Problems of Professionalizing the Police in the US

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MAY 2007

Applied Research and Bibliography

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**Introduction**

This paper will cite and explore the most important trends and contributions made by the four preeminent police authorities recognized in the 20th century especially in their pursuit to professionalize the police. Furthermore, this paper will deal with the problems with the police, obstacles or difficulty of professionalizing the police and how policy makers and administrators will professionalize the police.

**Finest Police Chief in the US**

In the history of the professionalization of law enforcement, August Vollmer (1876-1955) was recognized to be the “father of modern law enforcement” (Wilson, 1977). In 1909, Vollmer became the chief of police of Berkeley, California. At first, Vollmer reorganized the Berkeley police force by establishing a bicycle patrol and creating the first centralized police record system. After that, he discovered the importance of a “professional officer” who has a college education who can have “more favorable attributes to do the work required in policing” and “able to handle both criminal and noncriminal problems” than those who do not have college education (Palombo, 1995:28). According to Carte and Carte (1975), Vollmer was the first to suggest “higher education as the central element for professionalizing the police, for giving them dignity and raising their social status” (Sherman et al., 1978:31). Moreover, he was the first police chief who “created a motorized force and in cars” and “first to use the lie detector” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Vollmer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Vollmer), 10/13/2006). What frustrates Vollmer as Chief of Police was the prevalent “corruption and hostility” that he observed “coming
from outside the department” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Vollmer, 10/13/2006).

In 1931, the creation of the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement or commonly known as the Wickersham Commission has addressed the growing problem of political involvement within the police department. The Commission was established to study the American criminal justice system in which it recommended the “removal of political involvement from within the police departments nationwide” and that the “departments be run by professional police administrators serving a fixed term of office” (Palombo, 1995:29). On the other hand, at that time, the Commission has been tasked to evaluate the status of the rank and file officers. The Commission has found that “majority of police officers were not suited by either temperament, education, or training for police work” (Palombo, 1995:29). Also, what was surprising from the Commission’s study was the fact that “at least 75 percent of police officers in the United States were mentally unqualified to engage in police work” (American Bar Association, 1972:81; National Commission, 1931:58).

It was said that during the “Great Depression” a large number of college graduates who were not employed were recruited in policing jobs but it “lasted only for a short period of time until after the Depression” (Palombo, 1995:30). According to Niederhoffer (1969), “after the depression, there was a dramatic drop in the numbers of college-educated, middle-class police officers, and the police service once again reverted back to a job held primarily by poor, lower-class and under-educated individuals” (Swan, 1986:215). According to Urchida (1989), the first phase of police professionalization movement started from 1910 to 1960 (Palombo, 1995:30).
The other prominent police authority was **Orlando W. Wilson (1900-1972)**. Wilson was Vollmer’s student at the University of California. After Wilson’s graduation, he became the chief of police in Fullerton, California on Vollmer’s recommendation. From 1928 to 1939, he was the chief of police in Wichita, Kansas. Also, from 1960 to 1967, Wilson became a “reform-minded superintendent of the Chicago Police Department” ([http://www.bookrags.com/printfriendly/?p=bios&u=0-w-wilson-cri/1013/2006](http://www.bookrags.com/printfriendly/?p=bios&u=0-w-wilson-cri/1013/2006)). “He initiated planning, installed records, completely reorganized the departmental structure, lengthened training, emphasized college education, and instituted communications”(Bopp,1977:136). The part that attracted the attention of the general public was when Wilson reorganized the Wichita, Kansas police department in which he initiated the use of motorized/mobile patrol, two-way radio dispatch, and the use of lie detector machines and mobile crime laboratories. Moreover, he was known for his “ethical behavior and for eliminating police corruption” ([http://www.bookrags.com/printfriendly/?p=bios&u=0-w-wilson-cri/1013/2006](http://www.bookrags.com/printfriendly/?p=bios&u=0-w-wilson-cri/1013/2006)). He utilized every means at his disposal to identify corrupt officers, including the polygraph, psychological evaluations, aggressive internal investigative units, and highly restrictive personnel policies. He also went to “extraordinary lengths to insulate himself from politicians, and in so doing furnished municipal police chiefs with an example which has now become dogma in the field” (Bopp,1977:133) He encouraged police managers to be non-partisan and promoted careful police hiring and training and the use of latest technological innovations. However, he saw “corruption as the by-product of poor organization, inefficient planning, and an unorganized command structure” ([http://www.bookrags.com/printfriendly/?p=bios&u=0-w-wilson-cri/1013/2006](http://www.bookrags.com/printfriendly/?p=bios&u=0-w-wilson-cri/1013/2006)).
Vollmer’s view of quality service provided by individual officers was also adopted by Wilson who inculcated and internalized a code of ethics to officers which they could learn through a “preprofessional classical college education” (Palombo, 1995:33). Moreover, Wilson has seen the importance of recruiting African American officers to improve police relations with the black community (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orlando_W._Wilson_16_July_2006). Upon Wilson’s retirement in 1967, racial tensions and disputes over policing intensified because his suggestion for police force reorganization was not followed.

William H. Parker (1902-1966) who served for 16 years as police chief of Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) was known as the “leading renovator of the nation’s third largest metropolitan police force and the foremost practitioner of police professionalization” (Gazell, 1976:28). He established his name by changing the LAPD from a “corrupt, traditional-type agency into an innovative, professional one” (Palombo, 1995:30). Parker was known for careful planning and management, administrative efficiency, and rigorous officer selection and training procedures. With Parker’s style of policing, Vollmer’s classical professionalism had changed to managerial efficiency, technological sophistication, and crime control. Parker’s focus of policing has resulted in the most efficient and most militaristic department in the nation. He further stressed the four aspects of police professionalization: the rigorous selection and training of candidates, an accentuation of integrity, a stress on political aloofness, and the use of up-to-date technology (Gazell, 1976:37). Furthermore, Parker’s emphasis on authority and power “alienated the department’s officers from the communities they were to protect
and reinforced many of the minority residents’ belief that the police acted as an army of occupation” (Palombo, 1995:37).

