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ACCLIMATING TO THE MAYHEM:
FIELD TRAINING OFFICERS' PERSPECTIVES OF NEW POLICE RECRUITS
FROM A PROBLEM BASED LEARNING ACADEMY

by

STEVEN J. AMEY

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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MAJOR: EDUCATIONAL DESIGN AND
TECHNOLOGY

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Greg Vander Kooi, Ph.D.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to those who believed in my academic pursuit all along. It was a journey filled with ups and downs that eventually led to this point of completion. I thank you, Krystal, for your understanding and for the time you allowed me to seclude myself. I also would like to dedicate this to my children, Karson, Sabrina and Savannah, who have missed time with Dad due to this research process. My two oldest have asked me several times if I have more homework to do. I am done with my homework now, so I can fully help you with yours. Please always remember that Dad loves you and will be here, physically or in spirit, to help you reach your goals in life. I would be hard pressed not to mention my support animals, Margo, Murlin, Smoky, and Lucy; you always seemed to come around at just the right time. Your companionship helped make this process easier, and although our lifespans differ, I will never forget any of you.

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I would like to specifically praise my dissertation chair, Dr. Monika Tracey, for guiding me to completion. You always had the right motivational speech to keep this process going forward, even when redirect was necessary. Your continual support has evolved into a lifelong friendship. Please accept my gratitude, and know that I would not be at this point without you.

I also would like to thank Dr. Ke Zhang for her input and for the instruction she provided during the coursework stage. From you, I learned a lot about online learning, which I will implement in my own academic career. Likewise, I'd like to thank Dr. Sara Kacin for sharing her insights on how to complete this process. Your input truly has made this journey more complete.

I would like to express appreciation to my colleague, Dr. Greg VanderKooi. You have inspired me to complete this journey and educated me to more than this dissertation. The related connection from the separate law enforcement careers we both had, even though in different parts of the state, is uncanny. Undoubtedly, I feel that you and I could police the streets together today and still make a difference. I will always be grateful for your knowledge and friendship.

Steven J. Amey

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Training is a key component in any line of work. When a job entails complex duties, as is the case in policing, the amount and quality of training needs to increase to prepare the practitioners who perform it. Equally important is the method used to deliver the training, so new employees can better use, recall, and retain said training. In such a context, choosing the right approach among the many options is critical. This study examines the efficacy of Problem Based Learning.

Police academy recruits need a great amount of in-depth training in many complex and detailed areas. Recruits must address a multitude of core topics, such as accident investigation, motor vehicle code enforcement, criminal law and procedure, performance and pursuit driving, civil law, use of force, writing detailed reports, and criminal investigation, while on duty (MCOLES, 2010). The expected expertise of new recruits demands that they attain a basic understanding of the academy material in several core components.

Problem Based Learning (PBL) is an instructional learning style/teaching methodology that hones a lifelong skillset in problem solving (Savery, 2006) via six basic criteria (Barrows, 1996). First, it promotes a student-centered learning environment in which the responsibility for the work rests primarily on the shoulders of the students themselves. Second, learning must occur in small groups to better allow the interaction between participants to increase their communication skills. Third, teachers serve as facilitators. Fourth, the problem helps organize and provide focus and stimulus for a better learning experience. Fifth, better designed problems are more conducive to hone problem

solving. Sixth, PBL encourages the learner to discover new information own their own. These key six criteria offer a better definition of what problem based learning is for the purpose of this research.

PBL previously has been used successfully by medical professionals in a high stress emergency room environment where there is little or no room for error and limited time to act (Heading, Fuller, Lyle, & Lynne, 2007). Because policing decisions similarly occur in high stress, high stakes, and time sensitive environments, the governing body for training and granting licenses to police officers in Michigan, the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES), identified PBL as a potentially viable approach to train police recruits. It therefore developed a plan to infuse PBL into the training objectives of all police academies (MCOLES, 2010).

Ultimately, however, MCOLES failed to standardize PBL delivery methods for police academies (MCOLES, 2010). As a result, the choice of which methodology should be implemented in the police academy setting is still up to each training location. Although MCOLES' strategic plan is revisited from time to time, it has yet to identify which teaching methodology is needed in academy settings (MCOLES, 2013).

One Midwestern university has been using this learning methodology fulltime in its police academy across all core curriculums for more than ten years (Vander Kooi, 2006). As a consequence, the program has had phenomenal success for those police academy recruits who have been through this learning process.

Once successful police academy recruits leave the classroom, they enter field training where they are evaluated by field training officers (FTO). A rigorous review of the

extant literature revealed no research comparing recruits who have been through a problem based learning academy to graduates of programs that use different instructional methods. This gap gives rise to the following question: Are attributes emphasized in the PBL police academy, such as communication, critical thinking, and problem solving, observable by recent recruits' FTOs, and, if so, do FTOs observe a difference between PBL trained police recruits and a non-PBL trained police recruits?

Statement of the Problem

There are a number of current issues concerning learning strategies in a police academy setting. This particular Midwestern academy example features a problem based learning training environment to help develop new police recruits in many core areas. One of the areas focused on in this arena is the goal of new police recruits becoming better acquainted with the field training officer and to help further the development of police recruits in becoming proficient in their new occupation. To that end, I conducted interviews with 15 FTOs to help identify the attributes and skills new recruit police recruits need to be ready for their new police officer position. Although many of the topics addressed herein have been researched, discussed, and debated on their own, the field lacks research that examines them (specifically FTOs' perceptions in observing a new police recruit from a problem based police academy setting) in relationship to one another.

Moreover, research is lacking in the area of how well PBL prepares new police recruits for the job from the perspective of FTOs. Due to the recent publicity of law enforcement encounters, the public is demanding more transparency and accountability for officers' decisions. Understanding police officers' training is key. FTOs are responsible

for assisting in training new police recruits. Finding the goals and outcomes that need to be identified and the type of problem-based scenarios that need to be created for recruits would help focus training programs. I expect that developing educational materials based on FTOs' perceptions of what new recruits need may help new police officers adapt to the real life demands of the career. Moreover, I anticipate that PBL training will improve the decision making of police recruits.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to determine if PBL-trained new police officer recruits are better prepared for the job than those educated in more traditional methods. To that end, I sought the perceptions of FTOs, who are responsible for recognizing key working dispositions of newly employed police recruits. Ideally, I hoped to discern whether PBL is a more effective method of instruction for the police academy setting. Therefore, the following questions guided this research:

Q1: What are the field-training officers' perceptions of the educational training the police officer brings from the academy?

Q2: Are there observable differences in the preparedness of recruits from problem-based learning educational environments verses those trained from other educational environments and, if so, what are these differences?

Theoretical Constructs

As learners confront new ideas, they must be able to make meaning by assimilating it with their prior knowledge and lived experiences. They also must apply it, both within the immediate situation and by adapting it for new problems. Problem based learning helps

to stimulate better knowledge recall and longer retention for job skills as compared to traditional instructional methods (Strobel and van Barneveld, 2009). By leveraging lived experiences, a person can build upon existing knowledge, prioritizing what they deem important, whether negative or positive, for their own development (Eggen & Kauchak, 1999).

Constructivist based ideas are used to help hone the learner's development in constantly evolving or rapidly changing environments, which is a typical atmosphere for a newly hired recruit police officer. Equally important is the position of a facilitator in this process to help the newly hired police officer along. FTOs serve this role when they mentor neophyte recruit police officers in the beginning of their career.

Assumptions

Based on my training and experience with the law enforcement field and having trained several new officers, I offer some assumptions that influenced how I designed that study. First, I anticipate that FTOs will be able to notice perceptional differences in newly hired police recruits. Second, I expect that FTOs will be able to remember specific instances that may have occurred a few years ago. Finally, I anticipate that FTOs will willingly offer specific instances with as much accuracy as they can recall.

Study Rationale and Significance

New recruit officers are educated in numerous geographic locations in Michigan. Every police-training academy is expected to cover the same material and assure the new officer attains the same basic skills (MCOLES, 2015). FTOs do not have a direct link back to these educational locations to offer advice or suggestions on potential ways to alter or

improve the training. By gathering feedback from 15 FTOs on recruit preparedness, I hope to determine the efficacy of PBL for new recruit training and to begin facilitating reciprocity between field training officers and educational training institutions with the goal of better preparing recruits to enter the workforce.

Definitions and Key Terms

Affective domain: Bloom (1956) referred to this learning domain as related to emotions, feelings and attitudes.

Cognitive domain: Bloom (1956) referred to this learning domain as involving intellectual stimulation.

Confidence: Keller (2009) explained that "confidence is a complex concept that encompasses several motivational constructs ranging from those that explain perceptions of personal control and expectancy for success to the opposite extreme which is helplessness" (p.50).

Facilitator: An essential part for a person to help the learner develop further skills from acquired knowledge. A mentor set to guide a learner and construct their own knowledge by asking questions that lead to a better understanding of material (Salinitri, Wilhelm, & Crabtree, 2015).

Field Training Officer: An experienced officer who trains and evaluates new officers within his/her police department to prepare them for duty on their own (SJPD, 2017).

Ill-structured problem: Jonassen (1997) describes these problems as having "multiple solutions, solution paths, and fewer parameters, which are less manipulable and contain

uncertainty about which concepts, rules, and principles are necessary for the solution or how they are organized and which solution is best" (p.65).

Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES): The governing body that oversees the development of employment educational standards, training standards, pre-employment testing, post-employment testing, and licensing of all police officers in the state of Michigan (MCOLES, 2015).

Police Officer Recruit: A new person in training for a law enforcement career.

Problem Based Learning (PBL): Learning that requires the student to identify a problem and to focus on the main issue (Jonassen & Hung, 2008). Locating resources, implementing solutions, and assessing solutions to an ill-structured problem is included in a PBL curriculum.

Psychomotor Domain: Bloom (1956) referred to this learning domain as the motor function that happens after mental thought.

Regional Basic Training Academy: A training facility, which provides basic police training curriculum and trains police officer recruits in a typical 17 to 19 week session. An academic degree can be awarded in this setting as well as in certain training locations (MCOLES, 2015).

