having a degree, and points to that as the reason for his being quickly promoted. When asked about the role that either departmental relations or rapidity of growth played, he discounts those. He says that the departmental relations played very little role in his career, past being allowed an opportunity to be employed during school. He says the rapid growth provided opportunities for promotions, but the degree itself is what led to his selection.

Bill could not identify a discipline specific course that he feels prepared him for the work he does today. He then pauses and is apparently thinking over his initial response. Bill shares his thoughts, after reflecting on his first answer; he realized that there are times when he has been in a training course, or working on a workplace assignment, and remembered something from a course that has helped him understand or put into perspective the thing he is studying. Bill believes there are probably many things that still impact the way he thinks, or the things he does, from his college coursework.

Bill shares that a big impact on him came from some of the professors he had in Criminal Justice courses. He believes that the single greatest advantage his program provided is the connection to law enforcement. Bill says that the classroom discussions

were grounded in the applied side of the discipline, and this helped him to better synthesize the material. He remembers a discussion about the findings of the Kansas City Patrol Study, and says that a classroom discussion helped him to understand the concept in a way he did not from his reading. The former law enforcement officer teaching the course gave local examples relating to the findings.

Bill shares that he also liked the fact that he could visit with his professors about career options and they could give him first-hand knowledge and insight. He remembers that he got side-tracked once, thinking about seeking a position in the Federal Bureau of Investigation. When he talked it over with one of his favorite professors, the response was blunt and to the point. Bill was advised that it would be the worst mistake he ever made. He was told that he would make an outstanding patrol officer, but would be a terrible federal agent. He was told that he would be personally miserable having to do the work of an agent, but was very suited for the role of a patrol officer. Bill says that more importantly, the professor made him understand that one did not make you a better person than the other. Instead, he says he was told that the jobs are very different and each requires special characteristics. Bill said he made his decision during the course of that meeting and has never looked back, except to imagine how much he would dislike the work that he sees federal agents doing today.

Bill is a strong proponent of his old program and doesn't think there needs to be any changes. He says that he had heard a few years ago that there was consideration being given to move away from the practice of having current and former practitioners teaching in the program. Bill says that he knows one of the Board of Regents members,

an attorney in his community, and he went to visit him about the issue. He says that he feels so strongly that this change would have damaged the program that he felt compelled to have some input. He believes his input was an important part of stopping the change, or keeping it from happening.

Bill says that it is true that his department does not require a person to have a Criminal Justice degree, but he feels there should be some level of college education required. He also believes that the requirement should focus on Criminal Justice. He says that when young people ask him, or he speaks to a group of students, he encourages them to go to college if they are interested in working as a police officer. He says he also encourages them to pursue their degree through his own college for the degree.

#### **Brad – State Law Enforcement Officer**

Brad has been employed for four years in law enforcement. He graduated four years ago and has engaged in no coursework beyond the undergraduate degree. Like Beverly, Brad has a family tradition of state law enforcement work. Both his father and grandfather worked in the state patrol. Brad says that his path was determined before he was even born. Unlike Beverly, Brad determined in his third year of college that he wasn't going to be forced into following his father's footsteps. He dropped out of school and went to another state to work as a general laborer in construction projects. He says that he received a call from one of his professors, a former state police officer himself. Brad says that initial thought was that his parents had initiated the call, but the professor explained he had gotten his contact number from a friend who was still enrolled. Over the course of another couple of phone conversations, a few e-mails, and a visit back to



the campus, Brad came to realize completing his degree was a must. The professor became a mentor for Brad, and he helped him get to where he is today. Brad says that he is a state patrol officer today because it is the best thing for him, not because someone made him.

Brad says that being a Criminal Justice major in his university is this type of story over and over – faculty members encourage and help students to reach their potential. He says the program has that reputation across campus. Brad says that in his work with the state police agency, he encounters people he met in college and they all have stories about being mentored by one of the professors.

The next summer after his return, Brad was accepted as an intern in the state agency. He was assigned to a patrol district headquarters and did a variety of tasks ranging from proofreading reports to writing response letters for the commander. Brad says that they allowed him to do several ride-along assignments over the summer, and these were where he really fell in love with the idea of having a career in the patrol. In response to a question, Brad says that it was the professor who called him and convinced him to return that also helped him get the internship. He laughs and says that he was supposed to just see if this was something he wanted to do, but he realizes it was to get him past the rejection he had towards following his father's wishes.

Brad identified the internship as the single most important class he took in college. He went on to add that his parents considered it a waste of money to pay for tuition while working in a job, but he would encourage everyone to take the same approach.

Brad believes that the Criminal Justice degree gave him confidence to get through the hiring interview and to enter the academy with less apprehension than others. Brad notes that there were twelve people in his academy class who did not complete the training, and only one of these had a college degree. He adds that nine of them failed out on academics. Three were removed because of disciplinary issues, and one was the person with the college degree. Brad says that he remembers the person had a degree in business and that he didn't like the structure of the academy. He believes that individuals with a Criminal Justice degree come more prepared because of the interaction with their professors.

Brad says that he wouldn't have thought so at the time, but he now believes that more writing should be required in the coursework. He says that he was encouraged to take a course in technical writing, but did not. He says that he should not have been given that choice, and firmly believes that good writing skills can help a graduate be better prepared for their career in his agency. Like Beverly, he believes that all Criminal Justice students should be required to enroll in an internship.

Brad says that he is seldom asked about how to become a police officer, but he would recommend Criminal Justice as the preferred degree. He makes comments about the fact that people studying to be an accountant earn a degree in that field, and medical doctors study medicine. Brad says that he thinks that professional police officers should study Criminal Justice. He says that he believes a degree is essential and should be required of all state police applicants. Moreover, he believes that the degree should be

Criminal Justice. Brad says that he would recommend his own degree program to anyone wanting to enter law enforcement.

### **Brandi – State Law Enforcement Officer**

Brandi has been employed for two years in law enforcement. She graduated three years ago and has completed twelve hours of graduate coursework. Like Betsy, Brandi received an opportunity to go to work in state law enforcement before she completed her graduate degree and was recruited to apply by one of the adjunct professors in the undergraduate program. Brandi has no regrets about making the decision to seize the opportunity and believes she will finish her degree within the next three years. She is planning to transfer to an on-line graduate program at another university, simply because her duty assignment precludes her from being in a position to complete the one she had started.

Brandi says that there is no way to adequately explain all of the advantages she has found in receiving a Criminal Justice degree from the university. Brandi did not start college to earn a degree in Criminal Justice; her original intent was to complete a pre-professional program for medical school. However, during her second semester she found that she did not have the scientific background or determination to succeed in the sciences. During the summer term, she took an introductory course for Criminal Justice. The professor had several guest lecturers come in, and two of them were police officers. When she heard their stories, she started thinking about being a police officer. Brandi believes guest lecturers were an important part of her higher education experience. The

next semester she changed her major to Criminal Justice and set her sights on the state police as a career.

Like Betsy, she found the law courses to be of great value in preparing for the academy courses relating to criminal and traffic law. Brandi says that following her graduation from the academy, she sent a thank-you note to her former professor who had taught the legal courses in her undergraduate degree. Brandi believes that these courses are underappreciated during the coursework, but placed her far ahead of recruits who did not have the same educational background.

Brandi also reports that prior to arriving at the academy, she was advised to avoid standing out and to never say anything about having a college degree. Brandi was also warned that academy staff might haze her because she was a female, and more so because she has a college degree. Like Betsy, Brandi thinks both things may have been true in years past, but she assures that she never experienced any negativity, only support.

Brandi was one of the recruits that Betsy reported as being encouraged by one of the academy staff members to form a study group to help other recruits prepare for the examinations. Brandi remembers that she was proud to have the opportunity to help others in the academic area of the training program. She notes that there were others who assisted her in mastering other portions of the training, such as handcuffing and physical control techniques. She described this process of peer tutoring as team building and wonders if this shouldn't be promoted in the university program. Brandi thinks that the

one thing her undergraduate program lacked that she would change is more effort to get the Criminal Justice students together for social interaction and team building.

Brandi is quick to add that she is a strong promoter of the value of her academic program. She says that last year she was contacted by the university's alumni association and asked to participate in a survey about her undergraduate experience and the value of her degree. She gave the Criminal Justice program a glowing recommendation and would recommend anyone seeking a law enforcement career to consider that institution first.

#### **Brenda – Local Law Enforcement Officer**

Brenda has been employed for three years in law enforcement. She graduated three years ago and has engaged in no coursework beyond the undergraduate degree. Brenda went to the university right out of high school, which she views as a mistake for her. She failed all but one course during her first semester. She says that she convinced herself and the dean of her college that she had learned a hard lesson and would do better the next semester. Brenda withdrew from the university before the next semester was half over and enlisted in the military. Brenda then spent four years in the United States Marine Corps before returning to college. She describes herself as having been a struggling student, and is proud that she had the grade-point needed to graduate.

Brenda says that she chose to major in Criminal Justice because she felt a connection to the military structure, and there was an excellent opportunity for employment in her hometown. She now works in a department of about fifty police officers and lives on the property where she grew up. Brenda says that her department

does not have a regulation requiring applicants to have any education beyond a high school diploma or equivalent. She says that most of the people they hire today have either an associate or bachelors degree. She says that most of the people that have been with the agency more than ten years have little or no college education, except for those in administration and upper level command ranks.

Brenda says that it is no secret that the current administration prefers for new employees to have a four-year degree in Criminal Justice. She says that for this reason alone she would have to say that the degree has given her a great advantage. When asked about whether her military experience played a role in her gaining employment, she responds that it did, but that she does not believe she would have been hired without the degree. Brenda adds that another thing that helped her was that she paid her own way to go to the police academy, taking maximum advantage of her veteran's benefits. Brenda shares that she targeted her hometown police agency for a position, something she planned while still serving in the military.

Brenda says that she really can't identify any particular courses that have benefitted her, but that there are things she did in the coursework that has helped. She believes the single most important thing she learned to do was to write better. She says that in her first semester after returning from the Marine Corps she enrolled in the introductory course to Criminal Justice. She says that about mid-semester she received her required essay back and was devastated by the grade. She tells that the professor asked to speak with her after class one day, and told her that she needed to work hard at improving her writing skills. He also recommended that she enroll the next semester in a

technical writing course. She says that she walked out of the classroom and felt like her dream was falling apart. Brenda says that she opened the essay and read the comments that were provided with the grade. She found that the professor was supportive and that his comments were helpful – he became a mentor for her throughout the program.