The harsh style of policing that Parker pursued earned him notoriety for brutality and harassment especially towards the African American and Latino communities of Los Angeles. The Watts Riots took place in August 1965 while he was the police chief and the way he handled riots discredited him. It was an incident that 34 people had been killed and 1,032 were injured including 90 members of Parker’s force (Gazell, 1976:35). It is argued that this kind of tension has been the cause of Parker’s concept of professionalization: impersonality, mechanical efficiency and excessive reliance on technology that further divides the police from segments of the community (nonwhite minorities) (Gazell, 1976:37). It is believed that problems of the LAPD such as racism, brutality, and understaffing have roots in policies that Parker implemented (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_H._Parker_(LAPD) 10/13/2006). He also established the Organized Crime and Intelligence Division of the LAPD to check politicians and celebrities for purposes of blackmail (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_H._Parker_(LAPD) 10/13/2006). In this way, Parker was viewed as deviating from the value of professionalization which creates “serious and unintended dangers” resulted from “paramilitarism, inroads on civil liberties, and aggravation of poverty and racism” that he implemented at LAPD (Gazel, 1976:37). The bad image of police started to worsen when “police departments and agencies at all levels of government were being perceived as not only arrogant and intrusive but also as inefficient and ineffective” (Palombo, 1995:31). However, even if Parker was known to have committed flaws on its concept of professionalization
especially its impact on the public, he was still regarded as highly successful in the application of professionalization concept and one of the preeminent figures in American police administration. According to Parker, professionalization is a “process of achieving honest, ethical, competent police service, completely free of political manipulation and control” (Gazel, 1976:31).

Finally, John Edgar Hoover (1895-1972) was also an outstanding figure in the American police administration along with Vollmer, Wilson and Parker. Hoover worked for almost 48 years as director and founder of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (http://www.answers.com/topic/j-edgar-hoover 10/13/2006). Hoover has made significant contributions in shaping the FBI to be more professional and merit-based organization. Mr. Hoover “established high standards of personal conduct, replaced political appointees with lawyers and accountants, instituted strict supervision and initiated a rigorous, comprehensive training program for his agents” (Joseph et al., 1978:13). As Director of FBI, he started to establish a centralized fingerprint file, a crime laboratory, and a training school for police in which agents were required to be college educated and to maintain the highest standard of personal and professional ethics (http://www.answers.com/topic/j-edgar-hoover 10/13/2006). What was controversial with Hoover was his ability to collect damaging information on prominent politicians and public figures for his personal use and by his aggressive investigation of civil rights leaders and left-wing radicals (http://www.answers.com/topic/j-edgar-hoover 10/13/2006). Hoover was credited for creating an effective law enforcement organization but was accused of exceeding and abusing his authority in blackmailing notable public figures and engaging in unwarranted political persecution. He wrote three books such as Persons in Hiding (1938), Masters of

These four recognized police authorities, Vollmer, Wilson, Parker and Hoover have contributed a lot in the history of Law Enforcement. One of their main focus was to professionalize the police departments and their personnel and to improve police performance to establish relationships with people in the community. They believed that an educated police who hold a college or graduate degree will improve the quality of the police service and solve the many problems between the police and citizens. This was consistent with the belief of Bittner (1990) that “higher education for police officers is necessary to enhance officers’ efficiency and liberate the mind”. Cartel et al., (1989) He also stressed that college educated officers are better in handling difficult or ambiguous situations that require greater creativity and innovation. On the other hand, Shernock (1992) cited the importance of college educated officers for their ability “to have fewer citizen complaints, fewer injuries and accidents, are less likely to be assaulted, are more likely to engage in detection practices, keep better records and tend to be less authoritative and less cynical.”

With the creation of President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice in 1965, one of their long-range goal is to see departments raise their educational standards for police officers especially supervisors, administrators, and chiefs (Swan, 1986:216). In their report, they cited the importance of a baccalaureate degree for all supervisory and executive positions. The President’s Commission (1967), Saunders (1970), Wilson and McLaren (1977) have agreed to improve police
performance by means of exposing and requiring police to higher education and training.

In so doing, the Police Chief executive made the following recommendations:

“Every State or local jurisdiction should require that new police chief executives of agencies with more than 75 personnel have at least four years of education (120 semester units or a baccalaureate degree).”

“Every State or local jurisdiction should require that new police chief executives of agencies with fewer than 75 personnel have at least two years of education (60 semester units) at an accredited college or university. Such jurisdictions should require that the new police chief executives have at least three years of education (90 semester units) at an accredited college or university by 1978 and at least four years of such education by 1982” (Swan, 1986:216).

These recommendations from the Police Chief Executive were consistent with Davis v. City of Dallas (1985) where the circuit approved college requirements for applicants on the City of Dallas police force. It stressed that “applicants must have completed 45 semester hours of college credit with at least a C average at an accredited college or university.” Thus, the “Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals has recognized that the role of police officer is a professional position requiring special qualities of judgment, maturity, and responsibility to effectively carry out a complex set of tasks affecting the health and safety of the public.” It has further stated that the “Supreme Court might uphold a college education requirement for police officer applicants even if college requirements resulted in a disparate impact on minority groups” (Palombo, 1995:83-85). Indeed, the 1971 Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, 1972 American Bar Association, and 1973 National Advisory Commission of Criminal Justice Standards
and Goals have agreed to recommend a baccalaureate degree for sworn officers. They argued that a high school degree is inadequate for “essential tasks performed by officers including preservation of constitutional guarantees and the exercise of discretion involving life and death decisions” (Palombo, 1995:98-99).