Zone of Proximal Development Vygotsky (1979) defined this as a zone of activity in which a person can produce, with assistance, what s/he cannot produce alone (or can only produce with difficulty)

Summary

This dissertation study examined FTO observations of police officer recruits trained in a PBL environment. Two questions drove this research:

1. What are field-training officers' perceptions of the educational training the police officer brings from the academy?

2. Are there observable differences in the preparedness of recruits from problem-based learning educational environments versus those trained from other educational environments, and, if so, what are these differences?

It is my expectation that FTOs' perceptions of new recruits trained within a PBL environment will expand our understanding of how to best prepare police academy students for the job.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter serves as a literature review on constructivism, problem based learning, and communication theory. The first section overviews constructivism and examines how a learner's environmental experience might affect how s/he interprets the knowledge being presented. Next, the PBL literature is explored as a stabilized platform to help facilitate the learning process. Third, Kolb's Learning Cycle design and research is extrapolated to a police academy setting.

Constructivism

Constructivists have long believed that the making of individuals relies on the knowledge they bring with them. Jonassen (1991) stated, "Constructivists claim that reality is more in the mind of the knower, that the knower constructs a reality, or at least interprets it, based upon his or her apperception" (p.10). Individualist ideas are said to be generated within learners' experiences, which allows them to form their own concrete connection to the real world (Jonassen, 1991). Jonassen also has argued "that the knowledge that is transmitted by the instructor may not be the knowledge that is constructed by the learner and instead of looking at learning outcomes that providing the right tools and environment could provide multiple learning perspectives" (p.12). In other words, during the instructional stage an instructor tries to convey meaning that the learner may process in a multitude of ways. The pedagogical approach must match the desired outcomes to ensure that the learner has the necessary resources to solve problems. Providing multiple resources can assist in this learning process.

In addition to this type of learning, a key aspect of the learner's development is involving them in an activity that hones their own learning. The design of learning activities is crucially important. Specifically, designing the problem to fit the exact training need helps to show the value in solving the problem. Such creation involves experience and has been referred to as an underlying theme crucial to the problem design. Kant (1959) stated in "*Critique of Pure Reason"* that

> but though all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that all arises out of experience. For it may well be that even our empirical knowledge is made up of what we receive through impressions and of what our own faculty of knowledge . . . supplies for itself. (p.25)

It is important to understand that experience allows a learner to make it through a similar situation even if the details of the circumstances unfolding are not exactly the same.

Dewey (1938) specifically discusses the need for learners to be active participants in the solution to the problem. The ability of learners to center themselves and find a solution to the problem is at the core of the constructivist theme. Some of the biggest advantages for a learner-centered environment were described and summarized by Glasgow (1959), as follows:

- Learners acquire the ability to evaluate their own strengths

- Learners determine their own needs and learn to meet them

- Learners adapt to the knowledge challenges and problems they will encounter in the future (p. 35).

If learners are to become problem solvers, they need to be presented with problems that are bound to specific environments. Future police recruits therefore need practice adapting to the unknown challenges a problem may present. If regurgitation of information or surface

learning is all that these new recruits have to draw upon, they will not be able to address it. As Ramsden (2003) has shown, learners who develop a deeper approach to the actual problem feel better about their completed work, create more meaningful completed assignments and have better academic achievement overall (p. 56). That achievement should transfer into better recruit problem solving.

Problem Based Learning

Past practices have shown that simply reviewing material is not enough for learning to occur. Bruner (1965) suggests that resources can help learners to develop, but they need to start with basic concepts and a strong foundation (Edgar Dale as cited in Dwyer, 2010). Then, as a student progresses, so too can the depth of the material presented. To get the best out of a scenario, an artificial environment should be as close to reality as possible. Furthering the basic foundation idea, communication theory uses both language and tools to help create those building blocks (Vygotsky,1934). What is difficult in a problem based learning environment is the ability not only to develop the structured problem in an attempt to implement it, but also to identify what exact goals/outcomes are needed. When considering these three factors (and committing them to long-term memory), it is important to outline the objectives that need to be developed. Similarly, Eisner (1967) advised that in this problem-based learning environment of an educational training background, objectives are hard to classify and even harder to layout when there is an unknown number of potential outcomes. With the plethora of potential scenarios a new police recruit may encounter, the problem needs to be molded to fit many specific areas. Moreover, in attempting to solve an ill-structured problem designing a specific answer into the scenario adds another

significant element when the solution could be multi-faceted depending on the route the learner chooses to solve the problem.

Maufette, Kandlbinder, and Soucisse (2004) have identified the instructor's ability to provide timely feedback and to build learners' confidence as key motivational factors for learners. The instructor's ability to design a problem by rewriting a real life event, an instructor has encountered, also is characteristic of problem based learning environments (Maufette et al. (2004). Baden and Wilke (2006) suggest that by doing so, instructors encourage learners to develop the knowledge, particular skills and behaviors necessary in specific situations (p. 18). Providing practice with identifying problems is used to hone learners' ability to apply what they learn in future situations. It is important to note that learners first should be exposed to simple problems to allow them time to transition from absorption to application. The more difficult the problem, the more important it is for the learner to have digested simple solutions initially (Mauffette et al., 2004).

Popham (2009) demonstrated the importance of learning or performance objectives. Learners need to know what they will learn and how they need to show it. Being able to identify what the learner should be able to complete after instruction is important and leads to retention of the material presented. To that end, Popham identified seven guidelines:

- Provide clearly written objectives that describe what a learner should be able to do after a lesson.

- Accept unforeseeable objectives.

- Identify what is adequate and accepted by the student for assessment purposes.

- Use measurable objectives.

- Employ minimal proficiency levels prior to instruction.

- Create taxonomies to determine and describe objectives.

- Select measurable objectives from pre-existing collections.

Popham (2009) further suggested that prior knowledge of a topic helps learners to understand additional information. As such, instructors need to assess the learner's prior knowledge base and determine pedagogical objectives that hone learners' cognitive, affective, psychomotor growth. Academy instructors must determine whether learners are at the right learning level before attempting to move to the next area of instruction, especially as the material and the potential outcomes become more complex.

Case-based scenarios based upon real-life situations are important tools for problem based learning. Keller (2010) researched nine trainees in a problem-based learning environment in his 2010 study. The program was delivered in three separate sessions over a four-day period. The first session dealt with identifying a problem and ways to gather information to then reexamine the original problem. The second session covered different variables in solving the problem. The third session was the evaluation phase, which was designed to promote discussion and collaboration in the group. The overall idea was to look at a better way to deliver service-based training. This qualitative study was based on in-depth interviews of learners and facilitators. It closely examined learners' confidence after the training concluded. Findings revealed that participants perceived PBL as an effective learning approach that left them feeling more confident.

This confidence factor is described in the Attention, Relevance, Confidence and Satisfaction (ARCS) Model of Motivational Design (Keller, 2010). It is difficult for instructors to accurately evaluate learning in a relaxed environment during a training scenario of a neophyte recruit. It is even more difficult for FTOs to gauge new recruits' confidence and preparedness for the police world coming straight out of a police academy. One of their biggest issues is the safety of one officer looking out for two people, the FTO and the new recruit. FTOs have a dual responsibility once they are tasked with training a new recruit. Adding a real-life experience to the academy training program may allow recruits to gain better confidence to make good decisions.

With these challenges in mind, Graaf (2003) suggested ways to design a problem-based scenario. These suggestions include to:

- Observe group sessions

- Interview students

- Interview the teaching staff

- Distribute a questionnaire

Interviews were conducted with both students and staff to assess the PBL scenarios, offering a way to assess the learning objectives developed and to determine if they have been met as well as to identify any adjustments needed for future training. Results suggested there was strong support for the PBL. They also showed that students were able to develop a better understanding of the course material when it was used (Graff, 2003, p. 34).

Interviews regarding confidence in Popham's (2009) study were done three weeks after the learners returned to their work environment. Findings revealed unanimous support for problem based learning in a natural environment. The learners explained that PBL offered a better and deeper understanding of the learning material in a real-world arena. Moreover, retention did not appear to differ across learners from small rural areas to larger urban areas. Learners were still able to retain and apply what they had been taught. Although one of the significant factors was the difference between a non-stressful and a highly stressful scenario, the study still supported the relationship between a well-structured problem and deeper retention (Heading, Fuller, Lyle, & Lynne, 2007). This confidence in the ability to solve an unknown situation/problem is critical to new police recruits' success, especially in the eyes of their FTOs.

Problem Based Learning in Police Settings

Kolb's (2014) research examined these broader discussions within a police academy setting. His study analyzed whether police recruits felt hands on experiences in a problem based learning environment were more or less effective than theoretical discussions in a classroom lecture setting. In this study, Kolb's (2014) Learning Cycle and the Learning Style Inventory were used to examine four key aspects of police recruits' learning experiences: concrete experience (CE), reflection experience (RE), abstract conceptualization (AC) and active experimenting (AE) (2014). See Figure 1. The four aspects were then mapped as Emotive and Rational characteristics (EMORAT) and Reflective and Pragmatic characteristics (REFPRA). Female recruits scored higher on EMORA. Overall, pre and posttest findings show all recruits preferred a pragmatic (acting)

(Kolb, 2014) learning style. The study stressed that students need to understand how their classroom learning applies in the real world and on the job. Adding factors that include real world application and realistic emotion into a police recruit's scenario in a problem based environment is important. It may be critical when evaluating the processed scene completed by viewing the recorded perceptions of their field training officer at a later time. These components—watching, thinking, doing and feeling—allow the learner a better ability to combine and conceptualize the whole process of learning and allow instructors to better create problem-based scenarios, thus impacting recruits at an earlier stage of their training.