Brenda says that really isn't able to identify any additional particular advantages that she has found in having the degree, nor can she remember anything that would be identified as a disadvantage. She says that her academy experience was made easier by the fact that she was generally more prepared than many of her fellow students. She says that more than half of the class members had limited education and no military background. Brenda says that the majority of them were headed to very small police departments, sheriffs' offices, and to work as deputy constables. Brenda seems amused by the fact that she found herself excelling in the academics portion of the academy, which she says didn't require a great deal of effort. She also excelled in the firearms and physical portions, winning the award for best overall cadet.

Brenda says that she doesn't feel that she is in a position to make any recommendations about the Criminal Justice program. She adds that she hopes that the professors continue to interact closely with the students. She goes on to say that she thinks the program is a good one and that she has a nephew who is now enrolled there. Brenda says that she knows that the current chief of the department is on an advisory board for the program and is an advocate for people to attend there.

### **Criminal Justice Program C**

The university housing Program C originated as a state teachers college and expanded undergraduate and graduate degree programs rapidly between 1950 and 1990. The university is again expanding with new forms of interdisciplinary degrees and certificate programs. The Criminal Justice Program was launched in the late 1960s as a degree offering in another department. In 1970, the Program was housed in a newly created Department of Criminal Justice and has continued to operate as such. By the mid 1970s the Program had developed and began offering Criminal Justice Masters and Doctoral degrees. During the 1980s, the undergraduate curriculum was developed into a series of specialized tracks, one of these being specifically designed for persons wishing to enter a law enforcement career. In the 1990s, the graduate curriculum was similarly stratified into tracks of specialization. From the beginning faculty members were required to have terminal degrees and were selected from a variety of academic disciplines. Practical experience was not required and was considered to be in conflict with the academic posture of the Department. By the end of the 1970s, persons were no longer hired as faculty unless they had completed a Doctor of Philosophy in a discipline associated with Criminal Justice. The Program teaching assignments were originally supplemented by adjuncts from the local Criminal Justice community. Since 1990, these assignments are given to graduate students.

A spokesperson estimates that less than a quarter of all Program graduates enter law enforcement careers; another quarter of the graduates enter the correctional field; and about half pursue advanced education. The spokesperson believes the number



choosing a career not associated with Criminal Justice would be less than three-percent.

The spokesperson identifies the Program to be one of the most advanced in the area of the academic study of Criminal Justice.

The following table provides participant information and serves as an index for the interview synopsis:

**Table 4 Institution C Participant Information**

Page	Participant Name	Gender	Agency Type	Years Since Graduation	Years in Law Enforcement	Additional Higher Education
112	Caleb	M	Local	7	4	None
115	Calvin	M	State	5	4	6 Graduate Hours
117	Cam	M	Local	4	3	12 Graduate Hours
120	Cara	F	Local	6	3	MS/CJ
122	Carl	M	State	6	4	MPA
127	Carter	M	State	6	6	6 Graduate Hours
130	Celia	F	State	6	4	MS/CJ
133	Chantal	F	Local	5	5	None
136	Chloe	F	State	5	2	MPA
139	Claire	F	State	7	3	MSW

### **Caleb – Local Law Enforcement Officer**

Caleb has been employed for seven years in law enforcement. He graduated four years ago and has engaged in no coursework beyond the undergraduate degree. Caleb says that he never intended to be a police officer and earned a degree in Criminal Justice because he failed in the program in which he first enrolled. In fact, he says that he failed in the first three programs in which he majored. He says that he was advised to either major in education, Sociology, or Criminal Justice. He had done poorly in the

introductory course to Sociology, didn't want to be a teacher, and settled on the degree in Criminal Justice. Caleb says that his father wanted him to major in Business, his mother wanted him to be medical doctor or a dentist, and he lacked the dedication to do any of these. He also says that Finite Math played a major role in his deciding on a Criminal Justice Degree.

Caleb says that he came out of college and started working in his father's company, got married, and had his first child. Just after the birth of his little girl, his father died suddenly and unexpectedly of a heart attack. He says that there was no insurance, lots of company debt that none of the other family members knew about, and the company was sold by his mother. Caleb says that over the next few months he learned that there was huge difference between being the boss' son and being just a laborer. His family life changed as well and he believes his hardships contributed to a divorce. After unsuccessfully looking for work in other places, he talked his mother into supporting him while he went through the police academy of a nearby community college.

Caleb says that one thing that surprised him when he entered the undergraduate program was that the Criminal Justice degree was not enough to be certified as a police officer. He notes that the degree will help an officer advance more quickly in a department, and that it will help him progress through the advanced certification levels in the state system. He says that he felt somewhat on his own in the program, he remembers very little interaction with the professors. Caleb remembers that it was not

uncommon to enroll in a class being taught by a graduate student, even though a regular faculty member might be listed as the teacher.

Caleb says that he would have to admit that his Criminal Justice education was impacted by his own lack of real interest, but he feels the program did little to encourage him. He attributes the fact that he was minimally engaged as the cause for his inability to identify a single course that contributed positively to his work today. Caleb makes it clear that possessing the Criminal Justice degree played a major role in his being employed. He also believes that the general reputation of the program and university were important. However, he says he would be hard pressed to identify a particular thing he learned as being important. Caleb says the emphasis of his course work was on correctional issues and not on policing.

When asked, he said that he does not remember a single professor having a background in law enforcement. He reiterates that he didn't actually have a professor for a teacher until he was almost done with the program. He thinks most of the graduate students teaching courses had come straight from the undergraduate program. He remembers that some of them had worked in some correctional capacity on a part-time basis.

Caleb says that he works with another officer that attended a different school and earned a degree in Criminal Justice. He says that they have worked the same shift as partners in a patrol area on the midnight shift. Caleb notes that this situation led to all kinds of discussions, and that the other officer often shares something that one of his former professors told him. Caleb shares that they had a lengthy discussion about their

two programs one night and he decided that the other is a much better one for someone wanting to enter law enforcement.

Caleb says that he would not recommend his undergraduate program to someone wanting to be a police officer. He adds that if the person wants to do something else in Criminal Justice, or pursue a graduate degree and teach, the program certainly has a reputation of being a good one. He thinks there are other Criminal Justice programs that are probably better suited to people wanting to be police officers.

### **Calvin – State Law Enforcement Officer**

Calvin has been employed for four years in law enforcement. He graduated five years ago and has completed twelve hours of graduate coursework. Calvin started college to become a coach and says that he had visions of being a football star, then returning to his high school to coach his home team. He says he found out that he didn't connect with the coursework required for the degree, and that he would have to do additional courses in Education to become a certified teacher. Calvin was rooming with another player who was majoring in Criminal Justice, so he decided to try that as well. He enrolled in the introductory course and decided he liked the program.

As Calvin neared the completion of his degree, he wasn't sure what he wanted to do for a career. His uncle had a friend that was a state police officer. Calvin visited with him about the possibility of entering that career. Calvin decided to apply during his last semester in the program, but didn't get past the initial interview. He decided to enroll in the education courses needed to earn an alternative certification for teaching. He got a

part-time job as a juvenile intake officer and enrolled in two graduate classes. After the first semester, he was contacted by the state police agency and hired.

Calvin says that little of the information he received in the undergraduate program connected to his academy experience. He says that the most significant thing that helped him from college was the writing he was required to do there. Calvin believes that the most significant benefits from the Criminal Justice degree program was the confidence that he could understand the law, and that he was familiar with the terminology used in policing literature. As Calvin talked he began to identify other things that related back to his Criminal Justice coursework. He spoke of a class that he had taken in administrative procedures and law that helps him now to understand the reasons for some of the policies he is under.

Calvin remembers that he was very apprehensive about going to the state police law enforcement academy. He says that he was concerned because he had allowed himself to get lazy about working out, and he was afraid he might have trouble with the physical fitness program. He was also concerned that he would be one of very few minority recruits. An additional concern was that he would be singled out for having a degree. When asked why he feared the latter, he said that his uncle's friend had told him that the academy staff harassed college graduates.

Calvin says that none of these things turned out to be a problem. His football training experiences had prepared him for the physical fitness program. He said that during the first week he discovered that he was a lot more concerned about his race than anyone else at the academy, and the class make up was very diverse. He also discovered

that everyone had some level of college, and most of the recruits had college degrees. Calvin said that the single most prevalent degree was Criminal Justice, although there were recruits from a few other disciplines. Calvin said that he believes that having the degree in Criminal Justice brought some level of respect from those recruits with degrees in other disciplines.

Calvin believes that the program he came from has an excellent reputation, but that it lacks connectivity between the faculty and students. He says that there were some recruits who came from another university and that two of their former professors came to the academy graduation. Calvin says that if he could recommend any change for his program it would be having more faculty involvement with students.

Calvin says that he would recommend a Criminal Justice degree for anyone entering law enforcement, but not necessarily the one he attended. He says that he visited with the two professors from the other university who had attended his graduation, and started wishing he had gone there. Calvin says that one of his high school teachers told him that college was more than just getting an education. He was told that he would make connections in his college years that would last him a lifetime and open doors for him in the future. Calvin feels like that was limited to peer connections and not with faculty. He says that he never felt close to a professor, and he now thinks that this is unique to his program.

#### **Cam – Local Law Enforcement Officer**

Cam has been employed for three years in law enforcement. He graduated four years ago and has completed twelve hours of graduate coursework. Cam completed

college and then enrolled in a community college-based law enforcement academy. He says that this allowed him to get a job more easily that would fit his personal needs. The community he works for provides an adjusted schedule and financial support for officers completing graduate work. Cam says that without this assistance, he would have little chance of being able to enroll in graduate school.

Cam notes that several of his academy classmates had completed their associate degrees at the same community college where the academy was housed. He believes they were actually better prepared for the academy coursework than he. Cam says that he had friends in college who had transferred from the same community college to complete their undergraduate work. According to Cam, these individuals found the university's writing requirements and coursework more difficult and demanding than in the community college. Cam says that he values his degree, but believes the students completing the community college probably had an advantage over him in the academy.

Cam believes the work he did in some of his courses helped to prepare him for the academy and work experience, but he can't identify anything specific. Cam notes that the legal courses in the academy were taught at a much lower level than the ones he took in his undergraduate work. Cam says that he doesn't recall any theoretical discussions in the academy. He notes that a section on patrol techniques was more of a lesson in technique than the same topic in his coursework at college. He adds that he understands from friends who have attended other academies that the approach is quite different from their experience. Cam noted that he was somewhat concerned about the

academy from which he graduated, since only half of the recruit class successfully passed the state administered examination.