August Vollmer emphasized, that there should be a “direct liaison between the university community and the police in order to bring the best brains available to bear on given problems” (Palombo, 1995:218). However, Sherman (1978) argued that “higher education may show a minimal impact on the quality of police services unless police agencies are structured in such a way as to make better use of their highly educated personnel” (Palombo, 1995:219). As noted by Palombo (1995), American law enforcement has been perceived as the most violent in the world throughout the 20th century, a perception reinforced by the Rodney King incident. Palombo has seen the importance of the role of the community, academic, and governmental leaders to revise and increase educational standards for contemporary police officers to change the “wild west” image and reality of 20th century law enforcement in America by the turn of the 21st century. As such, upgrading the present accreditation standards for police agencies may change the nature and function of policing for the better and also can reduce the incredible and increasing amount of civil liability awards resulting from the unprofessional behavior of unfit sworn officer personnel.

**The Police and its Culture**

Police departments throughout this country are the primary institutions that provide security to society in dealing with serious street crimes, rapid response to calls for services, and careful investigations of the crimes committed. It has been said that the
work of a policeman is considered a noble profession because of its nature and its mission to serve the community. Nowadays, the image of the police as law enforcers is not well-respected because they are being branded as corrupt, brutal, inefficient, unfair and the like. This bad image of the police can be traced back to three different eras in police history in America. The first era in police history is the “political era” (1840-1900) or the “person approach” as Kelling and Moore (1988:2-24) mentioned in their article entitled “Evolving Strategy of Policing”. “Political era” describes the relationship of police and politicians that requires meeting the needs of both the citizen and the politician. In this era, the resources and authorization of the police depended mainly from the local political leaders. As noted in this era, the organizational design adopted by the police is decentralization. Decentralization allowed local police officers vast discretion in handling their individual work. An example of decentralization would be, walking the beat, which was one of the major means for a police officer in dealing with crime, disorder, and other problems as they were directed by their superiors. The police had close relationship to neighborhoods and political leaders that resulted to their legitimacy in providing useful services to communities. However, being intimate with neighborhoods and politicians and a decentralized organizational structure resulted in police corruption. Corruption has been prevalent during this period for three main reasons: first, the police had the ability to interfere in elections instead of being a non-partisan entity; second the police demonstrated discrimination against ethnic minorities and racial groups with regard to violations and crimes. The third reason, corruption which has been prevalent during this period, was due to the inability of the superiors to control
and supervise officers, which led to inefficiency and disorganization within the police departments.

The next era is the “reform era” (1930-1970) or the “case approach”. It was the period of ending the close ties between the local political leaders and the police. This was the era where the Civil Service professionalized the police especially in terms of hiring, firing, and promoting the police officers. Police legitimacy was strengthened by criminal law and police professionalism. At this period, police agencies, considered the most autonomous public sector in urban government, became a law enforcement agency. A bureaucratic way was adopted by the police in the areas of supervision, flow of instructions and information, record-keeping systems, and coordination of activities. Tactics during this “reform era” included: patrolling the streets by automobile as a preventive measure, and rapidly responding to calls for service. The effectiveness of the police was determined by the number of arrests made and response time.

The last era that the authors mentioned in their article is the “problem solving” era (1970-present). This era focused on the community and adopted the foot patrol with the intention of reducing fear, increasing citizen satisfaction with police, and improving police attitudes toward citizens. In this era, the police adopted the organizational structure of decentralization to increase their ability to solve and to respond to neighborhood and community problems. The priority of the police officers was to satisfy the citizens’ wants and needs in a way of identifying the nature of the problem, plan for possible solutions to this problem, and determine the segments of the community that they can serve.

Stoddard’s (1968:181-199) article “The Informal “Code” of Police Deviancy: A group Approach to “Blue-Coat Crime” was about the illegal practices of police personnel
that was socially prescribed and patterned after the informal code of the police. Stoddard’s study stated that the social structure of the code was the breeding ground for unlawful behavior in police departments. It was noted that motivation of policemen toward illegal activities are in part due to economic pressures.

The new recruit must accept and participate in illegal practices of his colleagues in the police force so as to not isolate himself socially and professionally from the group. If the recruit accepts such “code”, he/she will be given the rights and privileges of the group and will not be called a “goof”. The dishonest officers see the need to recruit the new rookie to the group’s code. The “code” was protected by means of secrecy and apathy from the complex demands and responsibilities given to citizen (Kappeler, 1999:196).

The various code and practices that a police officer could do were as follows: mooching, chiseling, favoritism and prejudice. The public were used to these practices and just ignored them. However, shopping and shakedown, extortion and bribery were considered unlawful and could pose danger to the policemen’s works. Stoddard mentioned the ability of the police to give priority to “informal code” demands rather than to formal police regulations whenever both were in conflict with each other. When such conflicts were visible, a policeman could conform to one and take the consequences of the non-conformity to the other. Also, the policemen could seek a compromise position to conform in the hope that sanctions can be minimal (Kappeler, 1999:184). The secretive nature of the “informal code” could enhance its effectiveness and preservation in the police force. Trust to practice the informal code was the main key to every policeman.
In Maanen’s 1978:220-234) article “Kinsmen in Repose: Occupational Perspectives of Patrolmen,” mentioned two distinct occupational perspectives a patrolman has to consider: the “outsider” perspective and the “lay low” occupational perspective. There are only rare places and occasions where patrolmen receive warm, friendly welcomes, mutual concern and friendly gestures with the public. Assistance and understanding come from his fellow police officers that have the subcultural identities of isolationism, secrecy, strong in-group loyalties, sacred symbols, common language, and a profound sense of separation from the larger society. The different subcultural identity of the police makes them different and creates cynicism from the public.

