

# The Most Effective CPAs - What Does the Research Show?

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# CPA Origins Quiz

**QUESTION:** Where was the first CPA created?

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**ANSWER:** In England at the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary in what was called the Police Night School.

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# CPA Origins Quiz

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# CPA Origins Quiz

**QUESTION:** When was the first CPA created?

**ANSWER:** 1977

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# CPA Origins

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- 70 original participants met once per week for 10 sessions.
- Police instructors learned how little community members understood about the criminal justice system.
- Spread throughout England and to the U.S. in 1985.

# First CPA in America

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- 1985: Orlando (Florida) PD.
- 10 three-hour weekly sessions.
- Added an officer ride-along and a modified firearms course.

# The Spread of CPAs

- Orlando PD reported the success of the CPA, and...
- Other law enforcement agencies quickly developed programs using Orlando's template.
- LEAs in Florida, Texas, and Colorado added scenario-based simulations, demonstrations, facility tours, firearms familiarization, emergency vehicle driving, and other specialized topics and activities.



# CPAs Look Different in Every Community

- CPAs operated differently based on staffing, facilities, and community interests.
- Some CPAs were one or two full days, usually on weekends.
- Others operated once weekly for a few hours during the evening for up to 13 weeks.
- Common topics have remained consistent over the past 40 years.

# CPAs Look Different in Every Community

- Raffel (2005) observed, *“While they share common curricula, CPAs acclimate citizens to the culture and norms of their own individual departments”* (p. 86).
- NCPAA National Coordinator Certification and National Advanced Coordinator Certification programs?

# CPA Alumni Associations

- Aurora (Colorado) Citizen's Police Academy Alumni Association: *"We are proud that our members are fulfilling that mission by volunteering more than 5,000 hours each year in support of the Aurora Police Department"* (Todd, 2010, p. 5).
- 125-member Westerville (Ohio) CPA Alumni Association: Logged more than 7,000 hours in volunteering roles in their community (Manning, 2011).

# CPAs and Police Legitimacy

- Community member involvement can lead to greater police legitimacy.
  - Jury participation, civil litigation, and reporting crime as victims and witnesses.
  - Public safety advocacy: bond proposals, letters of support, and editorials featured in news media outlets.

# CPAs and Police Legitimacy

- Richardson (Texas) Police Department VIPS program.
- Recruited volunteers from the CPA, CPA alumni association, and local senior center.
- Findings: Motivation for community volunteerism is often related to a prior connection to a police-related encounter.
- Other themes: Rewards in the form of prestige from participation and the personal meaning of service to the volunteers.

# Early (1990s) East Syracuse (NY) Study

- Pre-test, mid-course, and post-test surveys.
- Four themes:
  - An improved understanding of police officer capabilities and professionalism.
  - Support for police training and education.
  - Less confidence in anti-police rhetoric and media reports.
  - Willingness to cooperate with police on public safety matters.

# First Academic Study: Ellen Cohn (1996)

- CPA Program Evaluation in Metro-Dade.
- **Findings: Without structured follow-up activities, involvement and “other positive benefits of the CPA may diminish with time” (p. 271).**
- Touted Metro-Dade’s innovative CPA alumni association as a mechanism to maintain the relationships between CPA graduates and police.

# Bumphus et al., 1999 Study of Nationwide CPAs

- **Study of** 735 police departments and sheriffs' offices.
- *Are CPAs designed to increase public relations, decrease crime, or both?*
- *Are CPAs concerned about building stronger alliances with citizens who traditionally are distrustful of the police?*



# Bumphus et al., 1999 Study of Nationwide CPAs

- Findings: There was not sufficient evidence to support that CPAs prevented or reduced criminal activity or increased crime reporting.
- Critical of the CPAs that emphasized tactical police strategies as a possible distortion of policing, a public relations ploy, results that diametrically oppose community policing.

# Bumphus et al., 1999 Study of Nationwide CPAs

- Why agencies may include SWAT as part of their CPA.
- Speculated: Police selectively targeted their audience as a superficial public relations scheme by excluding some community members, including juveniles, young adults under age 21, and those with arrest records.
- Conclusion: Many CPA practices contradict broader community policing goals of improving relationships with historically marginalized groups.
- Criticized CPAs as *“simply window dressing to enhance the police image.”*


# Why Cincinnati's (Ohio) CPAs Have Been Successful

*“For a lot of departments, organizing a Citizen Police Academy is a nice public relations gesture and not much more. Yet properly structured and targeted programs can become a powerful teaching tool increasing community understanding of force issues and helping to bridge the racial divide between police and minority citizens. The time and effort spent in a well-designed CPA may be one of the best investments police leaders can make.” (p. 51)*

# Aryani (2000) Affirmed Rahtz's Conclusions



The success of CPAs depends on well-designed curricula, organized and engaged coordinators, vetted and charismatic instructors, course evaluations, and an evolving program.



