Research Article

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The importance of historically reflexive critical thinking for police education: United States criminal justice and the brutalization of African Americans

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Abstract: The value of college education for US police officers has been contemplated since at least the 1920's, yet the importance of critical thinking has only recently attracted scholarly attention. Modern police training is frequently led by experienced former practitioners; however, as "insiders" they may be less likely to critically evaluate the role police play, and have played, in maintaining unjust and discriminatory systems, particularly for African Americans. This article considers existing scholarship on police training and education, highlighting and demonstrating the importance of historically reflexive critical thinking.

Keywords: police education; critical thinking; racism; police training; discrimination

The murder of George Floyd is part of a long history of unjust interactions between police and African Americans contributing to enduring concerns over police training and legitimacy (Eichstaedt et al. 2021). Throughout much of the history of the United States, police actively enforced laws rationalizing the persecution of African Americans, Native Americans, Latinxs, Asians, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community, for example. Although each of these groups (and others) have their own unique history, this article primarily focuses on the treatment of African Americans in contemplating the importance of historically reflexive critical thinking (HRCT) in the education and training of police officers.

Policing in the United States originated in slave patrols at a time when forced servitude, overt persecution, and outright murder of African Americans was not an aberration, but a dominant part of the social order (Brucato 2020; Williams and Murphy 1990). While the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865 curtailed

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slavery for some, it rationalized it for others "as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted" (U.S. Const. amend. XIII). Soon after its passage, many former slaves were freed only to be recast as criminals and forced back into involuntary servitude under a brutally exploitive system of convict leasing which, for some, meant death (Gilmore 2000; Lichtenstein 1996; Zimmerman 1951). Over time, the horrors of convict leasing were exposed, and criminal justice reformers replaced it with the 'fresh air and sunshine' of chain gangs, yet another in the long lineage of cruelly exploitative approaches to 'justice' tantamount to slavery (Pratt 1913; Steiner and Brown 1969; Zimmerman 1951); it was the development of more efficient road building technology, and not humanitarian concerns, that ended the use of slave labor on chain gangs (Lichtenstein 1996). While the history of these brutalities is long and beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that in each of these historical examples criminal justice practitioners were complicit with slavery, forced servitude, and other forms of brutality, all legally rationalized under the Thirteen Amendment.

As the brutality of chain gangs subsided, legally rationalized apartheid under Jim Crow ensured the continued persecution of African Americans (Gregory 2022). Compelling historical evidence of police brutality in the enforcement of Jim Crow laws proliferated in newspapers (Gregory 2022) and alongside technological advancements in photography (Abel 2010). Further, as the medium of television expanded in the 1950s and 60s, so too did exposure of clashes between police and black protesters (Barlow and Barlow 1995), revealing that many officers were willing to ensure, by force, that African Americans remained subservient to whites (Spratt 2008). Unlike lynching – which has a complicated history that obfuscates its connections to positive law and where complicity and resistance amongst some police is well documented in the historical literature (Gregory 2022; Jordan 1980; Muhammad 2010) – slavery, convict leasing, and chain gangs were official criminal 'justice' responses to those who violated legal prohibitions under apartheid (Litwack 1999). It is somewhat paradoxical that critical discourse on the part of police relative to these official policies was presumably either absent or ineffective in curtailing the brutality of those practices in a racialized America; many officers willingly enforced the law without evidence of sustained resistance that would signify critical reflection on the morality of their work (Hawkins and Thomas 1991). After the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and in a manner reminiscent of the shift from legally rationalized slavery to legally rationalized convict leasing, African Americans (particularly young males) increasingly became the subject of persecution in the war on drugs (Barlow and Barlow 1995; Hinton and Cook 2021), fueling the racially disproportionate mass incarceration that blights America's approach to justice well into the twenty first century (Alexander 2010; Fornili 2018; Hinton 2016; Tucker 2014). Although its

devastating impact on communities of color has long been palpable (Roberts 2003), noticeably absent is meaningful critique from police.

As developed in this paper, HRCT highlights the dangers of policing by examining its past failings (e.g., its impact on marginalized groups like African Americans), important because "study of the moral underpinning of the law and the legal foundation of the criminal justice process forces students to explore moral questions involving fundamental concepts such as integrity, justice, fairness and equity" (Flanagan 2000, p. 8). Thus, HRCT entails analysis of criminal justice policies and practices by considering their ethical and moral compatibility with the 'justice' label. This entails, for example, an understanding of both the content of the law and the role police have played in facilitating or perpetrating injustices against marginalized groups, considering their degree of humanity or inhumanity (Williams and Robinson 2004). Such a pedagogy holds the potential to empower police to critique and challenge norms and assumptions obscured by culture, more so by police culture (Peach and Clare 2017; Schein 1996).