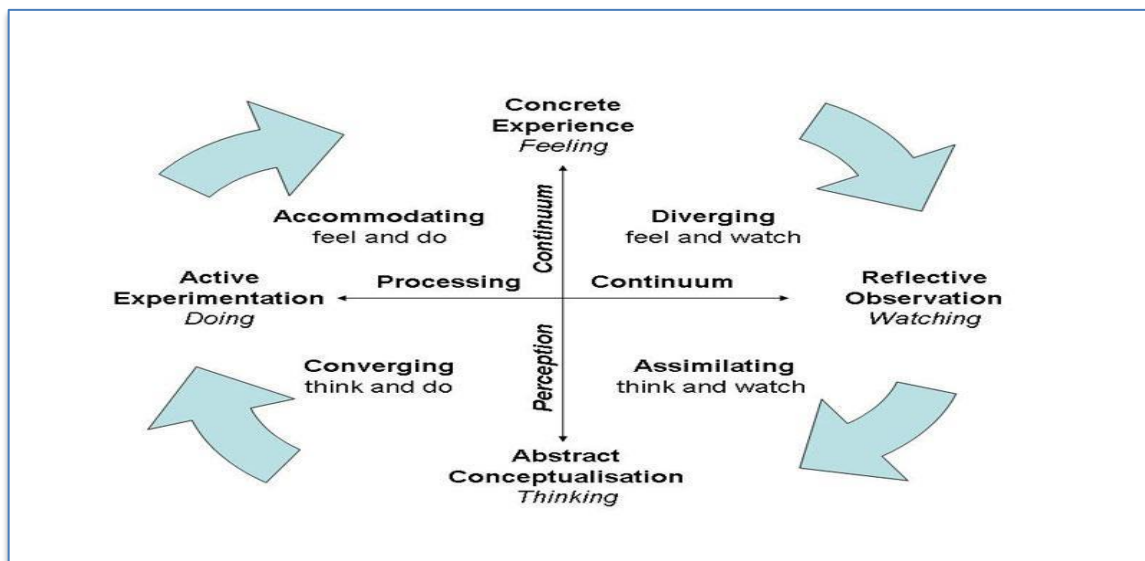Figure 1. Experiential Learning Cycle. From Kolb, D. A. (2014). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (p.32). FT press.

Shipton's (2009, 2011) research suggests that the goals of experiential learning via PBL could improve police academy learning. When new officers were placed into five cohorts, given an ill structured problem, and instructed to utilize prior knowledge and

expertise, they struggled to define group roles and to use time appropriately (Shipton, 2009). The data showed that the retention level for a police recruit was less when a teacher-centered, one way learning method was used (Shipton, 2009). Independent learning places a heavy cognitive load on the student, so a more guided scaffolding approach, such as provided in a PBL setting, has more potential to assist in retaining key knowledge.

In a subsequent study, Shipton (2011) used a qualitative design to examine which methods allow recruits to learn and retain information. The results showed that using problem-based learning with a scaffolding approach, where the instructor guides the learner centered instruction and only intervenes to lessen the cognitive load or to facilitate guidance needed toward the learning goal, is beneficial. This finding appears to support the existence of what a Vygotsky (1979) referred to as the Zone of Proximal Distance, in which people stretch their capabilities to learn just beyond the boundary of the unknown. The implications of this study suggest that a blended approach to recruit training, rather than a teacher-centered one, is preferable. Although research suggests that teachers should allow learners independence when attempting to solve a problem, teachers tend to prefer a teacher centered approach. It is easier for teachers to supply answers than to step back and guide the learner. When the instructor includes real life experience after the problem-based scenario and debriefs the learner, however, the learning is solidified for later use.

Shipton (2011) also described the distinction between deep learning and surface learning and explained how to develop learning activities to help police recruits obtain such deeper learning. The research was conducted through a survey of 70 law enforcement officers in a police academy setting who were trained in problem based learning. Results

demonstrated that even with training geared towards PBL, instructors favored a teacher centered learning methodology rather than a student center one (Shipton, 2011).

The implications of Shipton's (2011) study suggest that change is slow. Some instructors have difficulty transitioning from a teacher centered learning approach to a learner centered approach. This concept may be expanded and applied to new police recruits who leave the police academy and enter a paramilitary field training process. They are observed by FTOs who can choose to be evaluators or teachers. Historically, police departments have utilized, para-military format training, where getting the work done was more important than teaching new officers multiple problem solving skills.

In a future-focused look at law enforcement, Werth (2009) indicated that the field is changing. His research suggested that officers need a particular set of skills and that the standard paramilitary training approach is not adequate. Werth (2009) argued that complex information should be delivered to new recruits in a PBL format. The researchers studied an Idaho police academy for ten weeks. It focused on an ill structured problem of a mock homicide scene. The recruits were instructed to deliver parts of their own development in the case in steps. This exercise incorporated several areas of law enforcement and helped develop basic investigatory foundation skills that would be needed for future, real world environment problems.

Werth's (2009) data collection involved surveying 147 police students electronically. They were asked if they felt the problem-based learning helped them obtain the necessary skills to be a police officer. The overall opinion of the police recruit's exposure to problem-based learning showed that results indicated approximately 75% of

recruits agreed that PBL enhanced their retention and almost 88% agreed the program should continue. Overall results suggested that new police recruits felt PBL better prepared for them for the job.

Jonassen (1997) discussed the importance not only of teaching learners to solve problems, but also of involving them in problems centered on real life scenarios. These situations are intended to make a learner think more about a probable solution. Later, Merill (2009) developed principles of instruction structured around real world problems and based on existing knowledge. He posited that new knowledge needs to be demonstrated and then applied for proper integration. FTOs in police departments do not have an avenue to let training academies know what is working and what is not. This lack of communication back to the training academy environment is one reason for the current study.

When Werth and Werth (2011) examined the type of learner present in today's classroom, they outlined how learner characteristics and expectations are affected by generational differences among the Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials. They stressed that today's Millennials respond poorly to a teacher-centered, lecture based learning environment. Findings suggested that Millennials are best engaged in scenario-based training that incorporates role playing, student presentations, and problem based learning.

As a result of Werth and Werth's (2011) study, the United States Army developed an interactive online video game geared toward millennial learners of whom millions have subscribed. The success rate of this development suggests that instructors should attempt to incorporate interactive game technology into the learning process. Research like this

suggests that millennial learning is enhanced by problem-based concepts, such as developing small chunks of learning modules, providing risk taking in a safer environment, and showing how the skills learned apply to the real world. These implications suggest that learning styles have changed and that it is ultimately up to the instructors and educational institutions to use technology to mold an environment where skills are honed to perform the job.

Research about FTOs' perceptions of their newly hired recruits is almost non-existent, a situation that parallels the lack of communication back to the academies on what field training officers are observing in new officers' skillset. Moreover, researchers lack evidence about whether or not problem based learning is better preparing today's police officer. Such research could decrease the communication gap about instruction between field training officers and the police academy training environment.

Summary

Prior research has suggested that a problem based learning environment helps learners to identify problems, to develop possible and varied solutions, to locate adequate resources, and to increase retention for later application in real-life settings. This review of existing literature, therefore, highlighted constructivism, communication, motivation, problem based learning, and teacher versus learner centered instruction, each which influenced the design of the current study. Moreover, it examined the efficacy of Kolb's (1985) four stage Learning Cycle model as complemented by Jonassen's (1997) Problem Solving Instruction to frame this discussion of incorporating real-life scenarios into instruction.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine if FTOs perceive differences in the performance of police officer recruits taught in PBL and non-PBL methods. Data was gathered via in-depth interviews with 15 FTOs who were directly involved with training academy recruit students from a primarily problem based learning environment police academy. The questions guiding this research are:

Q1: What are the field-training officer's perceptions relating to the educational training the police officer brings from the academy?

Q2: Are there observable differences in the behaviors of trained recruits from problem-based learning educational environments and those trained from other educational environments and if so, what are these differences?

Study Rationale

New officers are educated in numerous geographic locations. Every police-training academy is expected to cover the same material and to ensure that new officers attain the same basic skills. Despite this, FTOs do not have a direct link back to these educational locations to offer advice or suggestions on potential ways to alter or improve the training. By gathering feedback from field training officers on the preparedness of the recruits, I hoped to determine what educational methods work, what ones do not work, and what can be improved in educating students in police academies.

Grounded Theory

According to Glaser (1998), through the process of coding, qualitative data becomes transparent to a researcher, yielding what is significant. Glaser and Strauss (1967)

agreed that a qualitative project of interviews could yield important data. By using interviewing as a research method, evaluators could provide a detailed thick description of what they observed in the PBL-trained police recruits.

Police recruits rely upon their FTOs for mentoring and constructive criticism. After leaving an academy setting, it is important to receive the guidance necessary to become a successful police officer. The use of rich description in interviews gives detail to real life experiences that can be related to the new officers' training. This is also a primary concept in problem based learning when designing the ill-structured problem and relating it to a real-world example. An example of rich detail (put in descriptive story already created about new recruit) helps to paint the mental image and build upon the progression of knowledge that a new police officer will be expected to obtain. Glaser (1992) understood that by coding interviews, relevant themes surface and in depth comparisons can be made. The importance of this research is that it provides a snapshot of what is taking place during a moment in time.

Research Design

This exploratory case qualitative study was designed to examine the perceptions that FTOs gain while training new police academy recruits who have just entered their careers. The intent is to identify commonalities within new police officer recruits who have been educated in PBL learning environments versus recruits not primarily trained with PBL. Participant FTOs represented multiple sized police agencies. The study attempted to examine the effectiveness of training methods in police academies based on the perceptions

that FTOs derived from the newly hired police officer. The research questions and data sources are included in Table 1.

Table 1

Research Questions, Data Collection and Sources, and Analysis Method.

Research Questions	Data Collection and Sources	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Analysis Method
Q1: What are FTOs' perceptions of the educational training new recruits bring from the academy?	Interviews with FTOs	FTOs	Newly hired police officers	1. Narrative Report 2. Coding via DeDoose software
Q2: Are there observable differences in the behaviors of recruits from PBL educational environments and those trained in other educational environments? If so, what are those differences?	Interviews with FTOs	FTOs	Newly hired police officers	1. Narrative Report 2. Coding via DeDoose software

Two previous dissertations informed this study. The first examined police academy recruits' perceptions of teaching style effectiveness. Police academies historically are authoritarian in style (Bumbak, 2011, p.10). In an attempt to identify other training methods, Vander Kooi (2006) studied police recruit's perceptions about the effectiveness of PBL. Vander Kooi (2006) found that police recruits believed PBL improved their ability

to problem solve by a slight margin. They also were more confident about their critical thinking ability. In a subsequent study, Queen (2016) focused on the perceptions of police academy recruits once they left the training location and entered police work. Queen (2016) researched past graduates from an academy that has used PBL as its main pedagogy since 2006. Unlike the slight statistical increase in confidence and retention by police academy recruits found in Vander Kooi's earlier study, however, Queen's (2016) findings demonstrated strong statistical significance in all areas researched, two of which were police officers' perceptions about their ability to think critically and to solve problems. Unlike the previous two studies conducted at the same site, the current study examined the effectiveness of PBL from the perspective of the FTOs charged to prepare and evaluate new police recruits for duty.