Cam does not view his degree as ever placing him in the position of being disadvantaged. However, he says that he was made the subject of some kidding in some of the classes at the academy because he had a bachelor's degree, but he took it as good natured joking.

Cam notes that he would be hard pressed to justify any direct relationship between his degree work and his role as a police officer, other than to say that he generally finds himself thinking through decisions more than officers without a degree. He believes the value of the degree is in providing him with an educationally based framework for decision making. Cam says that he has often thought about whether he would have been better off to have completed a community college degree and the academy first, and then completed his undergraduate work after beginning work as a police officer. As he discusses this option, he develops arguments for why it would have been a poor option for him. Cam admits that this is the process he goes through every time he enters into such a discussion with someone.

Cam says that he feels his way has worked best for him, but he is quick to note that he doesn't believe it would be so for everyone. He says that he doesn't believe that there are enough people capable of completing an undergraduate college degree to support the needs of law enforcement at every level. Cam says he is very frank when people ask him about pursuing a degree before entering police work. He says he believes that a good two-year technical based program and the academy will prepare someone to



be a good local law enforcement officer. He goes on to say that he thinks a person entering a larger municipal department, state or federal agency, or intending to be an executive in any municipal department, should have an undergraduate degree.

Cam says that he would not hesitate to recommend his undergraduate program to anyone seeking a bachelor degree. However, he notes again that he would first discuss the other options based on the individual's career goals.

### **Cara – Local Law Enforcement Officer**

Cara has been employed for three years in law enforcement. She graduated six years ago and has also completed a graduate degree in Criminal Justice. Cara is a patrol officer in a large metropolitan police department. Her father was an officer in the same department but retired two years ago. Cara's father had a degree, but not in Criminal Justice and not from the same university she attended. When he decided that she was serious about wanting to be a police officer, he insisted on her going through the program from which he had graduated. He also insisted on her completing her graduate degree before entering service, something he had not done. She says that she was very fortunate to have the support that she did in preparing for her career.

Cara says that her father took an active role in helping her select course options that would better prepare her for her work as a police officer. She notes that during her undergraduate program she was surprised by how little personal guidance she had from the school in the advising process. She says that her undergraduate degree did a great job of preparing her for the graduate program, and that this translates to an advantage in her career. She says that there were things she learned in the undergraduate program that

helped her understand issues discussed in the classroom training of the police academy. In particular she remembers theories of patrol being a topic, constitutional law and US Supreme Court decisions, and issues relating to the use of discretion. She relates much of the latter being conveyed through class discussions.

Cara says that she got to know the faculty really well during the graduate program and wishes there had been more interaction with them during her undergraduate work. She says that she listens and takes notes in her classes, but sometimes likes to discuss her perceptions of the information with a professor. She shares a story about something that was included in the introductory course. She attempted to discuss it with the person teaching the class and was told that the information was in the textbook. She says that it was then that she understood that the learning process was largely up to her. Cara thinks the program could be greatly improved if there were more regular faculty teaching the undergraduate courses. She says that at the same university, in the College of Business, there are full time instructors that are not professors and only teach the undergraduate courses. She says she remembers this from a discussion she had with her roommate during the time. She remembers that these individuals were people with real-world experience. She wonders why the Criminal Justice program doesn't follow the same form and hire people to teach the undergraduate courses who have experience.

Cara believes the undergraduate program is a good one and would recommend it to others, but she reiterates that she may have felt differently if she had not had the benefit of a very helping father and a graduate degree. Cara says that she believes the quality of a graduate degree at her institution is very high, and doesn't believe there is

anything wrong with the undergraduate program. She reiterated that she thinks the professors are so busy supporting the graduate programs and doing research that they end up ignoring the undergraduates. She also says that the major emphasis of the undergraduate program is to support the graduate programs with students. Cara said that in her opinion the most important thing is that any person wanting to enter a professional law enforcement career today should have a degree in Criminal Justice.

### **Carl – State Law Enforcement Officer**

Carl has been employed for four years in law enforcement. He graduated six years ago and has also completed a graduate degree in Public Administration. Carl is quick to point out that he was a non-traditional student in the undergraduate program. Carl spent six years in the United States Army before beginning college and took advantage of available federal and state educational funding. Carl completed the undergraduate program in Criminal Justice and immediately enrolled in the graduate program in Public Administration. Carl says that his original intention was to go into federal service when he completed his graduate degree. However, he says that two things changed his mind: He met a state law enforcement officer in graduate school and then he married her. He jokes that his wife outranks him and notes that they are assigned so that they work in adjoining districts.

Carl says that he feels like his Criminal Justice degree has helped him in the academy and in the practical work he does in the patrol. He is quick to point out that he doesn't want to leave a negative impression about his undergraduate major by his choice to seek a graduate degree in Public Administration. He explains that his choice was

related to his desire to eventually be a supervisor and administrator of an agency. He also believes he had a distinct advantage over those in his academy class without a Criminal Justice major. He adds that he believes more than three-quarters of his academy classmates had at least an undergraduate degree, and at least four had completed graduate degrees. He notes that there were five individuals that failed to complete the academy because of academics, and all of them lacked a college degree.

Carl said he could identify elements of several courses that helped him in his academy coursework, and in the field as a patrol officer. He says the courses were related to patrol theories, the role of police in society, professional conduct, and the reading and application of law. He quickly adds that good writing, critical thinking and decision making skills were also augmented by his coursework and helped him in his work as a police officer. He says that it would be difficult for him to distinguish between the military experience and his education as to which enhanced those skills the most.

Carl says that he would argue that completing the state academy was the point where a person without a degree is most impacted. After the academy, he says, the difference is usually most evident in the promotional process. He notes that it isn't impossible for a person in his agency to be promoted without a degree, but that it is rare. He shared that his patrol sergeant does not have a degree, but he served seven years in Army Special Forces before becoming a patrol officer. Carl believes that the specialized training is equivalent to some level of college. He adds that it is almost unheard of for an officer to be promoted to lieutenant without a college degree.

Carl says that he has not experienced a situation where having a degree has put him at a disadvantage. He adds that he has seen one instance where an officer seemed to rely too much on his having a degree and that his attitude ultimately led to a disciplinary transfer. Carl says that the officer seemed unable to get past the fact that his sergeant did not have a degree and that he made this a confrontational issue. Carl believes that in most of the cases where a person blames the degree for being a disadvantage, it is their attitude about having the degree that is the problem. Carl shares that in the academy there was a recruit who came with the attitude that he already knew everything he needed to know, because he had an undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice. Carl says that some of the other recruits discussed the recruit's attitude with him and helped him see that he was not fitting in.

Carl says that he thinks the only shortcoming of his Criminal Justice undergraduate program was the lack of a capstone course. He notes that this is a component of the MPA Program he completed, and that it gave him the idea for something he felt was missing from the undergraduate program. Carl believes there should be a course to tie the undergraduate program together and connect the academics to the applied side of Criminal Justice. Carl says that he shared that idea with a couple of the faculty members from his program and they countered that it would not be beneficial to the typical graduate of their program. Carl strongly disagreed with their view.

Carl seemed stressed by the question of whether he would recommend his undergraduate program as a preparatory one for someone wanting to enter law enforcement as a career. He started and stopped several times, obviously in deep

thought, and says that he could not do that at this point. Carl shared that he believes there are other universities with better Criminal Justice programs for people wanting to be practitioners. Carl says he has talked about and compared his program with other officers, including his wife. He explains that the program he graduated from has an excellent reputation, but he thinks it lacks a great deal for those graduates entering law enforcement as a career.

Carl says that there is no connection between the undergraduate students and the faculty. He says that he was in an upper-level course before he actually had a professor teaching him, and before that it was graduate students. He says his program used professors who have little or no applied experience. Carl believed it would have been beneficial to have had someone who could relate theory to practice without referring to more literature. Carl also believes that students would benefit from guest lecturers who are working in the field. He says that he cannot remember ever having a guest lecturer from the applied side of Criminal Justice. He notes that they did have a few guest lecturers, but they were always from professors who were noted authors and researchers.

Carl notes that his wife graduated from a program that had a requirement for professors to have experience. She was also strongly encouraged to enroll in an internship with an agency. Carl says that she had adjunct instructors teaching lower-level courses who were actively engaged in law enforcement service. Carl says that one of these lectures resulted in his wife being given an opportunity to intern in the headquarters of a state law enforcement agency. He says that she chose not to seek

employment in that particular agency, but that the experience was an asset in her selection process for her agency in which she now works.

Carl added that he would like to see an undergraduate degree required of anyone wanting to be a law enforcement officer. He says that he understands this would probably result in a shortfall of police officers and negatively impact smaller local police agencies. Carl believes the eventual result would be a tremendous increase in salary levels as demand increased. Carl believes that in the end, the profession would improve as a result of the requirement. He notes that most other professional positions require a degree.

Carl says that he firmly believes the Criminal Justice degree is a good one for persons wanting to be law enforcement officers, but he also believes the curriculum could be improved in most programs. He believes there should be a standard curriculum adopted for all Criminal Justice undergraduate programs. Carl shares that he wrote a policy paper in his MPA coursework that addressed this issue. He says that he knows his idea is not a new one, but he proposed the development of a Criminal Justice undergraduate program similar to the Army's Reserve Officer Training Corps. Carl believes that a tremendous number of students would take advantage of an opportunity to earn a degree and repay the government by working in law enforcement. In response to a question about how this could be accomplished without establishing a federal police force, Carl said this would have to operate more like the Peace Corps. Carl says that he believes Criminal Justice education is poised to change dramatically over the next several years as more and more persons become ineligible to work as police officers

because of criminal convictions. He believes programs should gear themselves to being more applied based than theoretical and academic.

### **Carter – State Law Enforcement Officer**

Carter has been employed for six years in law enforcement. He graduated six years ago and has completed six hours of graduate coursework. Carter serves an area patrol sergeant and has just recently enrolled in a graduate course. He says that the promotion allowed him to work in a shift that gives him an opportunity to attend the evening classes of the graduate school. Carter is working toward a graduate degree in Adult Education. His goal is to eventually be in executive positions of the state law enforcement academy.

In reflecting on his undergraduate experience, Carter says that he enrolled in college with the expectation of completing a degree in Criminal Justice and becoming a state police officer. However, he was somewhat surprised to learn that the degree wouldn't result in his being automatically hired and put to work. Carter admits that he was somewhat naïve about the process of becoming a trooper. He says a chance encounter with an on-duty trooper helped to set him on the path of success. The trooper took Carter's interest to heart and assisted him in making the connections needed to work in a summer internship, do ride-along sessions, and make a focused approach to completing the application process. He says he believes the trooper worked as hard at getting him hired as he did.