HRCT aligns with Peach and Clare's (2017) argument "that critical thinking needs to genuinely embody a 'critical' dimension aligned in the traditions of critical theory to ensure that students deliberate over issues of social justice and moral goodness that address notions of right and wrong" (p. 50). It also comports with demands for police education reform that date back to at least the early twentieth century, described by Durham as invested in "issues such as defining good and evil, the nature of human responsibility, and the right of the state to enforce behavioral conformity" (1992, p. 48). HRCT is also compatible with concept of "socially critical vocationalism", described as "education that is socially responsive and professionally oriented in order that students are able effectively to contribute to society, both socially and economically" (Peach and Clare 2017, p. 47). In doing so, HRCT is intended to address the famous (and much paraphrased) lament from philosopher George Santayana:

> Progress, far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness. When change is absolute there remains no being to improve and no direction is set for possible improvement: and when experience is not retained, as among savages, infancy is perpetual. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. In the first stage of life the mind is frivolous and easily distracted; it misses progress by failing in consecutiveness and persistence. This is the condition of children and barbarians, in which instinct has learned nothing from experience. (1910, p. 218)

By illuminating the shortcomings of past policy and practice, HRCT aims to empower police as potential advocates for more equitable and just policy in the future, important because some criminal justice agendas have been subjected to decades of sustained critique with very little change or critique emanating from police. For example, the turn towards paramilitary policing in the war on drugs demonstrates a disconcerting lack of critical thinking concerning drug policies and their consequences; it also demonstrates a schism with the research on community policing.

Internal critique of the war on drugs and its impact on communities of color could benefit police by providing an avenue through which they can reconnect with alienated, overpoliced communities, important given "the changing nature of policing from law enforcers to front line problem solvers and crisis interventionists within the community" (Wood and Sereni-Massinger 2016; p. 141). Reflexive critical thinking develops a deeper understanding of differences in perception, promoting empathy that could positively impact police communication and interactions (Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith 2017; Miles-Johnson and Pickering 2018; Patterson 1991) and counter authoritarian tendencies (Parker et al. 1971; Smith et al. 1967; Smith et al. 1970).

Unfortunately, achieving this could be challenging because current police education "may be inconsistent with advancing this new skill set" (Barker 2011, p. 22). Palmiotto et al. argue that "in order for practitioners to project and prepare for the future, it is imperative that they examine where policing has been" and stress that "police officers should possess a sense of social history" enabling them to contextualize past successes and failures (2000, p. 13). Barlow and Barlow (1995) suggest this a natural outcome of critical thinking:

> Once students have learned that our primary institutions of social control, such as the police and the prison. originated and developed in contexts of class, race, and ethnic struggles, in circumstances not dissimilar to the situation experienced today by young, urban, black males, they have substantial reasons to become dissatisfied with existing conceptions of criminal justice as operating primarily to fight crime and to protect law-abiding citizens from predators (pp. 119–120).

HRCT aims to achieve this by intellectually empowering police officers to critique unjust policies in the hope of catalyzing meaningful and just change. Patterson (1991) noted that "there is a sense of empowerment with learning. It is only logical that college educated officers soon begin to evaluate the internal organization based on their new knowledge" (p. 69).

1 Prior research on police education and training

Discourse on the importance of education for ethical and just policing is more than a hundred years old in America, some scholars even tracing it to the 1700s (Johnston and Cheurprakobkit 2002; Paterson 2011; Sherman 1978). In that literature, police training and education are differentiated, such that "education is viewed as developing the ability to conceptualize and expand the theoretical and analytic learning process, while training involves gaining the skills needed to accomplish the immediate tasks and goals of police operations" (Kratcoski 2004, pp. 103–104). Bergman (2017) tersely clarified training as "practice-based instruction in a street context" and education as "classroom-based instruction in a higher education context" (p. 71).