Perceptions

As noted above, the current research is a continuation of two dissertations, each which focused directly on perceptions about learning within a police academy whose primary pedagogical approach was PBL. These prior studies revealed three themes with which the current study is also concerned: communication skills, problem solving ability in real life/on the job scenarios, and critical thinking skills.

Setting

As of 2017, the State of Michigan had 587 police departments, down from 592 police agencies in 2015 (MCOLES, 2015). The departments vary in size from those employing one officer to departments staffed by several thousand officers. There are approximately 18,500 police officers in the State of Michigan. These officers are trained

in both regional basic academies and pre-service basic training academies. In a regional basic training facility, a police recruit (upon completion and passing of a licensing exam) enters into the law enforcement world licensed to be a police officer. The regional basic training style includes an academic college degree curriculum requirement that needs to be completed to obtain both a college degree and a license to become a police officer. The mandatory amount of training hours a recruit receives is 594. According to the most recent figures available at the time of writing, the State of Michigan granted 824 licenses in 2015 (MCOLES, 2015). Each one of these newly licensed officers then entered the next step of training with an experienced police officer, often referred to as a field training officer (FTO). FTOs are responsible for acclimating new officer to the demands of the job. FTOs are experienced police officers who are responsible for training new recruits within their departments.

A list of questions was generated in an attempt to identify perceptional themes that may be observed from FTOs. All departments were located in the State of Michigan. The size of the police departments varied from small to large.

Population

The purpose for this research was to explore Michigan FTOs' perceptions of new police officer recruits and to determine if they observed noticeable differences between new academy recruits trained in a PBL environment and those prepared in non-PBL environments. To that end, I randomly selected new police recruits who had graduated from a PBL-based training police academy in the last five years and entered a career in law enforcement as a police officer. Next, I focused on finding new recruit officers who had

only worked in one police department in Michigan. Then I cross-referenced these new recruits against a list of FTOs to locate recruits who had only one FTO during their training period. Finally, I sought to interview the FTOs who trained them, drawing from a variety of small, medium, and large departments in Michigan.

Fifteen Michigan FTOs participated in the study. These FTOs were responsible for training more than one new police officer within the last five-year period. These FTOs were selected from police agencies that hired a new recruit from a predominantly PBL environment. The list of graduates from this Midwestern police academy who were hired in Michigan police departments was provided by the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards. Each recruit had completed and passed the State of Michigan's licensing exam as well as all of the phases of his/her field training process.

Data Sources

I asked each FTO open-ended questions about their observations of both exemplar and non-exemplar new recruits, thus allowing me to identify perceptional themes and attributes from their thick descriptions of newly graduated police academy recruits hired by their departments.

Categorizing participants' words was condensed by using a qualitative coding software, Dedoose, which allowed me to keep the data intact and to track similarities across responses. To reduce the potential for cross contamination, I avoided new recruits who had attained employment at more than one police department. I also attempted to gather insights from more than 15 participant FTOs.

Participants selected were interviewed face to face when available and others with a difficult schedule or significant distance were interviewed by telephone. All of the interviews were digitally recorded to allow exact transcription for analysis. These interviews with the 15 field-training officers were conducted for the purposes of theory saturation. To protect their privacy, the names and locations of the FTOs were replaced with numbers. The FTO participants were able to review any of the transcripts generated and to delete anything that might identify them as well as clarify any information.

An outside vendor was used to transcribe the digital data recordings. The digital recordings were sent and received via a secured HTTPS website. The digital recordings were secured on a computer and that was password protected. Strict privacy was always maintained during the course of this research. During this research investigation, everything was reviewed against the original digital recordings for specificity.

Sampling Procedures

All study FTO participants were licensed police officers in the State of Michigan. The purposeful sample group of 15 Field Training Officers were from police departments that have hired a PBL trained police academy recruit from a mid-western university. The list of graduated recruits who were hired in Michigan was supplied by the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES). This MCOLES information detailed both a successful hiring and current employment information about graduates from the case site. Moreover, MCOLES listed the number of currently employed officers in the employing department.

All randomly chosen agencies employed PBL-trained participants from the case site who had successfully passed their field training officer process. FTOs were chosen from these diverse sites to offer a current perspective of what it is like to train and to observe new police officers and to identify potential issues about their academy training. Because there is no national database for FTOs in the United States, I contacted the last five years of PBL-trained police academy graduates to provide information about their current employment. Specifically, I asked them to provide the following information: current department, date of hire, and the name of their first FTO. I did not reveal the reason for the request. This request yielded the names of 190 FTOs. Of the 190 FTOs listed, only 119 fit the research criterion for supervising a new recruit who had never worked for another police department. This exclusion criteria allowed be to avoid having results influenced by recruit cross training from other law enforcement agencies. Of the 119 I contacted, 46 volunteered to be interviewed. Of these, I selected a purposeful sample of FTOs from different sized police departments in the State of Michigan. Ultimately, I conducted 15 interviews with FTOs.

The goal of this research was to gain a better perspective of FTOs' perceptions of new recruits. FTOs were selected to provide a current working knowledge of their role related to that perspective. Hence, that is why a purposeful sample of FTOs were located and asked to participate in this study.

Theoretical Sampling

It has been proposed that when researching topics where the potential for new understanding is great, theoretical sampling is useful (Corbin &Strauss, 2008). Because

this study is breaking new ground in an area that had not been pursued previously, I used

theoretical sampling to refine early-stage coding.

Interviews

Grounded theorists use interviews to gather rich data. Open-ended interview

questions were chosen to determine what was readily apparent to FTOs. Direct in-depth

interviews about what these FTOs observed, interpreted, and perceived offered a lens into

the state of current training and what could improve the academy environment. I therefore

asked the following questions:

Q1. From your experience as an FTO, tell me about an exemplar police academy recruit that you trained and provide any job-related experiences that relate directly to your choice.

Q2. From your experience as an FTO, tell me about a non-exemplar police academy recruit that you trained and provide any job-related experiences that directly relate to your choice.

Q3. What was particular about the above situations that stood out to you?

Q4. Can you explain in detail that particular incident further?

Q5. What surprised you most about that situation?
Q6. What, if any, areas can help improve the new police officer's success with the Field Training Officer in your department?

Q7. What areas in the Field Training Process itself could be improved upon?

Researcher Journal

In addition to the digital recording, I maintained a research journal to place

pertinent information that stood out at that time into writing for further reflection. During

and after each interview, I noted specific items that potentially could help clarify recurring

themes related to this research. In the event clarity was needed, I asked further questions.

I regularly examined these ideas, using them as a means to reflect upon the perceptions of each additional FTO participant. Recording and reviewing the data in this way allowed me to solidify themes and perceptions.

Data Analysis

The main study data was derived from open-ended interviews with FTOs. First stage coding was done to define and categorize emerging attributes (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2011). Even though it is improbable to expect a researcher to separate himself from over 20 years of lived experiences within the policing field, bracketing was used to allow him to foreground his expectations, thereby allowing him to resist letting his own biases and expectations to influence the results. Putting meaning to each line of data allowed this researcher to look at the different meanings given by the FTOs. Once the data was coded using Dedoose qualitative software, the meanings were used for quantitative analysis based on the frequency of the common attributes provided by the FTO participants.

Coding

I individually coded each interview using Dedoose qualitative software to identify the attributes of exemplar and non-exemplar recruits from the perspective of their FTOs. Another goal of this research was to determine if recruits educated at an academy that used a PBL-based approach were more successful (in the eyes of their FTOs) than their non-PBL educated peers. The 15 interviews yielded three primary dimensions, two conceptual categories, and numerous attributes, each discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

The first stage involved coding the 15 interview transcripts. During this stage, it was important to observe potential categories, to seek saturation, and to develop further

questions. This new information will lead this researcher from open coding to a new path

and emergent coding. Coding allowed this researcher to become one with the data,

becoming immersed within it. This immersion allowed me to refrain from my own

personal biases and to become more open to the FTOs' viewpoints.

I employed what Charmer and Glaser (1965) refer to as the constant comparative

method, whereby:

> Generating action codes facilitates making comparisons, a major
> technique in grounded theory. The constant comparative method in
> grounded theory means (a) comparing different people (such as their
> views, situations, actions, accounts, and experiences), (b) comparing data
> from the same individuals with themselves at different points in time, (c)
> comparing incident with incident, (d) comparing data with category, and I
> comparing a category with other categories. (p. 101)

This type of research is inductive and allowed this researcher further immersion in the

data gathered and managed throughout the process. Dedoose software was used in this

process to help code the data. This software performs data analysis and memo storage,

allowing this researcher to classify the information obtained from FTO interviews.

Summary

This qualitative interview study sought to determine the exemplar and non-

exemplar attributes of new police recruits from the perspective of their FTOs and to

determine the role that a PBL education may have played in their on-the-job performance.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

This chapter presents phenomenographic findings from interviews with FTOs who described attributes they observed when training new recruit police officers coming directly from a law enforcement training academy. I interviewed these FTO participants, gathered data, and grouped it into three primary dimensions—people skills, department skills, and technical skills. In addition to the primary dimensions, the study yielded several FTO insights about the FTO training process itself. According to Schatzman (1991), it is necessary to provide "a structure of terms that totally frame a given direction or methodological perspective to analysis" (p.308). The primary goal of determining a dimension is to see, "what all is going on here at a particular time" (Schatzman, 1991, p. 309). Using dimensional analysis helps researchers to understand the underlying issue and social aspects of a specific environment at a given time.

Primary dimensions are large conceptual constructs that are more fully detailed through conceptual categories and finally within specific properties (Eklin, 2015). For the purpose of this research, I entitled these specific properties attributes. Dimensional analysis is used to reverse engineer complex data, reassembling information about how participants construct their own meaning from occurrences for which they have first-hand knowledge in their own realm. These findings built two conceptual categories—new police recruit attributes and police department expectations—grounded in interviews with 15 FTOs in this research study. The conceptual categories were concise and, as mentioned in chapter three, developed by using Dedoose qualitative analysis software. Upon the basis of later stage coding, the conceptual categories were further classified into individual attributes.