According to Maanen, real police work involved the “hot” call, “on view” felony situation, and the potentially dangerous “back-up” situation in which an officer may assist a threatened colleague. Patrolmen appreciate the presence of their peers in the “back-up situation” that demonstrates the mutual concern and loyalty they have for each other. Moreover, the real task of evaluating the performance of patrolmen depends on satisfying the sergeant’s desire and demands that could create harmonious relationship with the department. Another patrolman’s perspective entails the so-called “staying-out-of-trouble which means doing what is assigned to an officer and minimizes the amount of work he pursues. The most satisfactory solution an officer can do to the problems of red tape, numerous rules and regulations, risks of street work, and unpleasantness is to adopt the “lay low and don’t make waves” occupational perspectives (Kappeler, 1999:230).

Maanen addressed the disadvantages and advantages of hard work in the police organization. One disadvantage emphasized in his article was that working hard in the police organization would just increase the number of citizen contacts that in turn
increases the opportunity to make serious mistakes. Another disadvantage of working hard within the police organization is the fact that there are few occupational rewards. One advantage of hard work is that the low visibility of the patrolman’s role sanctioned by his superiors could be minimized. Maanen mentioned the “no rat rule” which exemplifies the camaraderie of the police to cover each other’s mistakes. To the squad, a fair share of work will be a great help to every officer to remain in the group squad. The sergeant play an important role in protecting his subordinates by screening and making the arrest report flawless which might keep an officer out of trouble. Another way police officers demonstrate camaraderie according to Maanen is by the slang: “cover your ass”. The norm “cover your ass” is the “legal” cover up of the mistake or wrongdoing of an officer by his colleagues to save him/her from embarrassments. Patrolmen begin to realize that “it is the rewards of camaraderie and small favors granted to them by their sergeant that make their daily task either pleasant or intolerable. A few extra day offs, a good partner, enjoyable squad parties, an agreeable assignment, or an extra long lunch become important rewards offered by a police career” (Kappeler, 1999:233).

Kappeler, et al (1998:238-260) article “Breeding Deviant Conformity Police Ideology and Culture” dealt specifically on police worldview, police subculture, and cultural patterns in policing and postulates of police culture. Police behavior was believed to develop and shape based on group socialization and professionalization. The norms and values of the police were developed because of the demands of their occupation and shared experiences as law enforcement officers. The socialization process of the new officers affects their attitudes and values (p.242). The police are different from the other occupational groups and members of society by their unique role and social status.
The police worldview tends to describe the working personality as “we/they” or “us/them” orientation (p.243). The “we/they” orientation can be interpreted as insiders, the police and the outsiders, the citizens or those who are alright versus those who must be watched. Thus, the “we/they” idea introduces in officers a concern for danger in their work because citizens are potential sources of violence and enemies. The police working personality stressed the reason of “differentness” in three ways: “police are taught that they are vested with the unique power to use force and violence in carrying out legal mandates; the paramilitary nature of police work isolates police from others in society; and, police are indoctrinated with the idea that they are the “thin blue line” between anarchy and order” (p.259). The police believe that “if law, authority, and order were seen as fostering inequity or injustice, the police self-perception would be tainted and the goodness of the profession would be questioned by the public” (p.249-250).

Three guiding beliefs define the police ethos: ethos of bravery, ethos of secrecy, and ethos of autonomy. Ethos of bravery stressed the importance of being always prepared to dangers posed by citizens while ethos of autonomy dealt with the ability of the police to use force to control street crime. The ethos of secrecy protects the investigative function, autonomy and authority of the police. One of the cultural patterns in policing is the idea that police are socially isolated from the rest of society because of their ethos of secrecy. A second important cultural pattern of policing is the police solidarity or cohesion that is based on roles, perceptions, and self-imagery of the members of the police subculture (p.254).

Kappeler also mentioned several postulates of the police culture: “postulates that reinforce the need for police secrecy and solidarity that include instructions never to
“give up” another cop and to watch out for other police (especially one’s partner); postulates that support police isolationism that instruct police to “protect your ass” by being wary of everyone; not to trust new officers until they proven themselves; and not to trust supervisors to look out for an officer’s best interests; and, postulates that instruct officers on the ethos of bravery: never back down and be aggressive but not overeager in handling situations (p.260).”

Police tend to be isolated from the community because of the nature of their occupation and its informal norms and conduct outside the department. Those police officers who do not follow some postulates of the work group can be ostracized.

**Problems of Policing**

Scholars argued that the higher education or a college degree is not the overall solution in changing the nature and quality of police services in this country but rather, it is only one of the many elements that can produce change to policing. According to Sherman and the National Advisory Commission on Higher Education for Police Officers, the major problems: conflicting public expectations for police behavior; inadequate methods for achieving police objectives; police violations of the law; and poor relations between the police and the public – are “caused more by the structure of our society and polity than they are by the people who do police work” (1978:18-19).

It has been observed that police officers and administrators have been confused on how they will serve the needs of a diverse population – conflicts of class, ethnicity, and religion. Police officers are known to enforce the law but they are confused of their true role because they spend more time in handling problems like accidents, illness, and stray or injured animals instead of enforcing the laws and running after the violators. Police
officers perform a wide range of community services not directly related to law enforcement. The requests by individual citizens for emergency services divert police resources for reducing crimes to meeting the demands of the citizens.

It is argued that the two most important objectives of policing are controlling serious crime and conflict. However, police department failed to accomplish these objectives because of inadequate methods available to the police in accomplishing their objectives. Also, some of the police methods in dealing with interpersonal conflict are being evaluated more “with the appearance of improved techniques than with the substance” (Sherman et al., 1978:25). One way of improving the methods of police response is the conduct of proper evaluation to know whether the new methods are more effective than the old ones.