One of America's greatest police reformers, August Vollmer, proposed higher education as a necessary (and perhaps sufficient) requirement for police, reasoning that it served to professionalize and provide for increased personal dignity (Sherman 1978). He proposed this in the early twentieth century "at a time when 75 % of all policemen could not pass an army intelligence test" (Sherman 1978, p. 31), and police were often portrayed as "irresponsible drunks, dabbling in corrupt activities such as gambling and prostitution and purposefully employing excessive force to gain compliance from suspects" (Rydberg and Terrill 2010, p. 94). Vollmer would eventually establish the first collegiate program for police at Berkeley in 1916 and develop other programs pedagogically akin to the liberal arts. In contrast with what would come later, Vollmer's programs were intended to serve as a prelude to more specialized training (Sherman 1978), and "not meant to be a technical police school within a university setting" (Carte and Carte 1975, p. 69). In a time of increasing social mobility, Vollmer's efforts sought to transform policing into "a profession appropriate for gentlemen, in every sense of the word" (Sherman 1978, p. 33).

Despite little empirical support, Vollmer's ideas were influential, evidenced in the founding of programs at many of America's most respected universities throughout the 1920s: University of Chicago, San Jose State University, University of Wisconsin, Northwestern, Indiana University, Michigan State, Washington State, and Harvard, for example (Sherman 1978). Although his ideas informed the 1929 *Wickersham Commission's* recommendation of higher education for police (Rydberg and Terrill 2010), they did not have a significant impact on public policy until the decade of the 1960s when several high-level commissions – notably the 1965 *President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice*, aka the *Katzenbach Commission* – examined many longstanding problems with policing (Jacobs and Magdovitz 1977; Katzenbach 1967; Sherman 1978; US Department of Justice 1998). Many stemmed from a "legalistic, paramilitary approach" to policing that resulted in alienation, and sometimes antagonism, towards the community (Rydberg and Terrill 2010, p. 95; see also: Palmiotto et al. 2000). The *Katzenbach Commission's* final report concluded that "it would only be through requirement of a college degree for police that we could expect a significant improvement in the quality of service provided by law enforcement agencies" (Hayeslip 1989, p. 49). With little empirical evidence to support it, subsequent government funding in the form of the *Law Enforcement Education Program* facilitated an explosion in the number of criminal justice programs at colleges and universities throughout the decades of the 1960s and 70s (Rydberg and Terrill 2010; Sherman 1978).

Increasingly sophisticated research on police education has been conducted from the 1970s onward, much of it focused on America (Brown 2020; Parker et al. 1976; Paterson 2011). The findings of that scholarship are disparate (Worden 1990), although there is general consistency in that higher education is thought to beneficially impact

police officers (Brown 2020; Chronister et al. 1982; Hayeslip 1989; Heath 2011; Lee and Punch 2004; Paoline and Terrill 2007; Paterson 2011; Polk and Armstrong 2001; Roberg 1978; Roberg and Bonn 2004; Rydberg and Terrill 2010; Taylor 1983) no matter what their field of study happens to be (Carlan 2007; Cascio 1977; Champion 1995; Guller 1972; Lester 1979; Matyas 1980; Smith and Aamodt 1997; Telep 2011). It was also shown that university educated police officers have reduced numbers of complaints against them (Paoline and Terrill 2007; Roberg and Bonn 2004; Thompson and Payne 2019) and are more likely to report unethical conduct (Shernock 1992). although research is mixed regarding its impact on the use of force (Chapman 2012; Lim and Lee 2015; Paoline and Terrill 2007; Rydberg and Terrill 2010; Sherman and Blumberg 1981). Additionally, university education was shown to benefit more highly placed police decisionmakers (Hays et al. 2007; Lim and Lee 2015). Much of the variation in prior research has been attributed to the use of differing research methodologies, which is beyond the scope of this paper (Brown 2020; Hayeslip 1989; Paterson 2011; Rydberg and Terrill 2010; Sanders 2003). However, several scholars have noted that benchmarks to test the efficacy of education have been mis-specified, resulting in varying operationalizations of policing's goals and the qualities pertinent to 'good' officers (Brown 2020; Sanders 2003). Hayeslip (1989) suggested that these "artifactual errors" exaggerate differences between studies and hinder meta-analysis of overall findings (p. 53).