Carter says that he believes the Criminal Justice degree was a very positive part of his being helped by the trooper, and for this reason he would view it as being an



advantage. He credits his Criminal Justice coursework with helping him to be a better student in the academy, which he says was moderately rigorous from the academic standpoint. He says that he did well in the academic courses on Constitutional and Criminal Law, which translated into his doing well in academy coursework covering the same material.

Carter credits a Criminal Justice Management course as having prepared him for being a better supervisor. He says that it gave him an appreciation of the role he plays as a sergeant and the importance of documentation. He adds that there are probably ways that his Criminal Justice degree has helped him, without his understanding them now.

Carter says that he recalls at least two of his academy classmates having degrees in something other than Criminal Justice. He remembers that one had majored in Agriculture, and he believes the other had majored in Sociology. Carter says that he remembers them because they both approached him about helping them with the legal instruction portion of the academy. He says that he believes they were clearly at a disadvantage in that area, but believes they felt that way about the entire academy experience. Carter explains that he feels a lot of advantage in having the Criminal Justice degree is the self-confidence generated by having the academic background relative to your career.

Carter says that his Criminal Justice degree has never been a disadvantage for him. However, he adds that he has heard older troopers talk about how college graduates used to be treated in the academy and in their initial field assignments. He believes the last fifteen years have represented a tremendous change in the make-up of his agency.

He points to the fact that most people being promoted today are college graduates, meaning that they are less likely to view college as a negative.

Carter says that he believes the faculty in his undergraduate program needs to work more closely with their students in career planning and seeking opportunities to participate in various career programs offered by departments. He says that when he approached one of his teachers about the internship opportunity with the state agency and asked for a letter of recommendation, he was told that the faculty member didn't have time to write one. He says another faculty member told him that he doubted Carter would be selected if he applied. He confesses that in the end he had to write one of the letters himself and then get the faculty member's signature. Carter believes that an internship should be strongly encouraged, if not required, of all students of Criminal Justice. A few minutes later, Carter retracts this idea and says that it would not be fair for all students to be required, but that those planning to enter law enforcement should be encouraged.

Carter believes his undergraduate program was a good one, but he says that he felt little connection with the faculty there and credits his chance meeting with the trooper as being much more important in obtaining his career opportunity. He said that he remembers that a small group his academy classmates had graduated from another Criminal Justice program and that at least two of the faculty members came to the graduation ceremony. He admits that he felt a bit envious of them having that kind of connection with their teachers. Carter remembered that one of the classmates had worked in the same internship as he. Carter recalls that classmate had been referred to

the agency by one of his teachers. Carter says that he doubts that has ever happened in his own program.

Carter says that he would not discourage anyone from enrolling in his undergraduate program, but he would not be in a position to promote it as the best one for someone entering a law enforcement career.

### **Celia – State Law Enforcement Officer**

Celia has been employed for four years in law enforcement. She graduated six years ago and has completed a graduate degree in Criminal Justice. Celia echoes many of the same thoughts about her undergraduate experience as Carl. However, Celia never planned to enter law enforcement as a career when she started the program. She says that she really started college with no plan other than to earn a degree. Her favorite uncle worked for a specialized state enforcement agency and recommended she try a Criminal Justice course. She says that she did and was immediately taken by the complexity of the Criminal Justice System as a whole.

Celia entered the Criminal Justice program with the thought of becoming a researcher and perhaps teaching college. Her uncle encouraged her to apply for a summer internship with his agency, and she did. In fact, Celia worked for the agency every summer until she graduated and became a permanent employee.

Celia notes that her agency has its own academy and that the curriculum is considered by most to be much more academically demanding than that of the other state agencies. She says that her agency recruits persons mainly from three schools, two with Criminal Justice programs and one with a program specialization in the area of her

agency's enforcement. She adds that the undergraduate program she graduated from is not one of the preferred ones for her agency. She says it is viewed as being too focused on corrections and theory issues. Celia says that when she was preparing to leave for the summer break between her last two undergraduate years, she mentioned to one of her professors about the internship she was doing. She says his response was to warn her against letting the internship interfere with her other studies.

Celia says that her Criminal Justice degree did little to prepare her for the academy experience, or for her career work. She says the exception was her class on Criminal Law, which gave her an edge over peers without a Criminal Justice degree. She quickly adds that the writing requirements of her degree clearly prepared her for the academy, but not necessarily an advantage since almost everyone in her class had a degree.

Celia says that several years before she was employed, an agency director completely changed the hiring process and raised the standards for incoming officers. She says the result has been that officers have better pay and benefits, greater respect in the law enforcement community, and a more professional image. Celia says that there is somewhat of a strange downside to this – an undergraduate degree is pretty much the norm in the agency and this decreases the advantage a graduate may find in having one. She explains that her uncle encouraged her to pursue her graduate degree before entering the agency, and that she has already experienced her having one as being an advantage.

Celia believes that it is becoming increasingly necessary to have an undergraduate degree to enter the more profitable career lines in law enforcement: large

municipal departments; and state and federal agencies. She adds that she believes that for agencies like her own, the reality is that an undergraduate degree is not enough. In response to a question about the appropriateness of the Criminal Justice degree, she responds that it is a good one, but not the only suitable choice. Celia believes that for some agencies a degree in another discipline may prove to be more advantageous. She says that before recommending a Criminal Justice degree to a young person, she would discuss their career goals with them. Celia gives examples: a student wanting a career in criminal profiling should consider an undergraduate and graduate education in Psychology; a student wanting to pursue a career in child protective services should consider an education in Social Work.

Celia says that her experience with her Criminal Justice undergraduate program was that it was entered into by most students as a technical preparatory degree, when in fact it is not. Celia supports her statement that it is not preparatory by noting that one must complete an academy before entering the field. She points out that law enforcement is one of the very few career paths where the associated educational degree does not qualify you to work without completing a technical training program.

Celia says that from conversations with other officers she has come to understand that her undergraduate program was somewhat unique from others. She says the differences are in the fact that the faculty had less interaction with undergraduate students than in other programs. She also notes that there was a more distinct focus on the academic side of Criminal Justice, and on correctional issues. She believes this

worked for her, but wouldn't for everyone in general. She believes that the institutional reputation plays a significant factor in the success of its graduates.

Celia believes that her uncle played a role in her having the opportunity to work for the agency she does, but she also credits the internship. She says the internship is the best method of gaining access to a law enforcement agency and believes that Criminal Justice Programs should foster these opportunities.

### **Chantal – Local Law Enforcement Officer**

Chantal has been employed for five years in law enforcement. She graduated five years ago and has engaged in no coursework beyond the undergraduate degree. Chantal says that she did not begin college with the goal of a career in law enforcement and Criminal Justice was not her original major. In fact, she laughs as she shares a litany of majors that she declared in her first two years. She says that her indecision cost her at least one additional year of college.

Chantal says that her major had a direct impact on her having an opportunity to enter the local police department as a patrol officer. She says that she was recruited by an officer that attends church with her family. Chantal says that when she started her career, it was not intended to be one, but rather only a job until she could find something better. However, she says that she was quickly included in recruiting activities and given an opportunity to work in areas other than patrol. She views her opportunity as coming from a variety of things, including having the degree in Criminal Justice. She says that when she started five years ago, there were only two other persons in the department with degrees. Another factor she is quick to identify is that the department has doubled

in size over the last five years and is asking for more positions over the coming two years. Chantal says that her duties are now split between recruiting and serving as the community relations point person.

Chantal says that she can't really identify any particular aspect of the Criminal Justice coursework that has benefited her, but she feels that there have been general contributions throughout her academy and work experiences. She says that she scored very high in the academic portion of the law enforcement academy and credits much of that to a combination of things she had learned in the program and to having the confidence to believe she would do well. Chantal says that her academy class had only a handful of college graduates; she remembers only two others. Neither of the other persons had degrees in Criminal Justice and they seemed to struggle with the coursework related to legal issues and Constitutional protections. She says that her own academic struggle was with the mathematics involved in accident investigation.

Chantal says that she has never felt that she could have done better with another major area, or that she has been at a disadvantage because of her Criminal Justice major. She reiterates that the place she thinks the degree field really matters is in the academy. She shares that she placed first in academics there, and this made a very positive point when she returned to the department. She explains that the academy she attended had persons enrolled from a variety of law enforcement agencies. The fact that she was recognized for her academic ability impressed the senior officers from her own department who were in attendance. Chantal says that she felt confident enough to

believe she would do well because of the Criminal Justice degree, and doesn't think she would have been as successful with another major.

Chantal says that the invitation to apply for the department came at a critical point for her. She speaks about this in relation to a question about how her undergraduate program could be improved. She says that she felt disconnected from the faculty and was unable to develop a clear picture of what she wanted to do with her degree. She says that she spoke to two faculty members and was told by one that he was not a career advisor. She says the other suggested two options: Correctional officer or child protective services. Chantal says that neither idea appealed to her, nor did the suggestions include any discussion about why she would be successful in these areas. Chantal believes the program needs to employ some informed staff members to assist in placement, or make a more concerted effort to get recruiters in to talk with students about career options.

Chantal says that she also feels there should be a requirement for students to complete a math program that is designed to prepare them for the level of math used in accident investigation. She says that she found herself in the same difficult situation as her non-degreed academy classmates in trying to master the required mathematics. She says that she recommends a good math course for students she is recruiting from colleges for her department.

Chantal says that her department was not treated very nicely by the program from which she graduated, when she attempted to recruit there. She says that when she pointed out that she was a graduate of the program, she was told that her department is



not a level they seek for their graduates. Chantal spoke of four other colleges with Criminal Justice programs where she recruits every semester. She says that one of the colleges seems to go beyond the norm for helping agencies recruit there. Because of her experience, Chantal says that she would not recommend her undergraduate program for students wanting to become law enforcement officers. She says that there are better programs that will help students beyond the day of graduation.

### **Chloe – State Law Enforcement Officer**

Chloe has been employed for two years in law enforcement. She graduated five years ago and has also completed a graduate degree in Public Administration. Chloe has been with the state police for just under a year, working for a local police department before being selected for a trooper position. She has completed three police academies; the first was associated with a community college and required her to pay a fee. She explains that she graduated from college and chose to pay her own way through an academy to improve her chances of being employed by a good department. She completed the academy and placed first academically. Within a week, she was hired by a large metropolitan police department, which required her to attend their own police academy. Chloe placed in the top three positions for academics, firearms and physical fitness. After a little more than a year, she applied for and was selected for the state law enforcement position, and sent to attend their academy.