The inability of the police to accomplish their objectives has led them to violate the law. Some of the known police violations are “excessive force (eg. brutality), violation of constitutional rights and due process guarantees in criminal investigations, and corruption in form of misusing police authority for personal gain of police officers or others, such as politicians” (Sherman et al., 1978:25). Corruption has the damaging effect on public attitudes and behavior toward the police. Gardiner (1970) argued that corruption has undermined public respect for the police and public respect for the law. Indeed “corruption and other major problems of policing have made the public image of the police a problem in itself” (Sherman et al., 1978:28). Police violence toward citizens, corruption and other police failures to accomplish their objectives are some of the possible cause of antagonism of some citizens toward the police.
The police organization is a public entity that needs the cooperation of the community to meet its goals. Yet in reality, police officers are portrayed as not performing effectively because of their abusive attitudes or hostile treatment of the indigent people of color. These have resulted in what Radelet (1986: 280) described as “mutual ill feelings, lack of respect, disorder, and inefficient police functioning.” In this respect, the attitudes of the police matter when interacting with different groups of people in their attempt to combat crime within the community.

The police are one of the most popular government agencies that has been negatively portrayed in the mass media in handling people of color. The maltreatment and harassment of indigent people of color at the hands of the police have been prevalent in the inner city neighborhood. People of color particularly poor African Americans are more likely to receive intrusive and abrasive policing than the Caucasians. This has resulted in the increasing negative images of the police in the community.

In March 1991, residents of Los Angeles were shocked by the brutal beating of the police of Rodney King, an African American. On the 5th of November 1992, residents of Detroit area were also shocked by what happened to Malice Green, a black Detroit resident who was “repeatedly kicked, punched, and bludgeoned” by seven police officers (Sigelman et al., 1997:778). These two highly publicized incidents of police brutality have triggered public outrage. People in the area are debating about the relationship of police performance and race relations. To add insult to injury, the four white officers implicated in the beating of Rodney King received a “not guilty” verdict from the court whereas the seven officers involved in the beating to death of Malice Green were only “suspended”. It is argued that the court decision is a form of direct racial discrimination against African
Americans. Apparently, African Americans are less likely to receive justice than the whites in the legal battle. According to the study conducted by Sigelman et al (1997), these two highly publicized police beatings have affected public attitudes on issues of race relations and police performance. They pointed out that the beating did not diminish the wide gap that had previously divided the Blacks and the Whites on the issue of the legitimate use of physical force by the police. Also, their findings suggest that both of the racial groups are sensitive to highly publicized incidents of police brutality and to the “appearance of major miscarriages of justice against African Americans” (p.789). However, Whites are more likely to “isolate” these incidents by treating them outside the historical context of discrimination against the Blacks. On the other hand, African Americans were more likely to “generalize” them by seeing them as reinforcements of their existing perceptions of past racial injustice.

In March 1999, a New York Times article entitled “Poll in New York Finds Many Think Police are Biased” by Dan Barry and Marjorie Connelly mentioned a survey indicating that nearly 9 out of 10 Black residents believe that the police often engaged in brutality against Blacks, whereas two-thirds said that police brutality towards the members of minority groups is widespread. The poll cited the incident surrounding the death of Mr. Diallo, a 22-year-old African immigrant who was “hit with 19 bullets during a 41-shot fusillade fired by four white police officers”. He had no criminal records and was unarmed at the time of the shooting. It became a significant event in New York and encouraged many protests and rallies by Black leaders. This event has also led many minorities to distrust the police thereby exacerbating the problem on race relations. The overall poll disclosed that “more than half of those recently surveyed said they believed
that the police used excessive force rather than necessary force.” The findings have been shaped by racial attitudes towards police brutality. In addition, 63% of Black residents, 55% of Hispanic residents, and 24% of White residents believe that police brutality is directed against minority residents.

The main reason why the government would like to professionalize the police is to control police violations of law and other unacceptable behavior of police in the performance of their duty. This solution is posited because of “police solidarity” which underlies what James Q. Wilson (1963) calls as the “code of the system” (White, 1972:62). Professionalization is seen as a solution to these control problems (street justice, intimidation practices, corruption and the like) because it requires personnel to adhere to the new code rather than to the internal controls of the system. Furthermore, professionalizing the police is suggested to improve citizen evaluation of law enforcement (Chackerian, 1974:141).

**Components of Professionalism**

Professionalism is a “sense of commitment to work” (Khoury and Khoury, 1981:897). Also, professionalism “among law enforcement personnel has been linked to education, cynicism, job satisfaction and work relations, the use of force, and community and departmental characteristics” (Crank, 1990:334). While Carte and Carte (1975) argued that professionalism became less of an individual characteristic and more the sum of many components within a department (p112).

Police professionalism “occurs with the adoption of a “professionalizing” ethic that consists of five components: belief in autonomy, a public service commitment, belief in self-regulation and colleague control, recognition of professional police organizations,
and dedication to police work” (Regoli et al., 1989:49). Findings on the study conducted to Illinois Police Chiefs have revealed that police chiefs are more likely to “support professional police organizations both by reading professional journals and by attending professional meetings” (p56). Regoli et al research findings noted that professionalism had only a modest impact on criteria of job satisfaction. Furthermore, the more professional chiefs, the less likely they will support the reform movement.

Regoli and Poole (1980) in their research “Police Professionalism and Role Conflict: A Comparison of Rural and Urban Departments” have found that police role conflict may be reduced through the professionalization of the police; however, the influence of professionalism is conditioned by department type. They elaborated that rural police officer is more likely to act as a community member and second as a law enforcer officer. The rural police officer brings to his work “a sense of calling and commitment to community ideals and expectations” (p251). This is in contrast with the urban police officer who have less community ties and is unlikely to identify with his work assignment area. Urban police officers’ autonomy and sense of calling to the field is an important concern for them.