Additional research has examined the effect of higher education on police attitudes, specifically: authoritarian attitudes (Austin and O'Neill 1985; Owen and Wagner 2008; Parker et al. 1971; Smith et al. 1967, 1970); attitudes towards ethics (Bjerregaard and Lord 2004; Shernock 1992; Telep 2011); and attitudes towards the public (Hays et al. 2007; Miles-Johnson and Pickering 2018; Weiner 1974). Prior research also explored educational impacts on police job satisfaction (Cross and Hammond 1951; Dantzker 1998; Fischer et al. 1985; Hudzik 1978; Miller and Fry 1976; Paoline et al. 2015) and officers' differing perceptions of higher education (Baker et al. 2017; Edwards 2019; Johnston and Cheurprakobkit 2002; Jones 2016; Lee and Punch 2004). Other research explored differences in pedagogy, comparing police training with other educational models (i.e., liberal arts, problem solving or andragogical models) (Basham 2014; Birzer 2003; Blumberg et al. 2019; Campbell 2009; Heslop 2011; Nikolou-Walker & Meaklim 2007; Peace 2006; White and Heslop 2012; Williams and Robinson 2004; Wood and Sereni-Massinger 2016), and comparing international approaches (Brown 2020; Déverge 2016; Paterson 2011; Stanislas 2014; Wimshurst and Ransley 2007).

2 US police training

Police training in the US is varied, even within individual states and academies. Despite this, there are some commonalities across institutions – most training begins

in a police academy, and is then followed by a period of field training (Blumberg et al. 2019; Buehler 2021; Reaves 2016). Some police training is paramilitary in organization, where trainers are "indistinguishable from military drill sergeants, who verbally harass and, even demean recruits", forcing them to undergo a number of stress inducing scenarios ostensibly to 'toughen them up' for field work (Blumberg et al. 2019; p. 3). A 2013 Department of Justice report on training across 664 "state and local law enforcement academies" disclosed that nearly half employed "a training model that was more stress than nonstress oriented in its approach" (Reaves 2016; p. 1); a revised report in 2018 (n = 769 academies surveyed) disclosed that figure had fallen to 22.5 %, with more than half of the academies balancing stress and nonstress training methods (Buehler 2021). Basic training is categorized into five general content areas: operations (accounting for approximately 32 % of basic training), weapons/defensive tactics (20 %), legal matters (10 %), community policing (8 %), self-improvement (13 %), and special topics (17 %); basic and field training for all state and local academies lasts 833 and 508 h on average, respectively (Buehler 2021). Some of the content areas are considered 'perishable' which necessitates ongoing training, some organized by national entities like the Department of Justice and FBI (Blumberg et al. 2019). Importantly, "ethics and integrity" training accounts for a mere 1 % of overall basic training (n = 8 h) (Buehler 2021; pp. 9–10); a subsequent analysis of ethics and ethics-related courses in 39 states by Cohen (2022) replicated this in finding that, on average, they "constitute *only* 1.27 % (8.14 h) of the entire basic training program hours" on average (p. 295; emphasis in original). Despite supplemental elective training programs and materials made available by national entities like the FBI and DOJ (Nowicki 1994) – and although standards boards for policing exist in every state – there are no federally mandated national standards for police training or education in the US, most police departments only require new officers to hold a high school diploma, and training is much quicker than in most other developed countries (Blumberg et al. 2019; Buehler 2021; Horton 2021; Institute for Criminal Justice Training Reform 2021; Reaves 2016).

In the literature examining police training and education, 'critical thinking' is described as being employed in a vocational, pragmatic context distinct from HRCT. Often, 'critical thinking' references the workaday aspects of police investigations (for example, contemplating alternative explanations for criminal events); sometimes it references urgently choosing between alternate courses of action (Apeh and Sulaiman 2020; Makin 2016). Further, 'critical thinking' is sometimes used synonymously with reflective contemplation of one's daily life experiences (Christopher 2015; Nikolou-Walker and Meaklim 2007). Outside of existing police training, critical thinking has been described as "a defining characteristic of a university graduate" (Phillips and Bond 2004, p. 277). Peach and Clare summarize critical thinking as "reflected in the systematic evaluation of argument and reason" (2017, p. 50). Put

tersely, critical thinking is a "rigorous and systematic way of thinking" that "deepens our understandings of lived experiences" (Bergman 2017, p. 69).