Dimensional Analysis: Tear Apart the Parts and Rebuild

Dimensional analysis allows the researcher to represent complex realities based upon the fine meanings of the details observed in a social training setting. The result of dimensional analysis allows the researcher to help discover what is occurring at this place and time within the context of the social training process as described by the participants. This social training also encompasses what is the culture at that time. The ability to look at this data also needs to accompany an understanding of what is the culture at that time. The ability to determine the central ideas and to understand what behavior is acceptable only makes sense when viewed through the lens of the specific organizational culture (Crank, 2014).

The tearing apart of complex interviews into separate data chunks from an interview looks for the underlying interpretation of what is being studied. The analysis was conducted by using line-by-line coding often referred to as axial coding. According to Glasser (1979), this coding process allows a researcher to find the true essence in the meaning of the words being said. It allows the researcher to focus on each of the words and helps to prevent implied bias from developing. Eventually, after interviewing and coding more than one person, a commonality occurs which then leads to a primary dimension that resonates throughout all the data as an underlying theme. The core dimension identified in this research was mayhem and it resonated among all of the FTO interviews when describing all of the aspects that a new recruit needed to possess not only through the FTO process but also for having a successful career.

Overview of the Field Training Process

The primary dimensions are described in Table 2. The primary dimensions consist of conceptual categories and the underlying *attributes* of each conceptual category. The attributes are revealed in the FTO participants' own words. These recruit attributes indicated the overall social training process as described by the FTOs and within current police culture. I utilized direct quotes from participants' interviews to help supplement the identified *attributes* under each conceptual category.

The field training process in police departments involves a seasoned veteran officer who is familiar with all aspects of law enforcement, who is comfortable with department policy, and who understands the skills necessary to complete the job once the new recruit is out on his or her own. The new recruit must successfully pass these early stages in order to be allowed to continue to work in the law enforcement agency they work for. For this research the FTO participants are identified as P1 through P15. The title field-training officer (FTO) was used to describe the trainers within a police department who were interviewed. The term *recruit* was used to identify a new police officer entering the field of law enforcement hired by a police department. All participants interviewed and listed currently are or were an FTO with their police department within the timeframe I conducted the study, which was within the last five years. Table 2 lists attributes from direct quotes used in each of the individual attributes and are designed to exemplify the specificity and foundation for each conceptual category.

Table 2

Primary Dimensions and Conceptual Categories

Primary Dimension	Conceptual Categories	Attributes
People Skills	New Police Recruit Attributes	Communication Control Confident and Assertive Detailed
Department Skills	Department Expectations	Compounding Issues Corrective Action Needed
Technology Skills		High Technology Skills Poor Driving Ability

Summary of Participant Demographics

Twelve of the 15 participants were male and three were female. FTO ages ranged from 31 to 55 years old, with an average age of 40. There were seven patrol officers, four sergeants, three detectives, and one chief. Participant FTOs' education ranged from a law enforcement officer with a high school education (1) to associate degree (9) to bachelor's degree (5). The average years of service was 16.73 years. Eight participants had worked for only one police department, four had worked for two, two had worked for three police departments, and one had worked for four police departments. Seven of the participants worked the day shift, five worked afternoons, and three worked the night shift. Only two

participants had prior military service. Participant FTOs' average yearly income was $84,250.

New Police Recruit Attributes

For the purposes of this research, attributes are defined as the individual characteristics that a new recruit possesses as observed by others, in this case by FTOs in a training environment that look for these key qualities in a new academy recruit coming into their law enforcement work arena. The FTOs consistently described positive and negative attributes in relationship to the new recruits.

Exemplar attributes refer to positive details that were supplied by participants during this research. Non-Exemplar attributes refer to negative new recruit traits identified within FTO interviews during this research. These interviews involved specific detailed remarks when describing a new recruit. The purpose of these detailed responses was to provide FTO's experiences in their own words. All FTOs interviewed described the positive (exemplar) and negative (non-exemplar) attributes of their own recruits.

Primary Dimension One: People Skills

People skills describes a broad variety of individual and personal recruit attributes observed by FTO participants. In this study, people skills broadly can be defined as personal characteristics that a new recruit either does or does not possess. The following four descriptor categories further explain some of the people skills that new recruits either did or did not possess. These four attributes—communication, detailed, control, confidence—make up the conceptual category new police recruit attributes under the

primary dimension people skills. The words of P2 sum up people skills as follows: "But I mean, there's, heavy interpersonal skills in talking with the public, you gotta have those."

Communication is key. The ability to communicate with others is a key interpersonal characteristic that has been recognized for many years as necessary in law enforcement. Mills, a noted pioneer in looking at the skills a police officer should possess, identified it as the "social skills and ability to communicate effectively with persons of various cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds" (Mills as cited in Bohm & Haley, 1997). Even though communication was the skill identified as the most critical attribute a police officer needs to possess, police departments rarely train recruit officers and assume that people being hired already know what to do.

The best way to obtain a better understanding of why the dominant primary attribute was communication is to explore what FTOs, experienced officers who have successfully maintained a career in law enforcement in their cultural setting, had to say about the importance of communication. Early in the study, P3 expressed it this way: "...in the first step, that would be the ability to talk to people is the number one key for me." This emphasis was reinforced by additional FTO comments, as follows:

> Communication is key. I mean, that, your mouth gets you in and out of trouble. And if you're not able to talk to anybody, and if you're really short and rough with people, I mean they're, you're, nonverbals are there, people are just gonna think that you're disrespecting them. And then that's gonna get you in more trouble. (P4)

Another participant explained it this way:

> You know, it's, the thing that makes guys stand out to me are how comfortable they are with the public and how quickly they are to engage. A lot of the times when you get these brand-new guys out of the academy, that's the one thing you have to try to, you know, push them into. (P14)

In the next example, P5 called attention to the importance of communication as he described observing a new recruit handling a search of an illegal indoor marijuana grow:

> ...I think it's in the neighborhood, and how it's gone unnoticed for this long, and that we've never noticed it, it's on one of the side streets, so we may not go down it as much, but no one ever complained about it to us. And how simple it would have been if we paid more attention, but getting called there and just talking to people. And I think that was the biggest thing, is getting out and talking to people. Not relying on just what we can see and hear from a patrol car, but it's the personal interaction we have to have with people to get this information. And we can't have that from a patrol car. I think that was the biggest eye opener with this recruit when they were speaking to the people from that neighborhood. (P5)

FTO participants mentioned communication in relation to other constructs, such as ethnicity. One FTO identified the need ability "to communicate with people from a wide, diverse spectrum" as "the most important thing" (P13).

FTOs often cited communication basics in relationship to other attributes, such as being confident and assertive, because officers are expected to take the initiative in adapting to an unforeseen incident. As a result, communication, the dominant attribute identified, appears to operate as the linchpin to the other attributes described by FTO participants in this research. The attributes often were interconnected or layered, a finding that was not uncommon but that made it more difficult for the researcher to interpret the differences between and the combination of two or more area attributes. For example, the overlapping of these specific attributes and the combination of being assertive and communicating with people were described as follows: "Yeah, he always looked forward to talking to people" (P2); "This person was able to interact immediately" (P12); and "He wasn't afraid to ask questions" (P7).

In explaining the opposite of the exemplar communication as discussed above, for example, participants described the inability of new recruits to communicate with the public. As the research dug deeper into this area, it was apparent that the inability of new recruits to speak to the public in the performance of their job was paramount. FTOs supplied several negative examples of this occurring during the beginning stages of their career. Their descriptions of negative communication attributes and new recruits who did not possess the ability to communicate follow:

> The guy who everyone warned me about, like hey you're getting this guy, he couldn't even order coffee without fumbling over his words. I remember thinking – if this guy can't even order coffee at (Coffee Store), without fumbling over words, that's how uncomfortable he is right now. He can't even order a coffee. (P9)

This lack of confidence and assertiveness often indicated that a new recruit was unlikely to complete the FTO process. Ultimately, the recruit described above by P9 did not succeed in completing the FTO process and was terminated from the new job.

Several FTOs also described difficulties that new recruits had in building rapport with citizens in the context of such mundane actions as taking a complaint or conducting a traffic stop. P4 explained it this way: "In this day and age we have so many young people that can . . . text the domestic victim or text the suspect to get out of the car. But they wouldn't be able to talk to them." Such concerns about new recruits' negative communication skills often were expressed in relationship to FTOs' efforts to intervene to get the recruit through the process:

> Whether or not he didn't want to know or didn't ask, I'm not quite sure what it was, but we had to kind of get him through, well, maybe you should ask him this, maybe you should ask him, what do you think about asking him this. (P12)

FTOs spoke regularly of having to determine when a new recruit is not comfortable with an area or is struggling to complete the basics of an investigation, such as in the following example of an intoxicated and irate civilian that this new recruit froze up not having the ability to talk: "Let's start talking to her, get her to calm down, whatnot, just no communications skills whatsoever" (P15). Along the same lines, another participant stated, "You know, being able to relate to other people and not being sterile about things" (P12). In many cases, this problem was reflected in new recruits' inability to ask questions. In speaking of a communication-challenged recruit, one FTO expressed his frustration with the officer's inability to solicit basic information:

> ...with him, it wasn't like anything that was like, man, you really, you really did a great job. You asked the right questions and got enough info where we got a suspect, or whatever, no, I don't, honestly didn't see it with this guy, I don't think I did. I don't think I saw that. (P14)

The importance of having the ability to solicit specific details applies to many areas within law enforcement, from criminal investigations, to civil law violations, to automobile accidents. One FTO explained the problem with a new recruit's ability to gather information and to provide a detailed representation in relationship to a retail fraud investigation:

> You didn't put anything about, like, the details; you gotta have the elements of the crime here, bro. Can't just say, yeah, these people said he stole something! Yeah, I get that, but, how'd they see that? Why do they think he stole something? Did he conceal it? Um, well, I don't know. Did you ask that question? Um, no. Okay, well, you gotta ask these questions, brother. (P14)

What became evident here not only was the importance of asking questions but also the type and depth of those questions in relationship to the context. One FTO described a struggling recruit's communications as "always the same way with his line of questioning;

he could get the basic questions, but wouldn't dig any deeper than the basic questions for the report" (P12). Recruits like these could appear to the public as callus and robotic, recalling Joe Friday from the 1960s' series *Dragnet,* who lacked personality. Rather than "worrying about the victim," the new recruit being criticized was characterized as asking "Joe Friday type of questions, just the facts and all this" (P5).