In Chackerian article “Police Professionalism and Citizen Evaluations: A Preliminary Look,” he suggested that professionalism will improve citizen evaluations of the police because of greater effectiveness and equity in law enforcement (1974, p143).

**How Do We Professionalize the Police?**

Indeed, the reform movement in the police was established in the 1930’s by recognized chief of police such as August Vollmer, William Parker, and Orlando Wilson (Regoli et al., 1989:48). During their tenure, the focus of their efforts to reform the police
is to make the police a “professional” officer. As has been cited during the tenure of Vollmer, he emphasized on the professional police officer and later, applications were more focused on the professional agency (Carte and Carte, 1975:112).

As has been observed, the role of police chief has been very influential in terms of “procedural decisions on the implementation of policy as well as substantive decisions concerning the allocation of departmental resources and the extent and type of law enforcement that will be practiced” (Regoli et al., 1989:48).

It is argued that the best way to correct inefficiencies and unresponsiveness is to professionalize the police through “improved training, the application of the computer to police work, the adoption of a code of ethics, emphasis on crime control, and increased salaries” (Carte and Carte, 1975:108). In this respect, self-regulation is in relation with the adoption of a professional code of ethics (Khoury and Khoury, 1981:896). A professional police should regard the client’s best interests above his own interests. However, Mosher (1968) claimed that the term “professional” should have a “reasonably clear-cut occupational field; he should be required to hold at least a bachelor’s degree; and the occupation should offer a lifetime career” (Carte and Carte, 1975:110). William J. Bopp (1977) cited the meaning of “professionalization”, which focused to higher education, “to such additional variables as role relationships, integrity, career development, public support, and service delivery” (p56).

On the other hand, professionalization has been viewed by G.L. Williams (1989) as a means of controlling the police. It is by this means that the police can be made more effective, more efficient, and more accountable to the public (Baker, 1995:10). It was argued that “higher education for police officers has been equated with intelligence,
capacity, proficiency in communications skills, and motivation” (Baker, 1995:17). In line with this argument, the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals (NAC) proposed in 1982 that a baccalaureate degree be required as a condition of initial employment (p41). However, Sapp (1986), in “his study of 341 police agencies, found that only 11.2 percent required any college at entry level” (p41). The key idea of professionalizing the police personnel is to recognize the law enforcers as professionals like the physicians, attorneys, and teachers that have formal education to practice their profession.

LeDoux, Tully, Chronister, and Gansneder (1984) recognized the two major factors for professionalizing the police officers: to improve the professional standing of law enforcement as a career and to increase the effectiveness of the police (Baker, 1995:42). It is believed that these factors can help police officers adjust with the growing problems of the public that are highly complex and sophisticated. Moreover, Standards (1989) argued that a police officer who has a higher education will have a better opportunity to understand more the society and will learn to communicate effectively with the public. Moreover, Sterling (1974:28) mentioned several tangible benefits of higher education for police officers which are: 1) college educated officers tend to possess greater analytical ability, make wiser decisions, act more independently, and exercise greater discretion than uneducated officers; 2) college educated officers demonstrate psychological traits that are more desirable such as initiative, compassion, vigilance, flexibility, and intelligence; 3) officers with college experience exhibit characteristics that reflect sturdy morals and a solid personal value system; and 4) college
educated officers see themselves as professionals and have a greater sense of their role in society and the criminal justice system (Baker, 1995:43).

According to Sanderson (1977), “college educated officers performed better in the academy, used less sick leave, and received fewer citizen complaints once they were assigned street duty” (Baker:1995:43).

Nevertheless, our government is doing all their best to encourage police officers to have higher education. One way to persuade older officers to pursue higher education is to provide incentives. In 1965, several colleges have offered degrees in criminal justice and police administration. Budgets were allocated to police education through the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) and the Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP) which “took the form of either seed money to fund budding programs or as direct assistance to police officers” (Swanson, Territo, & Taylor, 1988; V.L. Williams, 1983). Then, the Police Recruitment and Education Program (PREP), “pays for education after high school for qualified minority and nonminority candidates who subsequently enter the law enforcement profession” (Baker, 1995:46). Also, many municipalities have also adopted “tuition reimbursement plans” and other agencies while in the East and Midwest they implemented “college incentive pay.” Carter, Sapp & Stephens (1989) elaborated that the other types of incentives are educational leaves, permission to attend class while on duty, adjustments to shift schedules, or changes in assignment. They also found that 75 percent of the agencies surveyed did not have a formal educational requirement for promotion; however, more than 80 percent indicated that college education is an important element in promotion decisions.
The importance of accreditation, standardized testing in recruitment and promotion, lateral entry to allow selection of the “best man” regardless of tenure in the organization, and an emphasis on college and in-service training are designed to maximize technical competence and to enforce public order in the community (Chackerian, 1974:141-142). On the other hand, the President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, Task Force on the Police defined professionalization in terms of increasing levels of educational attainment and specialized training in their field. This advocate of professionalizing the police states that: “Individual police officers must be provided with the training and education which will give them a professional identification consistent with the police role in a free society.” Such training and education “will equip them with knowledge to understand the policies of their superiors; make them receptive to efforts to make law enforcement both fair and effective; and enable the officer to take appropriate action in the unpredictable situations not dealt with by even the best efforts at policy formulation” (President’s Commission, 1976b).