3 Benefits of historically reflexive critical thinking

Despite variations in methodology and findings, prior research suggests that pedagogy akin to HRCT may improve the use of discretion (Finckenauer 1975; Marenin 2004; Rydberg and Terrill 2010). The change in thinking that comes from critically evaluating a situation – including its historical and social contingencies – may empower officers to consider the equity of their interactions in a more nuanced manner, critical in an occupation whose defining characteristic has been described as 'the possibility of using force' (Bittner 1970; Sherman 1978). Furthermore, Wood and Sereni-Massinger (2016) found that "improved decision-making and education in critical thinking assists officers in questioning their biases and assumptions and can lend to de-escalation and community safety" (p. 140; see also: Safi and Burell 2007). The connections between critical thinking and use of force are worthy of further exploration given the ubiquity of assumptions (and myths) regarding crime and justice (Durham 1992; Kappeler and Potter 2017). In considering discretion, "the trick, of course, is in finding the right mix such that honoring discretion does not put police beyond the law and responsible political control, while regulating discretion does not introduce undue rigidity" (Marenin 2004; p. 109; see also, Marx 1998). Additionally, HRCT may remove a source of alienation for police by illuminating connections between their role, the law, and perceptions of legitimacy – the latter being both a significant concern in prior research and critical for democracy (Brown 2020; Christopher 2015; Sherman 1978).

HRCT looks to expand education beyond a focus on the parochial, workaday aspects of policing, addressing the many prior calls for increased professionalization. As one example, the 1975 American Bar Association *Advisor Committee on the Urban Police Function* recommended a liberal arts education for police to better develop "the moral values needed for a commitment to public service" (Sherman 1978, p. 35). Such a pedagogy could also "positively influence an officer's appreciation of and commitment to democratic values" including upholding human rights (Rydberg and Terrill 2010, p. 112; see also: Kratcoski 2004). Compatible with some aspects of critical race theory (Bornstein et al. 2012), HRCT enables exploration of what Peach and Clare (2017) call the "moral dimension" of global citizenship, "which emphasizes an allegiance to humanity, human rights and sense of responsibility and obligation to others" (p. 47) by understanding that "rights and responsibilities are reflective of concerns that go beyond individual interest to serve a broader sense of social good" (p. 48). HRCT illuminates the historical underpinnings of an 'us versus them' police

culture, potentially illustrating "ways to help future police officers empathize with those they are meant to serve – citizens." (Boivin et al. 2020; p. 58).

Despite many potential positive contributions, one possible area of critique concerns the extent to which the critical lens of HRCT makes finding police recruits more difficult. Prior research on whether discourse critical of policing impacts the recruitment process is mixed. Employing differing methodologies, Todak (2017) found students increasingly motivated by a critical focus on policing, while Morrow et al. (2019) found the contrary. HRCT is intended to develop officers' understanding of society and the law, increasing empathy towards marginalized groups to benefit police-community relations; as such, it "may offset or at least partially mitigate the stream of negative publicity that often accompanies high-profile police shootings, which in turn, may be beneficial for police hiring and recruitment purposes" (Morrow et al. 2019; p. 600). Thus, HRCT is meant to indirectly address the negative publicity that has contributed to a reluctance on the part of potential police recruits by positively contributing to perceptions of police legitimacy (Déverge 2016; Paterson 2011).

The potential benefits of HRCT should not be construed as suggesting that reflexive critical thinking is always possible given the urgency of some situations, particularly those that Bergman (2017) characterized as "acute or dangerous", because in those situations "a police officer must rely on training and instinct, setting aside fear and sympathy" (p. 84). Although an important consideration in the context of urgent individual agency, this concern is negligible given Barker's (2011) suggestion that these situations are relatively infrequent, in that "crime fighting comprises only a small portion of the officer's typical day in the field", and that "as much as 90 % of an officer's time is spent on service-related calls" (p. 30). Instead, HRCT concerns police education aimed at developing a more nuanced understanding of past policy and practice, increasing empathy to counter what Bergman referred to as "the destructive streetcop culture that undermines police professionalism" (2017, p. 69; see also: Chan et al. 2003).

4 Resistance to higher education for police

In their analysis of social networks and their contributions to the 'thin blue line', Doreian and Conti (2017) report that training and education reform has been considered for so long that they are sometimes referenced as an inside joke amongst police leaders. However, change has been languid, particularly in the US (Baro and Burlingame 1999; Brown 2020; Carter et al. 1989; Cohen 2022; Paterson 2011; Roberg and Bonn 2004; Sherman 1978).