Chloe brings a unique perspective to this study because of her experience in three different types of police academies. She says that she never felt academically challenged in the academy associated with the community college. She credits her undergraduate

legal issues courses with helping her to excel in that area of academics. In addition, she says that she had not been properly advised about seeking a minor and had taken some advanced math courses. When asked about this, she explains that she was not advised by a member of the faculty, but by a newer staff member. After she had taken nine hours of math for her minor, she was finally informed that she did not need one to graduate.

Chloe credits her success in the larger metropolitan academy to her having just completed the other one. She notes that she was in great physical condition and had just completed an extensive firearms qualification program, so she couldn't have been more prepared. Chloe says the state academy was the most physically challenging experience, and at least equal to the larger metropolitan one in academics.

Chloe credits her degree in Criminal Justice for helping her secure a position in both of the departments she has worked. She says that the individual performing her background investigation for the state agency told her that Criminal Justice majors received additional consideration in the hiring process. When asked about the graduate degree in Public Administration, Chloe says that she was told it would play a significant role in her opportunities for promotion.

Chloe doesn't view her degree as ever having been a disadvantage to her, but she relates a few stories of her having been singled out in her first academy experience because of her education. She says that she didn't perform well on the very first quiz in the academy. The individual running the program and administering the quiz made jokes about her having a degree and not doing well on the quiz. She admits that the reason she didn't do well was that she hadn't studied the police phonetic alphabet, the topic of the

quiz. Chloe believes that the instructor was under the impression that the undergraduate Criminal Justice program was a technical preparation for policing, much like an academy.

Chloe made no recommendations as to changes in the curriculum for her undergraduate program. However, she did identify some things that she thought would improve the experience. Chloe says that she believes she made an expensive error in attending the first police academy, though she didn't waste the learning experience. Chloe says there is no evidence that the effort played any role in helping her attain the positions in either the larger metropolitan or state agencies. Chloe thinks that her undergraduate experience would have been greatly enhanced by having more interaction with the faculty and them showing a greater interest in her future.

Chloe shares a couple of stories of her seeking academic and career advice from different faculty members. She says that a common response was that the faculty member did not have time to speak with her about career advice and that she should go to the university's help center for those issues. In cases of academic advising, she was referred elsewhere until she had completed the majority of her degree requirements. Chloe says that it was extremely rare for a faculty member to take time to talk with a student, even about course issues. She says the program faculty makes use of teaching assistants that are usually graduate students. Chloe remembers an advanced class where the professor was absent for most sessions. She says he was always gone to conferences or doing consulting for an agency.

Chloe looks back on her undergraduate experience as one where she was largely self-guiding. She discusses her experience in the Public Administration graduate program and says that it was totally different and more interactive with the faculty. She says that she liked the experience of more structure and opportunities to visit with faculty members about her future plans. In response to a question about her decision to attend the first academy, she says that she never discussed that with a member of the Public Administration faculty.

Chloe seems to struggle with the question of whether she would recommend her undergraduate program to a person wanting to be a law enforcement officer. She finally says that she thinks not. Chloe believes there are better choices for persons wanting to enter law enforcement. She says that in the metropolitan academy, she and others discussed their undergraduate experiences. She remembers that other Criminal Justice majors spoke about the experience their professors brought into the classroom. She doesn't think any of her professors had any experience in law enforcement. Chloe says that she would recommend that a student visit several programs and meet with faculty members. She says that she would probably have chosen a different program had she received and followed that advice.

#### **Claire – Local Law Enforcement Officer**

Claire has been employed for three years in law enforcement. She graduated seven years ago and has also completed a graduate degree in Social Work. Claire worked for the state for two years in social services before deciding to become a police officer. She says that she views her former work as being akin to response policing, but one with

a much more delayed reaction. Claire says she became a police officer because she viewed her other work as a failing society.

Claire was an honors student in her undergraduate and graduate programs. She credits her Criminal Justice undergraduate program for helping her develop a very clear understanding of the role of police in society. She says that she wouldn't attempt to identify any particular course that helped her, but then discusses issues related to one regarding the historical development of policing. Claire says that her remembrances of the readings and discussions helped her when she started considering a career change. She also credits two courses relating to Constitutional and Criminal Law issues that have helped her in the academy experience and in her applied work. She says the Constitutional course seemed to help her form a deep appreciation for the relationship between the government and the citizen. Claire believes that appreciation helps her in making appropriate intervention decisions.

Claire views her Criminal Justice degree as being a tool used by a former field supervisor to paint a negative image of her in her social work position. She says that the supervisor was always accusing her of being too aggressive in her casework. This would result in her appealing to her next level of supervision for relief. Claire says that the field supervisor would always refer to her Criminal Justice education as being evidence of her aggressiveness. Claire says that she doesn't necessarily view this as a disadvantage, but it obviously presented an opportunity for the field supervisor. She says that she was told by a higher-level administrator in the social services organization that Criminal Justice majors often had a difficult time working in social work. Claire remembers that her

undergraduate course related the claim that police officers were the first social workers, and she views the connection as being a clear one.

Claire believes her undergraduate program is a good one from the standpoint of being academically sound and that it is a highly respected one in the Criminal Justice community. She says that she doesn't necessarily view it as being particularly connected to law enforcement. Claire has friends who completed their Criminal Justice degrees at other institutions. She identifies one that she feels would have been a much better one for a person intending to become a police officer. Claire notes that she would not have fallen into that category, since she did not enter college to be a Criminal Justice major, and was not intending to be a police officer when she entered the program.

Claire says that she is strongly considering working towards the completion of a graduate degree in Criminal Justice, from the same university she attended for her undergraduate degree. She says that she has spoken with one of her former professors about becoming a graduate assistant and entering the doctoral program. Claire thinks that she would like to be a college professor and teach Criminal Justice. She says that the professor was insistent that she leave her current employment to enter the doctoral program. Claire says that he has told her that the current trend is to move away from having faculty members with a strong experiential background in Criminal Justice.

Claire says that she would recommend her undergraduate program to someone wanting to study Criminal Justice. She goes on to add that if the person has clearly chosen to become a police officer, she would recommend they look at another program. Claire believes that Criminal Justice programs are slowly beginning to specialize in

particular areas, some focusing on applied corrections, some on law enforcement, and others in the broader area of general academic study. Claire says that she thinks she would like to teach in the latter program style, where she can do research into ways to better incorporate the work of law enforcement and social services.

### **Section Three: Theme Development**

This section explores the four major themes developed from an analysis of the interviews: The participants' perception of the CJ degree as providing them with distinct advantages in their law enforcement careers; the participants' perception of CJ specific coursework as providing them with an advantage in their law enforcement career; the participants' perception of the CJ faculty in the program as providing them an advantage through mentoring and employment connections; the participants' recommendation of the CJ degree, and in most cases the program from which they graduated, to someone wanting to enter law enforcement as a career.

#### **Theme One: The Participants Perceive the CJ Degree as Providing Them with Distinct Advantages in Their Law Enforcement Careers**

The analysis of participant interviews indicates a strong majority, twenty-eight of the thirty respondents, perceive some sort of advantage in having the Criminal Justice degree. The perception is that the degree provides them with some advantage over those entering the profession with other degrees, and more so over those with no degree. Of the twenty-eight respondents identifying some advantage, twenty-seven quickly identified some specific way in which they perceived the degree providing an

advantage for them. This was sometimes related to an advantage based on the perceptions of others or an advanced understanding on the participant's part. Some participants had more difficulty expressing the way in which they felt they were advantaged. Adam reported that he discovered a level of satisfaction with the degree as he participated in the interview. During the final part of his interview Adam stated that before the interview began he would have answered that he didn't believe a Criminal Justice degree would be an advantage in a law enforcement career. However, after sharing his experiences he came to believe that there is nothing wrong with the degree (Page 85).

Many of the participants indicated that some value from the degree is derived from the perception of others that the degree gives an advantage to those having it and entering the field of law enforcement. This belief is shared by twenty-one participants from all three institutional groups, for example:

- Abby notes that the sheriff specifically stated that he chose to hire her because she had a degree in Criminal Justice. (Page 61);
- Becky believes her degree caused others to have confidence in her from the beginning of her academy experience (Page 86); and
- Chantal believes her major had a direct impact on her having an opportunity to enter the local police department as a patrol officer (Page 132).

Another form of advantage identified in the analysis of the interviews is the development of self-confidence. A fairly common subtheme developed around the belief that the Criminal Justice degree became a source of self-confidence in the participant's



ability to perform well in academy training courses related to prior academic coursework. This belief is shared by twenty-five participants from all three institutional groups, for example:

- Aaron feels the major provided him with a higher level of confidence in the academy courses (Page 59);
- Brad believes that the Criminal Justice degree gave him confidence to get through the hiring interview and to enter the academy with less apprehension than others (Page 104); and
- Calvin believes that the most significant benefits from the Criminal Justice degree program was the confidence that he could understand the law, and that he was familiar with the terminology used in policing literature (Page 115).

Another subtheme revealed in the analysis was the participants' perception of the role the reputation of a program plays in the benefits received by those earning the degree. Although a very small number of the participants from the institutions referred to as "A" and "B" this way, this was a perception most often offered by participants from institution "C". For example:

- Baker stated that his degree has given him opportunities that are clearly associated with the reputation of the program (Page 84);
- Caleb believes that the general reputation of the program and university were important in his gaining employment with the agency where he now works (Page 113);

- Celia believes that the institutional reputation plays a significant factor in the success of its graduates (Page 132).

As will be discussed in another theme, many participants expressed their belief that the reputation of a program is not always accurately reflective of the quality of instruction in relation to a career in law enforcement. Several participants from Institution “C” reported that many undergraduate courses were taught by Graduate Teaching Assistants and the professor of record never participated in the course. Many of these participants reported that the courses were strictly textbook deliveries and busy-work.