Shown below is a model that Smith (1978) in his article “Dangers of Police Professionalization: An Empirical Analysis” used in explaining some relationships between occupational characteristics and the behavior. He elaborated that in professionalizing the police, there should be a way “to eliminate part-time police officers, to create “professional” associations, to produce and establish written codes of ethics for law enforcement officials, to expand required training programs and establish new law enforcement degree programs in colleges and universities, to create incentives for higher
educational attainment by police officers, and to achieve greater autonomy for the police practitioner commensurate with his or her professional status” (p200).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes of occupation structure (input factors)</th>
<th>Attributes of occupation performance (output factors)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time career work (for pay)</td>
<td>Commitment or sense of calling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formalized code of ethics</td>
<td>Service orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and education</td>
<td>Useful knowledge and skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional organization or association</td>
<td>Group identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Peer review and enforcement of standards</td>
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**Figure 1:** Simplified model of relationships between “professionalization” and “professionalism.” (Smith, 1978:200)

**Obstacles of Professionalizing the Police**

It is said that “the policy of requiring police recruits to have a college degree has resulted in recruitment outside minority communities” (Regoli et al., 1989:52) which resulted to racial discrimination against minority people.

The idea of professionalizing the police occupation has difficulty in its implementation because of “the harsh social and economic realities of the political environment in which police chiefs work” (p64). These problems that stems from political, economic and social environment include the “increasingly stringent budgets, sparse resources, police unionism, antagonistic community relations, and a public mood that has shifted from a rehabilitative, service ideal to a just-deserts, proactive model” (p64).
In addition, Neal Milner (1971) stressed that professionalization has built-in biases against minority participation that will only exacerbate the tension between black citizens and the police. He further cited the “extent to which an organization ethos that emphasizes professionalization may be used to increase the institutional biases against black accessibility” (Smith, 1978:202). Also, other critics have seen the danger of the process of the so-called “bureaucratization” of police departments because it will only increase hostility between citizen and the police and the ability of the police to ignore the bad assessments that the public gave to the police in rendering service to community (Smith, 1978:202).

**Conclusion**

Since the start of the tenure of August Vollmer who became the Chief of Police of Berkeley, California, movement to professionalize the police and its personnel has been a great debate until this time. Law enforcement administrators, government officials, and researchers have searched for possibilities to professionalize law enforcement agencies and officers. Some concerned agencies have called for mandatory college education requirements and some have argued to create a national police force. Vollmer, Wilson, Parker, and Hoover were recognized for their priceless contribution to reform the police agencies and its personnel during the 20th century. Their contributions have led the police agencies to be considered as one among the many government agencies that were given with legitimate power and authority to protect people’s lives and property and to maintain peace and order in a given community. Throughout their service as a Police Chief, they saw problems within the police and outside the organization. The informal police culture outside the organization was prevalent and the hardest problem to solve during their
tenure. The mandatory college requirements that they implemented have been very successful during their service. They believed that advanced education and training will be associated to quality police force and control of police misconduct, corruption, brutality, and other sort of unacceptable police behavior. However, not all states in this country have adopted the mandatory college requirement for entry level in the police. The reason for this could be the size of the departments and the size of the minority population in the community being served, which are not the same in every states of the country.

Some researchers argued that the urban riots of the 1960s, increasing crime and fear of police, police corruption, police militancy, and the cost of policing the community are among the many factors that raised serious questions about the quality and fairness of police service. These many factors are some of the reasons why many policymakers, government officials and law enforcement agencies strive to keep the issues of police reform alive. Some of the solutions that policymakers and administrators made are to deal with lateral hiring, mandatory college requirement upon entry to police service, salary increase, promotions, service trainings in their field of specialization or workshops, improvements in selecting, screening, training, assigning and leadership of the police, technological advances, evaluation on police activities like working hours, job assignment, job conditions, job security, safety, and improvement of management procedures. Many researchers have confirmed a positive impact of college degree requirement, training, promotions, salary increase in the delivery of quality police service associated with ethics and professional integrity in dealing with the problems of citizens.
Despite the efforts made by the four finest police chiefs during their service tenure and many recommendations from policymakers and government agencies to raise educational requirements for police to professionalize the police and its personnel, the results have been lengthy and irregular or say, the police community has been struggling to achieve professional standing. The 1993 results of a national study conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics revealed that “of more than 3,000 state and local police departments serving communities of all sizes, only 1 percent of departments require a college degree for employment” (Reaves, 1996). Furthermore, the Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) have found that “less than 0.5 percent of all police departments required new officers to have a four-year college degree” (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1990). This result is frustrating because police have more to go in professionalizing the police and its personnel. Kakar in her article “Self-evaluations of Police Performance: An Analysis of the relationship between police officers’ education level and job performance,” concluded that one of the reasons why professionalizing the police and its personnel is slow and sporadic in every state could be the general attitude towards police work as being simple and not requiring any intellectual skills.

Policymakers, administrators, concerned government agencies, and law enforcement agencies should unite and strictly implement the baccalaureate degree requirements for police entry level recruit in every state to professionalize the police and its personnel. Researchers should not stop searching and exploring what are the barriers to the implementation of the police reform movement. At this point we should ask if the failure to implement strictly such policies the fault of some policymakers or
administrators or is it because of the social structure or diverse population that this country has? There is a need to think what went wrong why it was hard to implement such policies of professionalizing the police and its personnel despite the recognized enforcement and contributions of Vollmer, Wilson, Parker and Hoover in the American Law Enforcement Agency. Is there any indicator that police professionalization will not occur until the year 2050 as Tafoya (1990) has claimed? Baker (1995) disagreed with Tafoya’s statement because based on the result of his study, “police agencies are laying solid groundwork by improving their selection and promotional processes and encouraging their officers to increase their levels of formal college education” (p139).

References:

A. Books


The author examines the impact of specific accreditation standards on educational requirements for police officers and on personnel practices pertaining to officer selection and promotional procedures as a means of furthering the goal of professionalizing the police. His study made used of a research design which compares accredited and nonaccredited departments with regard to procedural changes. He found out that accredited agencies offered incentives for education and actively recruited college educated officers than nonaccredited agencies. This book was very useful in explaining the historical background of professionalizing the police and its personnel. It helped me a lot in consolidating the needed information to validate arguments to professionalize the police.