Paterson (2011) noted that "part of the reason for the lack of reform is the resistance from police officers to academic study in what is regarded as a

practice-focused vocation" (p. 4). Police resistance to critical thinking and reflection was documented in some of the earliest studies on the subject (Niederhoffer 1967; Roberg and Bonn 2004; Sparling 1975) and widely reported in the intervening time (Bergman 2017; Christopher 2015; Karp and Stenmark 2011; Phelps et al. 2018). In a study of Swedish police, Bergman (2017) observed a "resistance to soft values, such as reflective activities, which must be overcome" (p. 84). Christopher (2015) and Manning (2005) noted the hypocrisy of police unions supporting professionalism to increase salaries while simultaneously rejecting changes to training and education.

However, despite a unifying culture, police resistance to increased education is not ubiquitous. Johnston and Cheurprakobkit (2002) reported that twenty five percent of police administrators found police academy training inadequate, while nearly 75 % thought college education *alone* would suffice. Compatible with HRCT, they noted a demand for courses in "ethics, morality and decision making", further clarifying these as "topics that are infrequently found in academy programmes" (2002, p. 193). The differential resistance to higher education is perhaps related to differences in police subculture, which Regoli (1976) identified as: professionals calling for increased education to "clean up law enforcement so that police personnel will be respected by the public" (p. 345), and "conservative 'old core' police officers who are skeptical of change" and feel threatened by a perceived loss of power (p. 340).

Resistance to higher education for police has also come from within academia itself (Brown 2020; Clear 2001; Paterson 2011). White and Heslop (2012) noted that "police education appears to be marginalized by both the academy and the profession" and that there were "few opportunities for the creation of critical spaces" (p. 354). Criminal justice programs have been critiqued by academics "as prima facie evidence of the willingness of higher education to 'surrender' to market demands for 'relevant', 'practical' courses that provide the credentials sought by increasingly vocationally-oriented students" (Flanagan 2000; p. 2; see also: Peach 2012; Peach and Clare 2017). Manning (2005) found criminal justice programs generally devoid of critical content, showing "little concern for ethics, justice, or equality in the field at large" with few focusing on the "consequences of growing, government-backed, and supported, massive inequality in a capitalist society and its ultimately eroding effects on the democratic ethos" (p. 37).

5 Vocational and intra-professional higher education

Despite acceptance of many ideas and in light of some resistance, Sherman (1978) lamented that "the reformers' vision of the kind of education needed to change the police has been all but forgotten" (p. 38), explicating:

> In the rapid expansion of police education programs, the objectives and content that Vollmer and others proposed for police education have been left behind in favor of more parochial concerns. The realities of police education are now a far cry from the vision. (p. 38)

Even in the few states that recommend higher education, there are conditions that attenuate critical thinking. For example, some allow for the substitution of coursework with vaguely defined 'relevant' or 'military' experience, the latter anything but a bastion of critical thinking. Sherman's (1978) report on the *Katzenbach Commission* concluded that "although there is a need for vocational training, it is not and cannot be a substitute for a liberal arts education" (p. 35), further citing a declaration from the *International Association of Chiefs of Police* that policing should be eschewed "by those unencumbered by a study of the liberal arts" (in: Tamm 1962, p. 5). A tendency towards vocationalism is concerning given Weiner's (1974) discovery that it nullified the benefits of university education, and the substitution of higher education requirements raises questions about the nature of those experiences and the extent to which they impact reflexive critical thinking.

Another attenuating condition concerns the impact of intra-professional education (conducted by practitioners), particularly when programs are comprised primarily (or even solely) of 'insiders' who have worked within the criminal justice system (Bergman 2017). Barker noted that intra-professional programs are often designed "to erase all individuality and replace it with the mentality that team processes and collaborative decision-making is paramount to the success of being a police officer in the field" (2011, p. 24); to Basham (2014), this encourages "mimicry" to the detriment of independent critical thinking (p. 100). In his examination of higher education institutions (HEI) in England, Jones (2016) cautioned:

> A central criticism of some HEI programmes to date is that their relationship with individual police forces is too close, and that their syllabuses are steered by police expectations around training and efficiency, rather than the critical and exploratory ethos of higher education (p. 234).