This perceived insensitivity toward the public did not set well with FTOs. When reflecting on his own entry into the field, one FTO acknowledged that he did not possess the qualities necessary to be a good communicator but came to appreciate them later, especially as he trained new recruits:

> and I remember when I first started, you get to the point: Were you assaulted? No? Okay, those are all my questions. Uh, I don't have a crime here. You know, and he just didn't know what to say when we were standing in front of somebody. (P4)

This context of building rapport was described frequently by participants. People want to be talked to. As one officer put it, "it's hard. . .it's hard to appease people sometimes, but your ability to communicate will go a long way to doing that (P13). Engaging people into dialogue helps the officer to control any scene they encounter. Having the ability to talk to the public about anything or a variety of topics keeps the flow of the words happening and can deescalate a volatile situation, such as the following:

> I said, you know, if she's intoxicated, and she's you know, having delusions, whatnot, I said, I want you to talk at her level. And if somebody is emotionally disturbed and they're acting crazy, and you need to act crazy to communicate with her, that's what you need to do, and I said, I'm not gonna laugh at you but you need to do, and, you know, what you need to do to have successful call here, and have a successful outcome and gain compliance form her. And he did, so when we walked in there, she had the music blasting, she was naked, (New Recruit) was just like, oh my gosh, and I said, time for you to talk, so he went over and he killed the radio, just, and I said, why don't you just ask, ask her if she can turn it down and he just turned it off and she was just irate, she said, I was just here listening to that good

music and I just want to listen to my music in my apartment and I said, turn the radio back on, just give her a little bit, you know, so he said, what are you talking about, I said turn the radio back on, he turned the radio back on and she calmed down. And I said just turn it down so he turned it down and then he was able to talk to her and she would kind of space out and listen to the music and then, and I told her, I said, I told (New Recruit), I said, you need to talk at her level. If you think she's talking crazy, you talk crazy to get through to her, and so I said, I won't laugh at you, I won't tell anybody, I won't make fun of you, but this is what you need to do, and he did, and ultimately, you know, he was able to gain compliance, EMS came in, they transported her and stuff like that but it took, I would say, it took a solid 15 minutes to talk to her, to gain compliance and he wasn't very good at it. He would try to listen but as he was writing. (P11)

In addition to the difficulties they described in relationship to recruits' communication with the public, several FTOs expressed frustration with new recruits' inability to listen to their commanding officers. In the words of P7, "I would be talking and he would interject and talk over me a lot; he didn't listen" and "I think he just liked to talk and he didn't know when to shut up." This difficulty was related to or perhaps complicated by the inability of some new recruits to accept criticism and feedback during the evaluation and training process. Veteran FTOs explained that some new recruits had a negative attitude about the training process. Their comments ranged from "I think they need to take constructive criticism" to "He was a know-it-all; he corrected me" (P11). When asked about it further, some FTOs theorized that the problem concerned new recruits' understanding of the police organizational structure. In their view, new recruits were reluctant to understand that they were entering a work environment that was para military and rank ordered and to acknowledge that they (new recruits) were at the bottom of the structure: "They're arguing with a veteran officer about why they did something right when it was completely wrong" (P10). These communication problems reflected a larger problem with respect for authority and for others, especially within a paramilitary

organization where "you have to know your rank" (P11). Despite such communication missteps, these same recruits expected to be heard and respected by their FTOs, their colleagues, and, most importantly, by the public.

Communication was paramount on its own and in relationship to the other attributes that a new police recruit needed to possess. In discussing this attribute, FTOs described the ability of the new recruit to talk to people, listen, and to understand what was being said and to do so without direction from the FTO. When FTOs described struggling communicators, they zeroed in on new recruits' inability to communicate with the public: their lack of small talk, difficulty in building rapport, and failure to appreciate cultural differences. These attributes overlapped and several were compounded by other attributes.

Detailed: being sharp and picking up on things. Law enforcement is a career based on details that allow a police officer to complete the tasks necessary to perform the job. To better understand the details a FTO looks for, it is important to understand the level of responsibility held by a veteran officer and a new recruit. A police officer is expected to be an expert in driving, to decide the appropriate use of force to use, to operate as an expert marksman, to serve as a counselor and/or mediator, to provide medical first aid, to solicit and maintain detailed knowledge of criminal and civil law, and to process information and make decisions in a rapidly unfolding environment and at a moment's notice. In the beginning of new recruit training, FTOs are attentive to the behaviors new recruits bring with them from the academy. *Being sharp and picking up on things* describes how exemplar recruits performed when newly appointed to the law enforcement world. This

attribute is illustrated both by what FTOs appreciated in the performance of new recruits and by what struggling recruits lacked.

When FTOs spoke of detail-oriented recruits, they characterized them as 1) quick to embrace new information and 2) responsive to redirect. FTOs described specific situations that illustrate the detailed recruit:

> Another attribute is just being sharp. Like if I tell you, if I teach you something, or coach you on something, you pick it up right away. And I don't have to do that four or five, six times. You know, even for the new people. (P4)

Another participant stated:

> I mean he was just one of those recruits who had the ability to absorb information; if he did something wrong; if you kind of tutored him on it, he didn't have an issue with it the second time. (P13)

Many FTOs appreciate it when new recruits retained prior instruction and/or if they did not need to teach them basic observational skills, two behaviors that they credited toward successfully completing the FTO program in the department. For example, an FTO described a situation where a new recruit acted upon a prior briefing about a suspect vehicle that was believed to be distributing illegal narcotics in their jurisdiction. The FTO described how a new recruit recognized the vehicle from the description and used it within a traffic stop:

> for him to pick up on that and run with it and stop the car, you know, got behind it, had a cracked windshield, get the people to get out; he did a really good job, he did a really good job all around, we're sitting at (A Street) and (B Street) and a car was coming towards us, and this is like week 2, week 3, maybe. But just that kind of the recognition, to see that kind of stuff. That is harder to teach new guys to pick up on your Spidey senses and act on them. I mean there wasn't really training going on, by week 4 of step one, we're kind of like a two-person car here. (P6)

Likewise, P12 offered an example of a recruit whom he "didn't have to really coach. You didn't have to tell him certain things. You know, didn't have to point out and show what you should be looking for when you're scanning on the streets." Whether they were detail oriented by nature or by training, the new recruits FTOs described listened, watched, and acted on information and observations, as is the case of an example recounted by P11. Essentially, a group of veteran cops went to serve a warrant. While they stood around trying to get in after failing to reach the landlord's number, the recruit stepped from under the awning, found the number listed on the building, and made contact, earning the respect of his fellow officers:

> So the other officers were like, hey, good job, you know, good job that he noticed it cuz we were kind of all tucked up under this awning and he sat back and took in the big pictures. So he was observant and I give him a lot of credit for that because our generation, this generation is very much head-down, no eye contact (P11)

The attribute of being detail oriented also is connected to officer safety, which overlapped in numerous FTO accounts also. Here are a few examples that illustrates a combination of the two:

> Pretty early on, we were working the night shift. And we had a drunk driving arrest and I was dealing with the intoxicated driver and he was watching our surroundings and he observed a car coming up in back of us that was going to hit us. He advised me, and moved myself and the suspect that we were dealing with out of the way so that we didn't get hit by the car. I just thought he did a good job. It was only like his third day but he was seeing, he was really green, and I was glad that he was being so observant that he picked up on it and that he acted so quickly. Cuz normally they're a little hesitant to act. (P7)

As the FTO pointed out, this recruit had the ability to pay attention to details and to assess for the presence of potential danger as well as the foresight to protect others. As the FTO noted, however, this is not a common occurrence.

Detail-oriented recruits tended to excel in accepting criticism. According to their FTOs, "They took constructive criticism and were very accepting of feedback" (P15) and "were open to teaching and coaching" (P5). Essentially, "They wanted to learn" (P9) and "were eager to learn" (P6), values they demonstrated in their actions.

Taking control. FTOs next articulated the ability of new recruits to handle an unfolding situation and, ultimately, to take control: "And as new recruits, man, if you can take control of a scene right from the start, you're impressive" (P1). Although taking control is not limited to exercising physical control over others, it often does include physical restraint. In such a case, P5 spoke admirably of the following new recruit: she "didn't have to think, jumped in, tussled around, got the cuffs on; she won." In speaking of the same recruit, he added: "Like, one of the first days that she was on they had an MIP party down on (ABC) Street and she jumped right in, got ID, got all the information, gave them a PBT, all good."

Several other FTOs offered counterexamples, where a new recruit needed to go "hands on" with someone but failed to act when the appropriate use of force was warranted:

> If you got good verbal skills and you're able to de-escalate things, and talk to people, you, you could probably talk 90% of the people you have into handcuffs, you don't have to fight 'em. So. Understanding where they're coming from. And yeah, they're a little bit frightened. If you have time to explain things, explain them, and then you have to find out through your experience when there's other people who are now, we're not even wasting our time. We're just gonna get them cuffed and take them from there, but some new officers seem to have it when others do not. (P12)

This physical ability to step into the scene and physically control the surroundings is part of the law enforcement job. The participants above spoke directly about the attributes that related to work scenes where a new recruit took control by a command verbal

presence when out at a scene and others could not. It turns out that many could not, as made evident in the following FTO comments: "He's just standing there, like a tree; I'm like come on man!" (P14) or "He couldn't take charge of a scene" (P7).