### **Theme Two: The Participants Perceive CJ Specific Coursework as Providing Them with an Advantage in Their Law Enforcement Career**

The most dominant theme among participant responses was the identification of a particular course in the CJ program that aided the individual in the academy experience. The courses identified were very often in the area of the law. Although the courses may be titled slightly differently between programs, they generally relate to the application of Constitutional provisions, the law, and procedure. The courses often include a requirement for the student to brief court cases. Similar topic areas are required in police academies in order to prepare students to enforce the laws as they are applied in the courts. Most participants either named a specific course or described one closely enough to identify the subject area. This theme not only crossed institutional boundaries, but appeared across the spectrum of agencies represented, for example:

- Anna, a local enforcement officer, described the academy experience as challenging, but notes that the legal courses she took in her Criminal Justice program prepared her to excel in similar courses in the academy (Page 78);
- Barry, a state law enforcement officer, says that courses in Criminal procedure and evidence helped him to better understand the reasons for things he was taught in the academy (Page 93);
- Carter, a state law enforcement officer, says that he did well in the academic courses on Constitutional and Criminal Law, which translated into his doing well in academy coursework covering the same material (Page 127).

Twenty-four participants identified courses other than those pertaining to law perceived to have benefited them. These included the basic introductory courses common to the study of Criminal Justice, the internships offered in each of the three institutions, and courses related to the study of policing in the United States. The following selection illustrates the recognition of some of these courses:

- Abby explained that she believes the introductory course for Criminal Justice course provides her a better understanding of how her role as a deputy sheriff fits into the overall system than some of the others she works with, such as deputies with no degree (Page 61);
- Alan identified a policing course he says provided him with a theoretical base to frame the various styles of policing into practice (Page 66);
- Becky could not recall the names of the courses, but remembered that they dealt with policing theories and included reading about patrol research (Page 87);

- Barry believed his introductory course gave him a good understanding of how policing fits into society and the Criminal Justice system, as well as a sense of his role as a police officer (Page 92);
- Carl identified elements of several courses that have helped him in his academy coursework and in the field as a patrol officer. He says the courses were related to patrol theories, the role of police in society, and professional conduct (Page 122);
- Carter credited a Criminal Justice management course as having prepared him for being a better supervisor in his agency (Page 127).

**Theme Three: The Participants Perceive the CJ Faculty in the Program as Providing Them an Advantage through Mentoring and Employment Connections**

Many participants from Institution “B”, and to some degree those from Institution “A”, shared their perception of the importance program faculty played in their career success. A clear distinction is indicated in the analysis of the interviews. Participants from Institution “C” expressed the perception that there was a distance between faculty and students in the program. This subtheme was repeated in participant recommendations about how the program might be improved. The reason this particular subtheme is important to the study is that the relationships were built in the process of earning the degree. A part of this subtheme relates to the fact that the faculty in Institution “C” lacks the applied experience and resulting connectivity to career field. The relationships are presented as a part of the learning process.

Participants from Institution “A” reported that faculty members played an important part in helping the students connect to the information being taught in the classroom. This is attributed by many to the fact that the institution utilizes current and former police officers as instructors, and had others as students in the classrooms and participating in discussions. Some participants reported that they found ways of using the resulting relationships to their career advantage. A review of some of the participant comments relating to this subtheme will illustrate the perceived importance:

- Alan said that because he was associated with former and current officers serving as faculty, and some current officers studying for their degrees, he had access to what he termed, “police talk”. Alan says that he would visit with his professors who were former officers, and he would always try to get to know and visit with officers taking classes. Alan says the combination of majoring in Criminal Justice, and getting to know persons engaged in the work, gave him access to ride-along opportunities and even a paid internship in a local law enforcement agency (Page 66);
- Alice shared that when she was considering entering the Criminal Justice program, she met a professor who had served twenty-years with the same police department where she now works. Later, the same professor assisted her in getting a summer internship in the police department where she now works (Page 73);
- Anna believed the program benefits from maintaining a requirement that faculty must have experience in the field in addition to having the academic degree. She

shares her strong belief that the students in her Criminal Justice program tended to bond closely with their faculty in mentoring relationships (Page 79).

Participants from Institution “B” report a much closer relationship with faculty members and many perceive the instructors as having a significant positive relationship with their career success.

- Ben felt a key advantage in the program is the close relationship that it maintains with law enforcement personnel in the area, and he notes that many of them serve as guest speakers in the classes. Ben adds that some of them teach courses, and that he was recruited by a state police officer teaching a course he was taking (Page 91);
- Betsy believed one of the greatest advantages of her college experience was that the program she attended utilized guest speakers and adjunct faculty from law enforcement agencies, including the state police. Betsy reiterated that this does not mean that the relationship alone is the most important, but the information these individuals bring to the classroom is real and timely (Page 95);
- Brad noted that faculty members encourage and help students to reach their potential. Brad adds that in his work with the state police agency, he encounters people he met in college and they all have stories about being mentored by one of the professors. He notes that it was one of his professors who helped him get the internship (Page 103);
- Brenda said that about mid-semester she received her required essay back and was devastated by the grade. She tells that the professor asked to speak with her

after class one day, and told her that she needed to work hard at improving her writing skills. He also recommended that she enroll the next semester in a technical writing course. She says that she walked out of the classroom and felt like her dream was falling apart. Brenda says that she opened the essay and read the comments that were provided with the grade. She found that the professor was supportive and that his comments were helpful – he became a mentor for her throughout the program (Page 109).

As mentioned previously, the participants selected from Institution “C” present a very different view of their interaction with faculty. Absent of not mentioning the faculty at all, many participants expressed dissatisfaction with their undergraduate relationship with faculty.

- Caleb said that he didn’t actually have a professor for a teacher until he was almost done with the program. He thinks most of the graduate students teaching courses had come straight from the undergraduate program (Page 112);
- Calvin said that if he could recommend any change for his program it would be having more faculty involvement with students (Page 116);
- Cara noted that during her undergraduate program she was surprised by how little personal guidance she had from the school in the advising process. She shares a story about something that was included in the introductory course. She attempted to discuss it with the person teaching the class and was told that the information was in the textbook. She says that she thinks the professors are so

busy supporting the graduate programs and doing research that they end up ignoring the undergraduates (Page 120).

**Theme Four: The Participants Would Recommend the CJ Degree, and in Most Cases the Program From Which They Graduated, to Someone Wanting to Enter Law Enforcement as a Career**

Analysis of the interviews confirmed a strong participant perception that the Criminal Justice degree contributes in multiple ways to a successful career in law enforcement. Even participants that felt changes needed to be made in their own degree programs were strong advocates for the degree. Twenty-five participants related that they have already recommended the degree to individuals considering a career in law enforcement. Many of the participants, particularly those from Institutions “A” and “B”, were quick to not only recommend the degree, but also the program from which they graduated. The following participant comments are representative of this perception:

- Aaron said that he has already recommended his former degree program to students wanting to become police officers. He adds that he encourages anyone wanting to enter a law enforcement career to pursue their degree first (Page 60).
- Alan said that he would certainly recommend the path he took to younger students interested in entering the profession. He notes that he can support that statement by the fact that he was the one that advised his younger brother. He adds that he has a cousin who wants to be a state police officer in the same degree program he completed (Page 67).



- Alice believed that she graduated from the best Criminal Justice program available for someone wanting to become a police officer. She says that she would recommend the program to anyone wanting to become a police officer, because the experiences of the faculty helps students develop a better understanding of what they will be doing (Page 75).
- Anton said that he regularly visits the high school and speaks to classes in career exploration, English and communications, and government. He always encourages all students to pursue a college degree if they want to enter public service. He has arranged for students interested in Criminal Justice to visit his undergraduate program and speak with professors there (Page 81).
- Ben believed the program he graduated from is the best program in the state, and probably one of the best available. He would strongly recommend the program to high school students wanting to have a law enforcement career (Page 91).
- Becky believed she does a good job of promoting college attendance without actively recruiting for her own degree program. However, Becky says that when asked about a recommendation, she always suggests that her alma mater is an excellent choice (Page 88).
- Barry said that he would recommend his program to anyone wanting to enter law enforcement. He adds that the program is well known in the state for being the best one for persons wanting to become law enforcement officers (Page 94).

Participants from Institution “C” indicated that they would recommend the CJ degree to persons considering law enforcement for a career, although most would not recommend the program from which they graduated. Some relevant responses include:

- Cara believed the undergraduate program is a good one and would recommend it to others, but she reiterates that she may have felt differently if she had not had the benefit of very helping father and a graduate degree. Cara said that she believes the quality of graduate degree at her institution is very high, and doesn't believe there is anything wrong with the undergraduate program (Page 119).
- Carter said that he would not discourage anyone from enrolling in his undergraduate program, but he would not be in a position to promote it as the best one for someone entering a law enforcement career (Page 129).
- Claire said that she would recommend her undergraduate program to someone wanting to study Criminal Justice. She continued on to add that if the person has clearly chosen to become a police officer, she would recommend they look at another program. Claire believed that Criminal Justice programs are slowly beginning to specialize in particular areas, some focusing on applied corrections, some on law enforcement, and others in the more broad area of general academic study (Page 140).
- Chantal said that because of her experience, she would not recommend her undergraduate program for students wanting to become law enforcement officers. She said that there are better programs that will help students beyond the day of graduation (Page 135).

### **Additional Subthemes Not Directly Related to the Research Questions**

During the evaluation of data collected in the interviews, there were certain important subthemes discovered that do not directly relate to the research questions or the intended purpose of the study. These subthemes were deemed to be of interest and important possibilities for future study. The following is an identification of the subthemes along with a brief description:

- There exists across the dimensions of law enforcement training academies and the entering recruits a suspicion of bias from the cadre of instructors. Females reported that they were cautioned before entering about how they would be treated. Non-white students reported that they were warned of a bias based on race. Students of both genders and all races reported being given a warning about bias against higher education. However, none of the participants reported the materialization of these warnings by the cadre at large.
- Some of the participants shared stories of their family having a history in law enforcement. These participants indicated this heritage was a significant factor in their own decision to pursue the criminal justice degree and a career in law enforcement. There is some evidence within the study that indicates this is a positive factor in the person being given a career opportunity.
- There are numerous studies relating to the challenges that people of color and women in general have faced in pursuing opportunities in law enforcement. This study indicates that there have been improvements in this condition.

- Participant stories indicate a strong relationship between family support and career satisfaction. There are relatively few modern studies relating to this issue, and these are particularly narrow in scope. Most historical studies relate to the high divorce rates of law enforcement officers. An overwhelming number of married participants spoke of positive family relationships and career support.