Given the lack of uniform federally mandated educational standards for US police (Blumberg et al. 2019; Buehler 2021; Horton 2021; Institute for Criminal Justice Training Reform 2021) and "the resistance from police officers to academic study in what is regarded as a practice-focused vocation" (Paterson 2011, p. 4), the quality of existing pedagogy merits scholarly attention. Buehler (2021) reported that 70 % percent of all academies required trainers to possess previous law enforcement experience, while only 32 % required educational experience beyond a high school diploma (or its equivalent); 35 % had no educational prerequisites for trainers at all. This perhaps makes the findings of Cohen's (2022) analysis of the quality of ethics education unsurprising. Employing a typology developed by Bowman et al. (2001)

that differentiated between "the low road, punitive, stay-out-of-trouble versus the high road, preventive, how-to-do-right-things approach" to teaching ethics (p. 198); Cohen found 100 % of states employed the 'low road' approach (2022; p. 297). Wimshurst and Ransley were critical of intra-professional education, arguing that these programs have made it "far from clear that it can contribute towards making police organizations significantly more diverse, representative and accountable" (2007, p. 120). As such, intra-professional education may hamper students' critical evaluation of the justice system, decreasing a likelihood of them catalyzing meaningful change (Brown 2020; Lee and Punch 2004; Wimshurst and Ransley 2007).

Intra-professional deficiencies in critical discourse may arise because a practitioner focus on the workaday aspects of policing tacitly presents an agnostic view of the extent to which political ideology and economic considerations (for example) shape the law (Dallier 2022), which in turn impacts the police role (Carlan 2007). Williams and Robinson (2004) describe this ideological agnosticism as both incompatible with the ideals of a liberal arts education and fundamentally lacking in integrity. In addition, intra-professional education has been shown to foster an 'us versus them' mindset contributing to bias (Boivin et al. 2020), which "can be problematic: as many police organizations remind us, officers should 'serve and protect' the public, which implies understanding of and empathy for the majority of the community" (p. 49; see also: Allport 1955). This mentality contradicts what has been learned from research on the efficacy of community-oriented policing, in addition to stimulating more aggressive interactions with the public (Boivin et al. 2020; see also: Blumberg et al. 2019; Ellis 1991; Skogan 2006).

6 Demonstration of HRTC using two disparate historical events

America's racialized approach to justice embodied in slave patrols, convict leasing, chain gangs, and Jim Crow (for example) points towards a sustained and profound lack of impactful reflexive critical thinking on the part of practitioners. This is perhaps an unexceptional part of the human condition, since many other historical examples point towards a puzzling silent complicity with unjust, antihumanitarian activities. Two will be considered, selected because they lie at the end-of-a-continuum regarding the grave injustices facilitated by conditions associated with existing police training regimens: dehumanization of others, 'us v. them' thinking, and a hierarchical and militaristic chain of command (Allport 1955; Feldman and Seibel 2005; Zimbardo 2011). Due to space limitations, the consideration of historical details will be brief and incomplete: one is somewhat distal from the practice of

policing (although not police training and hierarchical organization), while the other concerns the actions of police, albeit not in America. The two historical events under consideration – the My Lai massacre and police activity in the Holocaust – illustrate the dangers of noncritically following orders, legal or otherwise, in the absence of impactful reflexive critical thought on their moral implications.

The massacre in My Lai, Vietnam involved the rape and murder of 500 unarmed civilians by ordinary American soldiers in 1968, who acted on orders that they were engaging enemy forces despite a lack of resemblance (Jones 2017; Kelman and Hamilton 2008). Concealed by the military, the massacre would never have been discovered were it not for the actions of a young soldier morally disturbed upon hearing a secondhand account of it. Widespread publication of photos verified that account to an increasingly cynical US population, which prompted little institutional change aside from an increased focus on public relations (Cookman 2007). Although the military would eventually employ independent oversight of some policies (Hajjar 2014), issues of morality remained largely unconsidered (Roberts et al. 2016). In terms of justice, a singular conviction (with a reduced sentence) and several courts martial meant legal accountability would remain elusive (Davanzo 1997)- the massacre becoming rationalized and perhaps normalized over time (Oliver 2003).

Although My Lai occurred in the context of war, there are lessons that apply to contemporary policing. Despite many differences (police have more discretion at their disposal, for example), US police characterize some of their activities as war (e.g., 'war on drugs'). Furthermore, there are similarities found in police training and organization along militaristic, hierarchical chains of command (Blumberg et al. 2019; Buehler 2021), which is concerning because "to a considerable extent, armies have an interest in diminishing the critical capacities necessary for the ethical sensitivity, reasoned discussion, and public expression of preferences that, ideally, characterize a democratic citizenry" (Doris and Murphy 2007, p. 39). My Lai also highlights the extent to which the power of obedience to authority can override inhibitions (Burger 2009; Milgram 1969), even when they arise from direct sensory experience (Jones 2017). Additionally, the massacre illustrates the dangers emanating from an 'us versus them' mindset, which can contribute to the dehumanization of others and an increased likelihood of perpetrating violence (Lankford 2009; Zimbardo 2011), all the more troubling given the existence of the 'thin blue line' delineating police from non-police culture (Doreian and Conti 2017).