The book was all about the life of Orlando Winfield Wilson during his tenure in the police service. It is a well written biography of Wilson in which the author narrated the many contributions of Wilson from the very start until the end of his term in the police service. It explained why Wilson was considered America’s most influential police scholar and administrator. Wilson’s success and shortcomings as police officer have been narrated. I have used the book to assess the most important contributions of Wilson as a law enforcer during his time.

This book narrated the life and contributions of August Vollmer, recognized as the father of Modern Law Enforcement. It is a book that offered a historical perspective of American policing that derives from the professional model. Some of the important social and occupational factors essential to police professionalism were elaborated. This book helped me to ascertain how Vollmer started to professionalize the police.


I have used this book because it presents a detailed explanation on the history of police and society, the role of the police in society, and the problems of policing. It is a well-written book that featured the writings of many recognized scholars who have studied the police culture and behavior of the police.


I did use the book as my reference for getting a well-explained history of professionalization of law enforcement and dealing with the problem of academic professionalism for police officers. What was good with this book was the narrative explanation of the Federal Court decisions concerning the validation of higher education as a prerequisite to employment as a law enforcement officer.


This book offered a summary of recommendations for professionalizing the police and its personnel. It explores the idea of changing police education and tackles major policy issues in police education. It also presents problems of policing and the historical development of higher education as well as debates over the objectives of educating the police. This book helped me a lot in recognizing the importance of higher education in minimizing the police problems in policing.

**B. Journals**


The author conducted a research study to determine if professionalization of the police force could be one way to improve the citizens’ evaluation of law enforcement. Also, the author would want to test if professionalism is associated with effectiveness and restraint in the use of force, and if effectiveness and restraint are positively valued by the
public. I want to use this article to know how the public rate the police in the performance of their duty to serve the community.


This article has elaborated the idea about professionalism. Furthermore, Crank introduces some of the important causes and the implications of professionalism in policing. Professionalism has been one way to improve policing particularly its organizational structure like centralization, adopted personnel policies, and operational strategies that has led the police to become professionals in their endeavor to provide public service.


This article was all about the life of William Parker during his tenure in the police organization. Also, it is an assessment of Parker’s contributions to the modern American police administration and his efforts in changing one of the country’s largest metropolitan police departments (LAPD) into the most professional law enforcement organization in the nation. His efforts to professionalize the police have shortcomings that seriously created tensions between Whites and Non-whites. I used this article in getting the basic concepts on how Parker professionalized the police and its personnel.


It is a 6-page article that has historical perspective on how the FBI was created. I used the article to get detailed information about Hoover who was one among the prominent persons involved in improving and professionalizing the law enforcement. It presents strategies used by the FBI to develop and improve testing and refine many courses, seminars and symposia offered to criminal justice personnel at the FBI academy.


This study has been very useful to me because it explains further the relationship between police officers’ education level and job performance. The result of the study revealed that officers with higher education think they have an advantage over officers with lower education in terms of accepting responsibility, undertaking leadership roles and initiative, understanding federal and state laws and the like. Also, the author mentioned important points why the different state police departments did not fully implement the college degree requirement for new police recruits.

This study investigates the relationship between job satisfaction and public altruism within the police. Some of the components of professionalism have been discussed. The result revealed that there was no causal relationship found and can be regarded as a serious obstacle to the movement of police professionalization.


The authors examined the consequences or the impact of the police professions movement on professionalism among line-officers. It indicates that some of the factors that function to enhance the professionalization may obstruct it instead. I have used this article to further analyze some of the components of professionalism that are not consistent with the police professions movement.


This study has a very minimal impact on police chiefs’ professionalism on three aspects of the police function: job satisfaction, work relations, and professionalization of the police occupation. It elaborates further that professionalism affects several criteria of professionalization. The article focuses some on the implications of police reform movement.


The three roles of the police were mentioned in the article. The various components of professionalism and their effect to the role conflict were discussed. It was discovered that the role conflict can be reduced through professionalization of the police.


This article looks on how the public reacted to two well publicized incidents: the police beating of Rodney King and the killing of Malice Green in Detroit. It discusses the impact of police brutality against the African Americans and how the public perceived this police acts against African Americans. It helped me to assess if the police discriminate against the Blacks or minority groups.

This article has been very useful to my topic because it addresses the relationships between professionalization and police officers’ attitudes. I have used the schematic diagram that the author used in explaining some of the relationships between occupational characteristics and the behavior of the police. The findings on the positive effects of professionalization and criticisms to police professionalization have strengthened the analysis of my paper.


This paper is a 3-page article that summarizes the very important sequence of historical reform in policing. Also, it discusses the recommendations made by different law enforcement commissions. This report explains the difficulty of professionalizing the police and its personnel.


This article provides the basic structure of analyzing efforts of professionalizing the police. It offers a typology of police roles such as the problem-solver; the tough cop; the rule-applier; and, the crime-fighter, to explain the several dimensions of police professionalization. I have used this paper to further elaborate the assumption that professionalization of the police is effective in controlling police behavior towards corruption, street justice, discretion, and intimidation practices. Thus, a “professional police officer” perceived his role in solving the community problems and in preventing crime.

**C. Popular Press**


This news article states that more than half of those surveyed said that they believed that the police used excessive force and their attitudes could have been shaped by their racial orientation. Blacks and members of minority groups are those who often fell victims of police brutality in New York City.

**D. Web Sources**

The above web sources reported the many contributions of Vollmer, Wilson, Parker, and Hoover in the law enforcement agency. They were regarded as prominent chiefs of police during their terms. During their police service tenure, they focused on improving the professional status of the police. They instituted remarkable changes in the police which were integrated to the policies of today’s police forces.