#### **Section Four: Summary**

This chapter presented the results and findings of the study of perceptions of graduates' perceptions of the Criminal Justice degree as preparatory for a career in law enforcement, of the ways in which the degree may be deemed of value, and of elements relevant to that value. In the first section, an overview was presented of the interview process and synopsis development. In the second section, the participant interviews were presented in synopsis form and a brief description of the Criminal Justice programs from which the participants were selected was provided. The third section contains a discussion of the four major themes developed in the analysis of the interviews. The third section also contains information relating to subthemes that do not directly relate to the research questions. The next chapter will offer a summary of the study, an overview of the problem, conclusions from the study, and recommendations for supplementary and subsequent research.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents a summary of the study and important conclusions drawn from the data presented in Chapter IV. The chapter contains four sections: a summary of the study, findings related to the literature, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

#### **Summary of the Study**

##### **Overview of the Problem**

The majority of research into criminal justice education has focused on the quality of faculty based on credentials, professional reputation, and record of research and publication, usually measured by the quantity of papers written and the prestige of the journals in which they are published; the reputation of the program among other scholars; and the reputation of the university in which the program is housed (Myers, 1994). As Myers observes, these factors do not necessarily relate to effective teaching, nor do they translate into the professional contacts needed to aid program graduates to locate satisfactory employment.

Many of the researchers exploring the connection between general higher education and law enforcement officer performance have also observed the shortcomings of any effort to explore criminal justice education specifically (Travis, 1987).

Still, this research has contributed to law enforcement agencies increasingly requiring some level of college education for job candidates to be considered.

Schrink, Roy and Ransburg (1999) observed that the need to do more research directly targeting the relationship between criminal justice education and preparation for a criminal justice career has increased by the continuing calls for accountability. In 2006, U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings generated a flood of attention when she responded to the report issued by the Commission on the Future of Higher Education with her comments and a response plan. Four of the five points in her plan, which she reportedly referred to as urgent, directly relate to academic accountability. The four points include:

- An effort to interface high school standards with those of higher education;
- Creation of a federally operated database to track the academic progress of students;
- Basing funding on the willingness of institutions to share learning outcomes;
- Initiating a movement towards having accrediting groups place more emphasis on learning assessments (Field, 2006).

The latter point is not a new one for this discipline. The evaluation of learning outcomes is considered by some to be especially important for criminal justice programs for two key reasons: The relative newness of the discipline, and the lack of comprehensive and coordinated planning for the growth process (Ransburg, 1994).

However, the work of Schrink, Roy and Ransburg in 1999, like that of Ransburg's in 1994, did not specifically address the relationship between criminal

justice higher education and law enforcement officer performance (Schrink, Roy, & Ransburg, 1999). This specific research is severely lacking. If criminal justice is to continue as a viable option for students desiring to enter a law enforcement career, there must be extensive research and monitoring of graduate outcomes to assure the degrees are meaningful in the workplace.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship of criminal justice higher education and their work as law enforcement officers as perceived by criminal justice higher education graduates. Through the utilization of the interviewing methodology of data collection, this study will determine the graduates' perceived value of the criminal justice degree as a part of the preparation for a career in law enforcement.

### **Research Questions**

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do criminal justice graduates perceive the value of their criminal justice higher education studies on their work as law enforcement officers?
2. Can criminal justice graduates identify, and describe how, discipline-specific education has a positive influence on their ability to perform as a law enforcement officer?
3. Are there specific areas of criminal justice higher education that need to be enhanced to provide a better educational background for graduates entering law enforcement service?

4. Would criminal justice graduates working in a law enforcement career recommend a criminal justice higher education degree to others wishing to enter the field?

### **Review of the Methodology**

The qualitative approach was determined to be best for this research project. The study sought to utilize the individual's perception of reality in developing an understanding of the value of a criminal justice education to preparing a person for a successful career in law enforcement. This research project utilized naturalistic inquiry to collect the perceived realities of active-duty law enforcement officers holding undergraduate degrees in criminal justice, in an attempt to pierce the perceived realities to glimpse at what Guba and Lincoln describe as "real reality".

This research project relied on personal interviews of active duty law enforcement officers holding bachelor degrees with a major study in criminal justice. In this study, the researcher's personal experience in law enforcement, together with a familiarity with criminal justice education, helped to dissolve potential barriers and incorporate the jargon as meaningful dialogue.

Thirty participants, ten from each of the three source universities, were interviewed. Each participant was assured confidentiality (Appendix A). During the initial interview, participants were asked fairly open ended questions designed to collect data relating to their perception of the value of their criminal justice degree measured with their career success as a professional law enforcement officer. In addition, other follow-up questions were included to clarify answers or assist the researcher in



collecting the relevant data. These questions were specific to each interviewed participant and were not asked in a way to alter the intent of the original ones.

Following the completion of the interview, the researcher reviewed the field notes with the participant to ensure the observations accurately reflected the intended responses. The participant was offered the opportunity to review any of the digitally recorded responses to interview questions. In addition, a participant was allowed to restate or explain responses for clarification. Interviews were recorded with a digital recording device. In addition, the researcher made notes about the interviews and observations of the participants.

The interpretative phenomenological analysis method of data analysis was utilized in this study. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a qualitative method used to gain understanding of how the participants perceive a phenomenon. IPA was developed specifically for the purpose of finding answers to the types of research questions used in this project, relating to perceptions of individuals (Smith et al., 1999). The digitally recorded interview of each participant was reviewed several times. Once the transcript was produced, each was thoroughly reviewed numerous times in order to develop as much familiarity as possible with the participants' accounts. Each reading resulted in notes about key phrases, preliminary interpretations and connections or contradictions with each participant's account being made in the left hand margin. Notes identified emergent themes associated with key words that captured the essential meaning of passages. This process produced the final superordinate themes of the study, which were then rechecked for consistency with the source material.

The following themes emerged as a result of this process: (1) participants perceived the CJ degree as providing them with distinct advantages in their law enforcement careers; (2) participants perceived CJ specific coursework as providing them with an advantage in their law enforcement career; (3) participants perceived the CJ faculty in the program as providing them an advantage through mentoring and employment connections; (4) participants would recommend the CJ degree, and in most cases the program from which they graduated, to someone wanting to enter law enforcement as a career.

### **Major Findings**

*Research Question One - How do criminal justice graduates perceive the value of their criminal justice higher education studies on their work as law enforcement officers?*

From the qualitative data collected through the interviews, participant's perceptions of the degree value were determined. During responses to questions related to this particular research question, participants shared personal stories and experiences relating to value. Some participants thought through their response in silence, while others verbalized their thoughts. Those who verbalized the thought process helped the researcher in understanding their responses.

Most educators accept the fact that the reflective thinking process improves learning. As previously noted in this study, reflective thinking is integral understanding our findings. The interviews in this study clearly prompted reflective thinking by the participants. Evidence indicates most participants developed a higher appreciation, or perhaps rekindled their perception of the value gained in their criminal justice degree as

they developed their response. At least one participant observed that he first realized the value the degree had for him during the process of developing his response.

A common subtheme relating to this question is that there is an external perception of the value of the degree, one held by persons in the career field who may or may not have the degree themselves. The study shows that participants perceive the externally viewed value of the degree as being directly related to the program reputation. One group of participants reported a great deal of perceived value based largely on the reputation of the program, but questioned whether the reputation was deserved.

The majority of participants from two of the programs identified much of the perceived value as deriving from their association with faculty having experiential backgrounds in law enforcement. The participants referred to these instructors as mentors, friends, supporters and advisors. The stories shared by these individuals of how the practitioners-turned-professors helped them in securing internship and employment opportunities reflected deep levels of commitment to student success and an inherent understanding of which students fit into particular law enforcement agencies. Many of these stories reflect a continued connection with the faculty beyond the graduation. These participants believe these relationships have been central to their career success and clearly view them as a part of the criminal justice program.

*Research Question Two - Can criminal justice graduates identify, and describe how, discipline-specific education has a positive influence on their ability to perform as a law enforcement officer?*

Discipline specific courses, meaning those included in the major field of study, were generally found to have a positive influence on the participants' careers. As previously noted, there has only recently been any form of national standard adopted for criminal justice programs. The Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences spent years attempting to develop a certification process and find agreement as to program structure. As of March 2009, there are only three undergraduate programs in the United States to have fulfilled program certification requirements. None of the participants in this study are from included programs.

A good measure of the positive influence identified by participants was related to their ability to perform above average in the academy training. Participants generally believe that performing well in the academy gave them an edge in the agency, or in those cases where training was done as pre-employment, assisted them in obtaining a position.

A common reference was made to a course relating to the study of Constitutional protections and the application of relative case law in police practice. Many participants noted that the course is complex and requires a great deal of writing, mainly in briefing cases. This translates to the participant entering the academy training with a well developed understanding of case law, and perhaps more importantly, an understanding of how to study case law. Most participants noted that this was one of the areas where they excelled over their peers with other degrees, and more particularly those with no degree. Participants believe that such courses provide them with an edge in the academy, and that this translates to them having an advantage in the workplace.

Here again, the value of the internship contributing to the graduates' success is stressed. Some participants found their career opportunity with the same agency in which they performed their internship. None of the programs in this study require an internship, and in a panel discussion at the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences 2009 Conference, none of the participating programs required one. Parts of this study were discussed specifically in the meeting and it was generally agreed that internships often lead to the graduate returning to work with the agency. Participants who participated in internships credit the opportunity for much of their career success. Several participants that did not participate in an internship expressed a reflective wish that they had done so, and some suggested it should be a requirement within the major.

Several participants identified courses that helped them place the role of police officers in society into a practical perspective. For some, the course was the basic introductory course on criminal justice, which is one of the most common included in criminal justice programs. For others it was one related to policing and the role of law enforcement in society.

Other courses were also identified, but participants demonstrated some recognizable level of difficulty in identifying particulars relating to the course material. The most notable exception were courses relating to theory of patrol, but participants most often cited individual instructor related experiential stories as the source of the perceived benefit. Ironically, one of the major concerns in the ACJS panel discussion was that too many professors with applied background include experiential stories in their course lectures. One panel participant noted, "These experiential stories pollute the

classroom and deemphasize the theoretical approach of the textbooks.” Several other panel participants expressed an opposing view, one noted that experiential stories, “Help students make sense of the textbook and put the issues in perspective.” Another asked, “What professional programs do not have experiential lessons brought to them by teaching professionals?” This study poses a more significant answer; the participants feel the stories have positively contributed to their understanding of the profession of policing.

*Research Question Three - Are there specific areas of criminal justice higher education that need to be enhanced to provide a better educational background for graduates entering law enforcement service?*

There was no consensus about recommendations for change in the programs. Some participants recommended that the programs should include more applied training, but in their conversations they would usually determine that this would present major issues with liability and in complying with state training guidelines.