# Jordan (2000) Findings With CPA Objectives

- Findings: Public education about policing (46%), community relationship building (43%), crime prevention, community relations, community policing, and volunteer development.
- Only 9% of agencies used CPAs to solicit community input about police activities and objectives.
- CPAs “appear to have a marked potential to inform citizens about the authority, practices, policies, and limitations of the police” (p. 93), but they often don’t achieve these goals.

# Jordan (2000) Findings With CPA Objectives

- Warned of the dangers of CPAs being coopted or corrupted for political gains and bureaucratic interests.
- The leadership role and relational dynamics of police-community partnerships differed across American jurisdictions.
- There was unequal decision-making between police and community members; power was tilted toward agency needs.

# Jordan (2000) Findings With CPA Objectives

- Findings: The amount of direct community influence over policing matters varied with noted resistance by law enforcement to engage in substantive community oversight.
- Community members should be able to provide useful recommendations to shape the police mission while helping to accomplish agency goals and objectives.
- Could garner efforts toward the co-production of public safety rather than one-way, police-led education.

# Stone and Champeny (2001) Findings

- Austin (Texas) PD: CPA favorably influenced graduate attitudes toward police and their resolve to assist with future crime prevention.
- 100% of graduates rated content from the CPA as valuable or very valuable, with the majority viewing police differently after completing the CPA program.



# Palmiotto and Unninthan (2002) Findings

- Findings: CPA graduates gained a better understanding of police practices, which augmented previous positive views toward law enforcement **BUT....**
- The potential for the “preaching to the choir” effect based on the high percentage of CPA entrants who held favorable views before commencement.
- CPA program did not include economically disadvantaged community members or police critics.

# Palmiotto and Unninthan (2002) Findings

- Speculated why these populations might not participate regardless of law enforcement recruitment efforts.
- Potential reasons why some participants failed to graduate from the studied CPAs.
- Work and personal scheduling conflicts, loss of motivation when companions dropped out, and those who held skeptical or negative opinions of police didn't wish to continue and be among the majority of participants whose views of the police were enthusiastically improving as the sessions continued.

# Schafer and Bonello (2001) in Lansing MI

- Findings: CPAs attempted to dispel the inaccuracies of dramatic representation (CSI Effect).
- CPAs demonstrate reasonable police officer motivations in their daily activities while dispelling myths of officer ill-intent and prejudice.
- 74% of respondents viewed their assessment of media accounts differently after completing the CPA.
- Provided the CPA participants with a law enforcement lens of key policing issues.

# Schafer and Bonello (2001) in Lansing MI

- 87% of CPA graduates believed their knowledge about local crime and safety issues increased.
- 92% believed they had a better understanding of local police activities.
- 87% appraised their understanding of department-initiated problem-solving initiatives had improved.
- 98% of survey respondents noted that they told others about their experiences during the CPA.

## Schafer and Bonello (2001) in Lansing MI

*“I was uninformed before and basically a ‘conscientious objector’ against violence. Now, I understand how much control and restraint the officers have in respect to their own actions and that the different levels of force allow for more control of their own actions.”*

# Morse (2012) Study - Public Administration Lens

- **Knowledge-sharing** must occur so that community members have a rudimentary level of understanding of local government functions as they participate in civic activities.
- **Reciprocating dialogs** between government staff and community members.

# Morse (2012) Study - Public Administration Lens

## - Three Conclusions

- The potential to develop requisite community member abilities to participate in the governance process.
- Better community leadership and democratic participation will result when meaningful public participation opportunities are created.
- Community capacity and social capital can proliferate with increased opportunities for meaningful two-way conversations.

# Raffel's (2002) Study

- People have minimal contact with police, leaving media as a key mechanism to socially construct reality through news accounts, fictional drama, reality television, and docu-dramas.
- Resonance can occur when media accounts present similar life experiences.
- The need for community members to have alternative venues to shape existing but incomplete reality construction through interactions with relevant and verifiable experiences.
- The public needs accurate context and meaning related to violent confrontations between police and community members.