The second historical example refers to the role of police in the Holocaust. Christopher Browning's Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland (1992) examined normal police officers who were conscripted to murder more than 80,000 men, women, and children in occupied Poland. They were not selected on the basis of any unique characteristics but were drawn from a disparate assemblage of Hamburg, Germany's working-class citizens; consequently,

they were neither remarkably anti-Semitic nor exceptionally prone to violence. While the nature of their work contrasts sharply with policing in twentieth-first century America, the contrast is less dramatic when juxtaposed with America's antecedent forms of policing (e.g., slave patrols).

Despite many differences, one relevant aspect of Browning's scholarship concerns its focus on violence perpetrated by non-pathological (i.e., normal) individuals. Compatible with Arendt's (1963) 'banality of evil' thesis and significant scholarship on the widespread participation and complicity necessary for implementation of the Holocaust (Aly and Heim 2002; Browning 1983; Gouri 2004; Hilberg 1985; Mulisch and Dwork 2005), Browning discomfortingly shows that police battalion 101 lacked the ideological commitments and personal pathologies often invoked as a cause of murderous, genocidal behavior. Browning's (1992) research is also relevant to policing in cautioning about the dangers of hierarchy, which have been shown to foster obedience independent of morality (Milgram 1969; Waller 2007). Furthermore, the persecution of Jews, Roma, political dissidents, members of the LGBTQIA+ community (and others) was legally and economically rationalized (Aly and Heim 2002) in much the same way that slavery, convict leasing, chain gangs, and Jim Crow apartheid were legally and economically rationalized. And there are striking behavioral similarities found in the silence of those complicitous with the Final Solution and the otherwise normal officers complicit with the 'blue wall of silence' (Chin and Wells 1998).

7 Discussion

HRCT aims to educate police officers about past injustices to increase empathy and understanding, changing hearts and minds by intellectually empowering them to consider the equitable and just treatment of marginalized groups, crucial given the authoritarianism, insularism, and cynicism prevalent amongst students of policing. To accomplish this, HRCT must incorporate analysis of the power differentials influencing law creation, vital to understanding America's historically racialized approach to criminal justice. A police education that eschews this risks equating legality with morality; even if implicit, doing so legitimizes profoundly antihumanitarian and immoral approaches to justice. Williams and Robinson (2004) found that most criminal justice texts overlook these sorts of issues, lamenting that "students who are not exposed to such topics will never understand the realities of criminal justice practice" (p. 282).

Discourse on police education would benefit from a greater empirical analysis of the extent to which it incorporates reflexive critical thinking. Despite Clear's (2001) declaration that "the day of the 'cop shop' is long past" (p. 722), the extent and impact

of intra-professional education for police should be quantified, focusing on the factors that shape HRCT. Where requirements mandate a mere high school diploma for trainers, or where intra-professional education is pervasive, one ought to question the extent of HRCT on, for example, the ideological contributors to legal codification or the ramifications of police power for democracy. Further research should explore pedagogical differences in critical thinking between intra-professional and traditional programs in higher education, assessing whether length of time as an 'insider' or degree of institutional embeddedness (i.e., rank) correlate with HRCT.

HRCT in policing pedagogy is vital because "policing remains relatively unique as a profession with only one entry point for those aspiring to the top job: as a recruit starting at the bottom and working one's way up" (Roberts et al. 2016, p. 27). As future leaders, police traineees should possess a nuanced understanding of the moral, ethical and strategic failures of prior policy. That education appears to increase ethicality and the likelihood of reporting unethical conduct is an important additional consideration. Further, HRCT mirrors pedagogical advancements in other disciplines (i.e., social work, medicine, and law) that critique prior practice, which Paterson reasoned "provides a significant progression towards the professionalization of police learning through a shift from a technical focus on competencies towards a more reflexive appreciation of the complexity of the police role" (2011, p. 13). As such, the HRCT considered in this paper is a call for discourse on past injustices to better inform our approach to justice in the future.

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