FTOs offered many other examples of new recruits who demonstrated their ability to take control by making an arrest and doing so with composure, often in very public and volatile situations. P13 offered one such example:

> This recruit had a situation, it was pretty early on, phase one, and we were sent to a run in which a dog had attacked an older lady. And the gentleman, the neighbor who was outside had, witnessed it, ran inside, got a gun, came out and ended up shooting the dog. And when we got on scene, it was one of those runs that you kind of have an idea that's probably gonna be a big deal. Because the person whose dog got shot, they were very, very upset. It went to the news. It made national news. We talked about that ahead of time, that this is one of those things, sometimes, you might not think it's a big deal, but, you know, it's one of those things where you're gonna have to be on your toes, good investigation, get all the information, write a report, because there's gonna be a lot of people that are probably gonna want to look at it, from your supervisor on up, probably to the media, which is what happened, and you know, he just did a really good job early on gathering information, dealing with people that were highly agitated on both ends; the person who shot the dog, the person whose dog was shot. But early on that was pretty impressive that he was able to keep his composure, gather the information, and do a good job all around on that particular run. (P13)

When asked to elaborate on what most surprised P13 about the above example, this seasoned veteran noted the recruit's maturity, a level the FTO acknowledged not possessing at such a young age and at the earliest stage of his career:

> I've got XX years in law enforcement; I won't say an advanced age, but I was through my twenties already when I got into law enforcement, and I know that, as a young man at the age of 21-22, I don't think I had the ability to do this particular job. So, when I get these young recruits and almost the vast majority of them are straight out of college, so 21, 22, it always amazes me that there is a maturity level

there that, um, I don't feel like I probably possessed at the time like this new officer did. (P13)

Confident and assertive. As the last section demonstrates, FTOs frequently expressed concerns about new recruits' ability to be confident and assertive. Many struggling new recruits waited for veteran officers to tell them what to do, causing their FTOs to doubt whether they had the confidence to complete the FTO process and to operate as a police officer. The following example, however, represents a case where the new recruit acted with confidence to take care of the scene and to ensure his own and his FTO's safety:

> I had him in phase two and we started going looking for this pit bull. And we were getting told of, you know, neighbors would see us, they saw us out there looking, they were like yeah this pit bull, it's very vicious and it charged at people, so, as we're looking for it, we come across the dog kind of at some garbage cans along the side of a trailer. And we're probably two trailers away, empty lots, we've got some distance between us but the pit bull turned and saw us and immediately charged. And, by the time I was able to get my pistol out, and get it trained on it, it was already at kind of my foot. And, I used my foot to kind of block it but by doing that I also kind of prevented myself from being able to shoot it cuz I would have had to shoot through my foot to get to it. As that's going on, there's a stream of pepper spray that came over my shoulder and pegged the dog right in the eyes and sent the dog running off to the trailer where it was residing at the time. And I thought, wow, that's good training, and good composure; he was able to decide that pepper spray was his best option, utilized it, perfect utilization of it, and you know, saved me from either being bitten or having to shoot it. That was day one. So, right away I had a pretty good feeling about this recruit. (P13)

It wouldn't be uncommon for a recruit to express a certain level of hesitation, especially with so little or no experience, but when a new recruit evolves and shows a confidence level beyond the FTO's expectations, it stands out. In speaking of another exemplar recruit who acted in the face of uncertainty, P15 expressed the following: "I mean, honestly with being new, without knowledge with department policies and whatnot, super ready from the

beginning." Many new recruits do not realize what law enforcement authority entails. This new arena often represents their first experience recognizing the enforcement capability they possess. As P11 puts it, new officers need to become "comfortable in their own skin; they've gotta identify as a police officer in their mind. I think they need to have the confidence to present themselves" as authorities.

Several FTOs explained that many new recruits struggle to understand what law enforcement arrest powers entail. Having never made an actual arrest for any offense, many new recruits hesitated or outright failed to perform an arrest when the situation called for it. One FTO argued that practicing placing handcuffs on other academy recruits could not replace the real-life experience needed. He further argued that the streets were not the place to hesitate, to ask for permission, to learn how to make a decision.

FTO comments about assertiveness indicated their concerns about new recruits' ability to make a decision in the moment. Many of the decisions made in the law enforcement field are at a much higher level of complexity, involving multiple areas than just a static training area, than what can be addressed within a lecture or a text. While this research was not about specific training exercises in a law enforcement-training academy or specific arresting techniques it did query a specific learning style. FTOs' comments about recruits who could act on demand, overriding the inclination to deliberate too long, to make a decision in an anxiety rich environment represented a critical area where PBL instruction may make a difference since it is based upon problem solving with real life scenario training (Kolb, 2014).

When addressing the affective aspect of decision making in policing, the following FTO commentary explains an exemplar recruit's ability to express confidence and assertiveness in an emotionally stressful situation:

> You know we had a house fire and rolled up on it, it just came out as a structure fire. Nothing about anybody being in the house, anything like that, they said that they thought everybody was out of the house. So, we rolled up on it, we rolled up before the fire department did, of course, and as we're walking up to the house, and we see people outside, where they kind of like notice that there were a couple people that were kind of frantic. So we went to them, we're like, you alright? And they're like, I can't find my four-year old. And there's this guy and I just us, of course my heart just sank into my stomach cuz I have a little one at home. And I'm like is he in the house? And he goes, I don't know! I don't know! I can't find him. So my first thought was to you know, run to that house, but you know, all I'm thinking is I also have a new FTO, I have a new guy, and it's like, when you're doing FTO, you're looking out for yourself but you gotta look out for a second guy, too. And before I could even tell him what to do, he was sprinting towards that house. And I'm like, that's, one of those things that just stood out to me. I'm like, I didn't have to direct that, I didn't have to you know, say, hey, what do we need to do? It's like, no, he just knew to do it. Knew to go. Luckily, thank God, we get to the house, where we go to the back of the house, and there's smoke rolling out, we start getting onto our hands and knees, and we're about to start crawling in there and we're screaming for this kid, hoping that he's anywhere near, right as we're about to get in, the dad's like, he's here, I got him! I got him! I got him! It was like, oh my God. That was just like an adrenaline dump. I still get goosebumps thinking about it but, it was that, you know, amongst other things because the kid, you know, he's, I can't call him a kid anymore, but he's a good officer. Good cop. But that was one of those things that stood out to me, that was, this kid's gonna be just fine. (P14)

The level of the emergency that unfolded in this scene with a new recruit describes a high level of emotion. Failure to respond to this scene appropriately would have catastrophic effects for all involved. When asked what surprised this FTO about his recruit's performance, P14 elaborated further:

> I think it was more or less like, seeing the comfort of being able to handle himself. How he handled himself in just like even in normal police calls, and then stressful ones, I was watching somebody who I knew was gonna be fine. I mean, Honestly I can't really think of another thing that stands out to me, but I just remember having

a very easy time training this guy, and then pushing him through to the next phase (P14).

He later reiterated how important it is for new academy graduates "to engage" quickly, to use what they had learned in the moment. He could push them to do it, but the exemplars seemed to do it naturally, without prompting.

Several other FTOs articulated similar sentiments, such as the following:

And we would go on call after call after call and I would say, okay, (New Police recruit), you're gonna handle this, you're gonna talk to our victim, and what I want you to do is, as we pull up, you're gonna get out of the car, and you're gonna make eye contact with them and when you make eye contact with them they are gonna gravitate to you. And I'm gonna make a conscious effort not to make eye contact with them. And so, okay, okay, I got it, and we'd pull up and I'd see the person and I'd say, do you know who we're talking, you know, who we're looking for, do you know who the victim is, he'd say, yeah, I think I do, and I'd say well look at him, and then he'd keep his head down and so I'd look at them and so whoop, they'd come right to me and I'd say dammit, (New police recruit). As they'd approach me I'd say you know what, Officer (New Police Recruit) is gonna take this report from you. I would kind of stand sideways so I wasn't looking at them and he had the hardest time getting his head up, making eye contact. And I think that with our phones, we're so used to having our head down. (P11)

Summary of New Police Recruit Attributes. As this discussion of new police recruit attributes has demonstrated, FTOs frequently spoke of the overlapping people skills required to succeed in policing. First and foremost, new recruits needed to be effective communicators who could elicit specific information and appreciate the intercultural dynamics of listening and speaking. However, they also needed to know when to act, to do so with confidence, and to secure a scene for the benefit of themselves, their colleagues, perpetrators, victims, and bystanders. In all that they do, new recruits need to demonstrate an awareness of how these attributes are crucial to their job performance.

Department Expectations

Primary Dimension Two: Department Skills

When a person completes a training curriculum in a law enforcement police academy, the police department expects that the new police recruit will have more knowledge about policing than the average citizen/lay person. They also expect a manifestation of this knowledge in the form of physical skills, firearms' proficiency, driving precision, and criminal law and procedural knowledge as regulated by the state governing body MCOLES and demonstrated by passing the state certification qualifications. In addition to the people skills discussed in the previous section, and perhaps related to them, FTOs also discussed specific skills that were expected and the consequences of not possessing those skills.

One of the police department expectations that recruits often did not have was the ability to handle more than one thing at a time. This lack of multitasking ability often surprised many of the FTO participants. When the new recruit did not have the ability to multitask, for example, it often resulted in a participant FTO disciplining the new recruit. If more than one negative issue was apparent, the continued departmental documentation often leads to the failure of a new recruit. In FTO's language, this documentation is called Corrective Action Needed (CAN). As they explained, the overlapping of issues, what I labelled as compounding issues, influence one another. The following section describes compounding issues and corrective action need as described by these participants through their examples.

The field training process is a highly documented area of police work. This allows a police department to start a paper trail in the event a new recruit falters in one area. If a new recruit does not show proficiency in a specific area, it will result in a disciplinary action. The corrective action needed notification places the responsibility on a new recruit either to get a higher score or a pass in a pass/fail system. The more the disciplinary action and the more serious the issues cited, the more likely it was that the recruit would not successfully complete the FTO process. Every police department has a list of requirements that a new recruit is expected to complete. The basic ones, as acknowledge above, are discussed in the following examples provided by these FTO participants. In discussing examples of corrective action needed, for example, P14 noted that all of a new recruits' "reports were getting kicked back." In another example, P13 demonstrated the concept of a compounding issue:

> On the shift, so, you know, at that particular time, I was on days, he was on nights, so he transitioned from day to night and whatever kinds of things you struggle with on days always seems to be amplified when you go to nights. So. It was, it was pretty quickly apparent, there was all kind of issues, you know, I mean, he wrecked a car, all kinds of stuff, you know, nearly got them killed on the freeway, it was all kinds of things that happened that were just, um, you know, to the point where, there wasn't, um, he was extended but he just decided at, you know, the writing was on the wall and he just, he resigned.