# Raffel's (2002) Study

*“Police belong to the branch of government most associated with ‘legitimized violence,’ so stories about police misconduct receive considerable coverage for that reason. However, if citizens do not understand the basics of police work, they will not have realistic standards to decide whether acts of violence are justified or not. In cases where force is over-utilized, public opinion can serve as a restraining force to prevent future abuses” (Raffel, 2000, p. 14).*

# Raffel's (2002) Five Conclusions

- **The law enforcement agency created opportunities for dialogue in the sessions.**
  - Interact with police instructors in non-emergency situations, where participants and officers were able to ask questions and share information and perspectives with the larger group.
- **A credible framework for members to discern the reasonableness of police conduct.**
  - Good leadership exhibited by the chief of police, a clear agency mission with written and followed policies, high standards for officer selection and training, effective supervision and accountability, a culture of procedurally just police behavior, effective crime control, and clear communication with the public and media.

# Raffel (2002) Five Conclusions

- **Accurate and transparent narratives of how police departments operate while offering opportunities for participants to experience what is shared in the classroom.**
  - Critical thinking manifests when cohort members compare classroom material to past and new experiences.
  - Ride-alongs and engaged in realistic shoot-or-no-shoot scenarios, which enabled them to experience the stressful situations of police officers.

# Raffel (2002) Five Conclusions

- **Demonstrated how police violence is restrained to critical situations.**
  - Through classroom presentations, discussions, scenario-based experiences, and the ride-along experience.
  - Participants heard why police practices are lawful and necessary; they learned how police prevent, intervene in, and investigate criminal behavior.
- **The ability of graduates to participate and volunteer in future public safety-related activities.**

# Grant's (2003) Study of Knoxville Tennessee CPA

- Findings matched Cohn's (1996) research.
- Those who responded to the survey expressed a desire to bolster their understanding of law enforcement duties and challenges.
- Feedback from many respondents also included extending the CPA to 16 weeks and allowing more time in classes for questions and dialog.

# Brewster et al. (2005) Study Conclusions

- In both police departments, CPA participants felt they had a better understanding of policing issues.
- Results indicated that further positive shifts in attitudes occurred for many of the participants.
- CPA graduates believed police received enough training to be effective in their jobs.
- Message amplification might justify the costs of this type of resource-intensive program, given the small number of community members who participate.

# Breen and Johnson (2007) Study Michigan sheriff's office

Findings: The transparency of the CPA provided a “realistic overview of police work” that reduced policing misperceptions and helped participants understand the realities and limitations of their law enforcement agency.

Concerned about the potential for the “preaching to the choir effect.”

# Delice et al. (2010) Study

## Louisville PD CPA

- Findings: Need better outreach for those who begin the sessions with less favorable attitudes, including younger participants.
- Highlighted the potential barriers to CPA involvement.
- The LPD required participants to complete an application and background check, be at least age 21, have residential or employment ties to the community, and have no felony convictions or outstanding warrants, which have the potential of producing a chilling effect on participation.



# Lee (2016b) Study

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“Citizen police academies can be good tools for police departments to enhance public relations, community education, and community partnerships.”

# Boateng (2020) Study Findings

## Oxford Police Department

- Significant improvement in public awareness of police activities and programs.
- Improved the perception of police fairness, perception of community member treatment by police, willingness to cooperate with police, and how the public appraises police-related media reports.

# Perez et al. (2022 Study Findings

- Is there longevity in participant knowledge and officer perceptions after completing a CPA?
- Is there a relationship between CPA-acquired knowledge and views of police officers six months after completing a CPA?
- Perez and colleagues conducted a study of 14 1-day, 8.5-hour CPAs in a sizeable southwestern city in the United States.

# Perez et al. (2022 Study Findings

- CPA graduates had more favorable views of police veracity, trustworthiness, and accountability.
- More knowledge about policing did not impact perceptions of police conduct, indicating that other factors drive these views.

# Perez et al. (2022 Study Findings

- Much of the positive impact found between the pre-test and post-test surveys diminished six months later in the responses within the follow-up surveys of CPA graduates.
- Opinions about police officer veracity, misconduct, and accountability were significantly lower.
- CPA graduate perceptions of force and misconduct failed to correlate with knowledge of police practices six months after CPA participation.



Questions and Discussion





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