Other recommendations did not focus on course content, but on improving relationships and interaction with the faculty. These comments were especially common from participants from Institution C. These participants frequently included in their discussions stories concerning how little real interaction they had with the faculty during their undergraduate experience. In some cases, these participants had either witnessed faculty from other institutions demonstrating an interest in their graduates’ careers, or had heard stories about them.

Many of the participants recommended that the internship be made a required course in the undergraduate program. This recommendation came from participants who completed an internship as part of their undergraduate coursework, some who did not, and some who completed an internship outside of the undergraduate program.

Another recommendation made by several participants was that there should be more discipline specific writing required. Some of the participants noted that the writing required of them in some criminal justice courses translated to improved writing in their law enforcement work, and opportunities for career-bettering assignments and professional recognition.

Many participants expressed concern that their undergraduate program was moving away from hiring individuals with law enforcement experience, and exclusively hiring non-experienced persons with a Doctor of Philosophy in Criminal Justice. Participants tended to believe that this would prove to devalue the program from which they graduated. The study clearly shows that participants connected the value of their program to the mentorships and agency connections that applied experienced professors bring.

*Research Question Four - Would criminal justice graduates working in a law enforcement career recommend a criminal justice higher education degree to others wishing to enter the field?*

The single strongest theme developed from the interviews indicates that participants would recommend a criminal justice degree to persons considering a law enforcement career. Many of the participants related stories of how they have already

recommended criminal justice. In the majority of interviews, the participants went on to say that they would recommend the program from which they graduated. This was especially true of the participants from Institutions A and B. Participants from these two institutions shared stories of not only recommending their former programs to persons interested in a law enforcement career, but arranging for them to meet with faculty. Some participants told of recommending their former undergraduate program to their family members.

Even those participants sharing that they would not recommend the undergraduate program from which they graduated still identified the criminal justice degree as important to a career in law enforcement. The most often cited reasons for such a recommendation were related to the external identification of the degree as being relevant to the work of law enforcement officers.

### **Findings Related to the Literature**

Some of the findings of this study are directly related to the literature. The most obvious connection relates to the work of Payne, Sumter, and Sun in an article published in the November 2003 *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*. The researchers recommended improving criminal justice education as a preparatory degree for the criminal justice career through the introduction of field trips, ride-alongs, and guest speakers (Payne, Sumter, & Sun, 2003). The findings of this study indicate that the law enforcement agency internship, an extended exposure similar to the field trips and ride-alongs they recommend, has a very positive influence on the student's career success.



Some findings in this study are contradictory to those in the literature. Carter, Sapp, and Stephens (1989), reported that their study did not indicate a hiring preference for candidates holding a degree in criminal justice over other disciplines. In this study, several participants reported they were employed, and in some cases recruited, because they did possess a criminal justice degree. This is consistent also with personal experience of police agencies seeking recruiting opportunities through criminal justice programs. This difference may easily be explained by the time between the two findings and the maturing of the criminal justice programs.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations for Practice**

This is a unique study in that graduate perceptions are used to determine answers to the research questions, and the focus is specifically on criminal justice. Much of the research relevant to the relationship between higher education and the law enforcement career is dated, focused on higher education in general, and has primarily relied on quantitative data. In the rare instance that qualitative data was sought, criminal justice faculty members were questioned about their perceptions of the value of the program.

Criminal justice is a maturing discipline, as noted earlier, only recently moving towards some measure of standardization and program certification. As the discipline matures, and more graduates move into professional law enforcement, it is natural that the relationship between the two be viewed as closely associated. Personal experience of the researcher in advising and teaching in a criminal justice program supports this view – students and their parents expect the linkage to be clear between earning a criminal

justice degree and being in a preferred position for employment as a law enforcement officer. Likewise, the tendency for law enforcement agencies to request recruiting opportunities in criminal justice programs is evidence that there is an internal expectation of linkage.

Based on the findings of this study, four major conclusions emerge:

**(1) Criminal justice programs should include more writing-enhanced, discipline-specific courses in their core requirements.**

Professional and technical writing requirements for police officers have greatly increased over the last several years. This is partly due to increased and more complex reporting requirements, but also to greater levels of accountability in the court and public sectors. By incorporating writing enhanced course work, specific to the discipline of criminal justice, students become more familiar with the expression, language and terminology they will be expected to use in the field. In addition, the lessons being taught in the criminal justice classroom will be reinforced through the writing requirement.

**(2) Criminal justice programs should include a required internship for students specializing in law enforcement and planning to enter the career field.**

As evidenced in the literature review, law enforcement has been steadily and consciously improving the level of professionalism in local, state and federal agencies. In relationship to law enforcement, the sub-discipline is both externally and internally viewed as being linked – thus it is viewed as a professional degree. Other professional degree programs, such as social work, teacher education, and those in the medical field,

require some form of internship within the framework of the higher education degree program. The inclusion of a meaningful internship opportunity allows the student to transfer the theory from the classroom to the practice of the applied setting.

**(3) Criminal justice programs should work to establish professional relationships with law enforcement agencies.**

Developing professional relationships between criminal justice programs and law enforcement agencies provides multiple benefits to the programs, faculty, agencies, and students. Programs benefit from having an array of guest speakers and potential adjunct instructors with unique qualifications available to come into the classroom and provide students with information about current issues and technologies being used in the field. Faculty benefit from enlarging their research opportunities, reducing police resistance to participation in research, and gaining exposure to the most current issues relating to the discipline. Agencies benefit from having access to researchers who can assist them with program development and evaluation, statistical measurement and analysis, and access to the latest research in the discipline. Students benefit from the resulting associations with adjunct faculty and exposure to the guest speakers, as well as increased internship opportunities arising from the association.

**(4) Criminal justice programs should work to build mentoring relationships between program faculty members and students.**

Mentoring is a valuable asset to a program, particularly one like criminal justice, and more so in law enforcement. Mentors assist students by advising not only about course selection and degree completion, but by identifying other opportunities the

student can pursue in preparing for the career. The mentor should be in a position to assist the student in identifying potential employment opportunities. The mentor can serve as a valuable reference for the student seeking employment. This bond then translates to the student becoming an advocate for the program.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following areas are recommended for further study:

**(1) Modify the 1994 Ransburg Study and investigate to determine competencies key in preparing graduates for a career in law enforcement.**

The Ransbrug study is dated and focused on the broad scope of determining competencies key to a criminal justice career, and collected data only from within academia. This study should be redone narrowing the scope to be specific to law enforcement, and the data should be collected from practitioners.

**(2) Investigate current formalized professional relationships that exist between criminal justice programs and law enforcement agencies that promote internships and direct recruiting opportunities.**

This study contains points to the positive influence of including qualified law enforcement practitioners as adjunct faculty and guest speakers in criminal justice classrooms. In addition, there were indications of other forms of professional relationships that exist between law enforcement agencies and criminal justice programs. The impact of these relationships on graduate success in the law enforcement career

should be examined and a determination made as to what types of relationships work best.

**(3) Conduct longitudinal studies of graduates completing writing-enhanced courses specific to criminal justice and their impact on career success in law enforcement.**

Research needs to be done to determine if the inclusion of writing-enhanced courses specific to criminal justice have a more positive influence on success in a law enforcement career than does any other such writing requirement. Further, if there is a positive influence, there should be an attempt made to determine a measure of writing needed to achieve the benefit for the student.

**(4) Conduct longitudinal studies of the experiences of criminal justice graduates in law enforcement careers where there are formalized academic mentorship programs.**

Research needs to be done to determine the benefit academic mentoring programs have on graduate success in a law enforcement career, and the most beneficial design for such programs.

**(5) Conduct research into the subthemes identified in Chapter IV, Section Three.  
(See Page 154)**

The subthemes represent a variety of areas in which a researcher should find plentiful data and meaningful work.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **CONSENT FORM**

#### **GRADUATES' PERCEPTION OF THE CJ DEGREE AS A PREPARATION FOR A CAREER IN LAW ENFORCEMENT**

##### **Introduction**

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate in this study, this form will also be used to record your consent.

You have been asked to participate in a research project studying the perceived relationship of Criminal Justice education to a successful career in law enforcement. The purpose of this study is to seek understanding and identification of distinguishable links between the completion of a university course of study in Criminal Justice and successful employment in the law enforcement profession. You were selected to be a possible participant because you completed and undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice and are employed full-time as a law enforcement officer.

##### **What will I be asked to do?**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to agree to be interviewed about your perceptions of the benefit of your Criminal Justice education to your career in law enforcement, and review your responses with the researcher for accuracy of understanding. This study will take approximately one hour for the interview and thirty minutes for review.

Your participation may be audio recorded.

##### **What are the risks involved in this study?**

The risks associated in this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

##### **What are the possible benefits of this study?**

The possible benefits of participation are you will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, your responses will help the researcher identify linkages between higher education in Criminal Justice and perceptions of success.

##### **Do I have to participate?**

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University or Stephen F. Austin State University being affected.

**Who will know about my participation in this research study?**

This study is confidential and the records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher, George R. Franks, Jr., will have access to the records.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only the researcher, George R. Franks, Jr., will have access to the recordings. Any recordings will be kept for until they are transcribed and then erased.

**Whom do I contact with questions about the research?**

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact George R. Franks, Jr., by e-mail at [franksgr@sfasu.edu](mailto:franksgr@sfasu.edu), or by telephone at 936-468-2061.

**Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?**

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or [irb@tamu.edu](mailto:irb@tamu.edu).

**Signature**

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to be audio recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not want to be audio recorded.

**Signature of Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PrintedName:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Person Obtaining Consent:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX B**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Given a broad conceptual view of your law enforcement career, do you perceive your degree course specific to criminal justice as allowing you a career advantage over other officers without a degree, or with a degree in a different discipline?  
Follow-up: Why or why not? (As appropriate).
2. Can you identify any particular discipline-specific courses of your criminal justice major that clearly prepared you for your career? Follow-up: What are they? (As appropriate).
3. Can you identify particular instances in your law enforcement career where having a degree in criminal justice provided you with a career advantage over other officers not holding the degree? Follow-up: Will you discuss these? (As appropriate).
4. Can you identify particular instances in your law enforcement career where having a degree in criminal justice provided you with a disadvantage compared to other officers not holding the degree? Follow-up: Will you discuss these? (As appropriate).
5. Considering the criminal justice curriculum of your degree program, can you identify any specific courses or academic skills that should have been included and were not?  
Follow-up: What are they? (As appropriate).
6. In the event a high school student wanting to pursue a career as a law enforcement officer were to come to you for preparatory advice, would you recommend your own degree program to them? Follow-up: Why or why not? (As appropriate).



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