From researching this topic, the evidence contained in past research projects show that police officers benefit from higher education in multiple areas of their jobs. Associates and bachelor’s degrees provide the necessary skills that will benefit an officer beyond the basic police training that they go through. The three main areas that are affected by this topic are:

- The effect of higher education on the officers themselves and how it effect their job performance,
- The effect on the law enforcement organization and hierarchy,
- The effects on comminutes the officers are serving in.

The study of the benefits of college education for police officers has been debated for quite some time now. The call for higher education and improved police training originated with recommendations from the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement in 1931. Then was later reinforced by suggestions from the President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice in 1967 and the National Advisory commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals in 1973. They believed that policing would become more professionalized in the United States by increasing formal education standards and improving the quality of training (Manis, Archbald, & Hassell, 2008). The most extensive studies over the past four decades have been regarding the recommendations of these commissions. This topic of study is not just isolated to the United States, it has also been studied and implemented in parts of Europe, in Australia and more recently in India (Paterson, 2011).
How Higher Education Affects Officers.

Higher education can improve a police officer’s attitude and performance. Some of the benefits that are acquired from the college experience is improved critical thinking, affective learning strategies, experiences with a lot of diversity, and self-discipline. The most effective way to accomplish these benefits is to design degrees in criminal justice and political studies to incorporate a generic set of core skills and competencies to meet these needs.

Another area to consider is the different types of policing, on one hand there is the public police and on the other the expanding private security industry. By requiring higher education for the public police, the officers will gain a greater confidence that there is a means of separation between them and the competitive private security industry. In a mixed economy of policing this presents the opportunity for the police to define a distinctive role in service delivery and the accreditation of policing functions that separates them from the private industry (Paterson, 2011).

One area that is commonly viewed as a benefit to higher education is that it reduces disciplinary problems. According to a ten year study by Truxillo, Bennet, and Collins if a jurisdiction’s primary reason for increasing its education requirement is to reduce disciplinary problems, their data did not support this theory. According to their research background investigations and honesty tests prove to be more accurate and useful for this purpose then higher education (Truxillo, Bennett, & Collins, 1998).

Another study performed in 2008 shows that there is a relationship between higher education and the frequency of formal complaints against patrol officers. The research showed that officers with four year degrees had less formal complaints brought against them then those without a four year degree. In addition, officers without four year degrees were more likely to have a complaint
sustained against them then those with four year degrees. A far as informal complaints there was no separation those with four year degrees and those without. The study shows the amount of complaints is even across the board regardless of education, but the severity is greater with those without a degree (Manis, Archbald, & Hassell, 2008). So, either those with a degree are more controlled or have a better knowledge to get out of a complaint.

**Effects on Police Organization and Hierarchy**

Higher education has an effect on the leadership roles on the police. According to the ten year study by Truxillo, Bennett, and Collins, they found those with a bachelor’s degree were more likely to be promoted. This goes along the same lines as any other field that those with higher education have a greater chance at advancement so this is not much of a surprise.

Even though these promotions are expected they gave some interesting reason as to why. The first reason is that the same motivation these officers had for educational achievement is probably the same motivation for seeking promotions. The experience they received to be successful with this motivation in receiving a degree makes them a step ahead when it comes to promotions. This leads to the second possible reason is those with degrees have mastered skills needed to be promoted. The third reason is that higher education institutes require a higher degree of maturity and professionalism to succeed and in turn the same levels needed to succeed in your profession (Truxillo, Bennett, & Collins, 1998).

**Effects of Officers with Higher Education on the Community**

Higher education helps develop skills to improve community-orientation and local accountability. Community policing focuses more on an officer’s ability to make decisions and solve problems rather than incidents. The skills to do this can be acquired as part of higher
educational courses, because traditional police training still focuses first on law enforcement functions over the community based skills. Research shows that trainers focus on law enforcement functions that only take up approximately 10% of an officer’s time (Palmiotto, Birzer, & Unnithan, 2000). A positive impact on police performance is evident when job experience is combined with higher education from an officer’s attitude and behavior to a better use of discretion which improves public perception of police fairness (Roberg & Bonn, 2004).

“Higher education promotes creativity and critical thinking ahead of control and the potential to counteract the cultural instincts of criminal justice institutions through flexible value-systems that are more suited to the demands of community-oriented policing and an enhanced focus on the ethical and professional behavior. This benefits both police performance and police ethics with efficiency being directly linked to perceptions of fairness and police legitimacy” (Brodeur, 2005).

The impact of globalization has created social changes and impacted the nature of crimes thus changing the demands of policing. Higher education provides the opportunity for police to acquire the advanced skills and knowledge to deal with the changing complexity of their role. It provides them with the opportunity to understand global issues and their role on local crime (Paterson, 2011).

Not everyone agrees with the need of higher education in the police force. Critics of criminal justice degrees question their academic integrity and point to their rising popularity as indication of the willingness of higher education to surrender to market demands for relevant, practical courses that provided credentials (Flanagan, 2000).
In conclusion I will side with the need for higher education and to attain a degree to become a police officer. Not necessarily that the degree be attained before you can become an officer, but there could a probationary period so they can get the experience along with a college degree. Just from some of the research done there is a lot more positive reasons then negative ones in regards to higher education in this field. A degree will not fix every problem an officer faces but in will give a solid foundation to build and rely on. Along these same lines, of course, if a degree becomes necessary then an officers pay and incentives need to be adjusted appropriately. As in all careers the knowledge and experience gained through obtaining a college degree is really priceless and is most effective when used together with experience.
References