Likewise, P15 commented that in "everything we went on. There was no end to his lack of thinking, he was very timid" (P15). In other words, one issue problem could and often did signal more problems, or compounding issues, to come, many of which recalled the people skills discussed within the previous section:

I was baffled by his inability to do anything (P8) It was just complete silence. (P8)

He didn't get really far. (P7)

Just kind of had a hold of the steering wheel, just had that blank stare, she was terrified, she didn't last long. (P5)

Always had to ask permission to do something. (P5)

There were so many with her. (P5)

Primary Dimension Three: Technical Skills

The law enforcement environment has changed over the years to become one that is more technology based. Police Departments today now utilize more computer operating systems to navigate, locate personal information and help in the solvability of crimes. Databases are also used for suspect criminal histories and driving records as well as to ping a cell tower to locate a suspects' or victims' last known location. Most new police recruits today have used computer based systems to look for answers from their own smartphone. One of the positive skills discussed by several FTOs was the ability of new recruits to use technology, such as P12's claim that "they're very technology orientated, so I don't have to have to worry about teaching them anything on a computer; they do all that on their own, they actually teach us some things."

Although recruits were frequently described as technologically savvy, their cell phone had conditioned many of them not to make eye contact, to have their eyes buried in their phones, as revealed in the following example:

> And we would go on call after call after call and I would say, okay, (new police recruit), you're gonna handle this, you're gonna talk to our victim, and what I want you to do is, as we pull up, you're gonna get out of the car, and you're gonna make eye contact with them and when you make eye contact with them they are gonna gravitate to you. And I'm gonna make a conscious effort not to make eye contact with them. And so, okay, okay, I got it, and we'd, you know, we'd pull up and I'd

see the person and I'd, and I'd say, like, do you know who we're talking, you know, we're looking for, do you know who the victim is, he'd say, yeah, I think I do, and I'd say well look at him, and then he'd, you know, he'd keep his head down and so I'd look at them and so whoop, they'd come right to me and I'd say dammit, (New police recruit). He said, and, and as they'd approach me I'd say you know what, Officer (New Police Recruit) gonna take this report from you. And so I would kind of stand sideways so I wasn't looking at them and he had the hardest time getting his head up, making eye contact. And I think that with our phones, we're so used to having our head down. (P11)

Likewise, P12 could not ignore the fact that some of the worst new recruits were "very intelligent people, you know, they've got Bachelor's Degrees, smart, computer skills, whiz kids on the computer, rocket scientists, you know, great kids" (P12).

While new recruits did not need help learning to use digital technology and perhaps needed encouragement to break habits associate with it, FTOs had a lot of concerns about new recruits' driving abilities, even those that they normally would classify as exemplars. For example, P15 lamented how one recruit who had passed phase one of training still could not balance siren, address, road conditions, etc.:

> It was terrible. It was terrible, and he still, I mean, it sounds like he's still having a hard time with that, more of driving marked down on it; he tried getting to emergency situations and he just can't do it.

Another FTO remarked that a recruit "almost drove us into a ditch numerous times" (P6). Driving difficulties were not limited to road conditions or night time driving: "Even in the day time, the officers that worked with him on days said that he drove terrible—very jerky driver, just bad" (P7). In still another case, after numerous attempts by the FTO to work with her, a recruit continued to drive like "Miss Daisy" (P5). Apparently, however, painfully slow driving was not limited to one gender, as P11 remarked about the following

recruit: "He was very slow to drive. And I said, you've gotta get to the speed limit, like you're holding people up behind you; everybody's afraid to pass a cop car."

Summary

This research study sought FTOs' perspectives on new recruits hired from a primarily-PBL academy. Findings revealed two conceptual categories—new police recruit attributes and police department expectations—and yielded three primary dimensions: people skills, department skills, and technical skills. In the next section, I briefly examine what I call FTO insights, suggestions FTOs made about the FTO process and their roles within it as well as their ideas about how to improve FTO success.

FTO Insights

A class where we make them talk to one another. As discussed in my prior coverage of dimension one, all FTOs interviewed talked about the importance of a new officer having the ability to communicate with the public. The importance of this attribute resonated so fully that FTOs felt it was a predictor of new recruit success within the FTO process. When asked to make recommendations about the training process, P4 exclaimed, "I think somehow a communications class or a speech class or something where they're, they're talking to people more, they're getting out there." While other FTOs did not reiterate the call for a class, many mentioned the need to engage new offers in conversation, to overcome their reticence, to think past the bare minimums necessary to elicit the intricate details during an interview with a citizen. "What do you think about asking them this?" allowed further conversation. Most agreed that engaging new recruits in open-ended questioning may be a way to promote this.

Are we too critical? Several FTOs became self-reflective about their own roles in the process. As a result, they asked, "Are we too critical when it comes to a newly academy trained police recruit stepping into this police work environment?" The FTOs interviewed across both small and large police departments discussed a plethora of the skills that need to be developed further, many of which must be learned shortly after entering the department career from a police academy. Several described the FTO process in their own department and admitted that the training process is often inundated with too many details, especially so early into the career. P11 described it like this: "You know, did he fail the system or did the system fail him?" Another FTO described law enforcement trainings this way, "Is it the way the training academies are set up. You're just providing the basic training. You know you're taking a raw piece of metal and putting it in the fire and banging it with a hammer" (P12) Recruits are expected to be able to perform basic tasks, but FTOs recognized experience and what a difference it makes. P12 explained it this way:

> He had about the same amount of time as I had in, he had (number) years, well I had him in step three, by step three I didn't have to teach him or say anything to him, I basically just sat in the car and was his partner. You know we would go to calls and he would handle everything from top to bottom and it would be basically the same thing I would do. He'd interview people, he'd complete his stuff, his investigations, to where basically the Detective Bureau, all they had to do was do a warrant request and the case was done. Where, you're not gonna get that with somebody new; somebody' . . . just getting to the point of getting to where you have the report finished and all the elements, the crime, and exactly what happened in there. Verses you know, going the extra yards and interviewing somebody, getting a good confession out of them, and, knowing to pull the video tape, knowing to contact certain people, knowing all the elements that you need to do to kind of further it. You're not gonna find that with a brand new officer, and we're not.

Taking the time to walk through the steps of complex and difficult types of calls allowed for better transition into knowledge on how to do things correctly procedurally. P7 recognized the added stress and pressure from his own entry into a law enforcement career under the eyes of an FTO and admitted to being nervous and mixing things up. As an FTO, he tries not to add that to the new officers' already stressful and complex agenda. Another acknowledged that even veteran officers struggle with certain kinds of calls or that veteran officers tend to develop a specialty area that they are good at and attempt to avoid calls that they are not good at handling:

> …Just that there's still veteran officers that try to avoid those. Because they never were proficient in everything, which no one is, but they would avoid things that they aren't good at. It was like that --- see their own faults, almost. (P9)

P12 addressed the lack of occupational job variety and academic compartmentalization that this occupation exposes new recruits to:

> a lot of it, they're younger also, so they don't have a lot of,what would I say, they haven't done a lot of jobs, they haven't done different things, they haven't interacted with different kinds of people, different demographics and things like that. They kind of just came from their little bubble into the police academy and now they're in this big world that things are going on all around them that they really don't understand.

P11 emphasized that FTOs serve a specific purpose, training, and noted, "It's easy to be negative; however, as an FTO and a parent, that's not what I tend to be, I tend to be the nurturer." He tries to offer the new recruit a suggestion on how to proceed forward and be successful with their FTO process, this is represented with this passage:

> …I think that it's fair for a recruit to ask his questions all day long, that's what we're there for. But I think that perhaps them saying it like, hey can I ask how you did this? Why you did that? What would you do in this situation? I think those are great questions. But I think that it's like, a kiss of death around here is when you

call out your FTO, or when you correct your FTO, and not that we're not wrong, but I think perhaps the delivery of their questions, like I said. (P11)

P14 described it another way by addressing the fact that recruits were new to the field, trying to learn what to do with all that they were exposed to in the academy and during the process. In this way, the contrast between being prepared and eventually learning the material for this job was acknowledged. They favored the idea that if a new recruit was motivated, the material knowledge would evolve with time.

> I don't care about them knowing the law. I don't. Because that's gonna come. Everything, you know, even when I was in the academy, I was, you know, they're trying to teach us criminal law and all this s*!t and I'm like, I gotta know all this stuff? I'm like, there's no way I'm ever gonna learn this. Well, there's always, you always deal with, you know, once you're on the road you deal with certain things and then you get really good at dealing with those things and you know that you don't need to know everything. That's what your boss is for, that's what detectives are for, everybody's got their own niche, everybody knows things, so, when these guys come in and they're like, oh, I know that this is a 93 day misdemeanor and this is, this is a 90 day misdemeanor, it's like, who gives a (f*!k!) Can you arrest on it or can't you? It's like, I don't care, I don't want to see them coming in and just saying yeah, I know all the laws, and this and that, and I don't make mistakes and – no, I want these guys to be ambitious, I want them to go out, I want them to be excited about going out and pulling stops. (P14)

The items FTOs seek to evaluate may never present themselves to the new officer during this training. When a specific situation/scenario finally exposes itself to the neophyte officer, s/he may have a hard time figuring out this situation. In such times, the police officers prior training presents itself as a problem-solving lesson. With such gaps and challenges in mind, FTOs often reconciled the need to be critical.

A good FTO is a coach and attempts to get new officers to think for themselves, to solve problems and to make decisions. P2 summed it up this way: "FTOs have a tendency

to make you learn." One FTO considered his approach as a "dummy approach," allowing new officers to expand what they did and did not know how to do. Similarly, another FTO wanted to get new officers involved, asking them to "give me something you could have done better" in the course of the FTO training. Taking the time to walk through the steps of complex and difficult types of calls allowed for a better transition into knowledge on how to do things correctly procedurally. As mentioned earlier, P7 recognized the added stress from his own entry into a law enforcement career under the oversight of a critical FTO. He admitted to struggling initially, something he keeps in mind while working with new recruits.

P2 explained that there were too many categories in the skills being evaluated about a new officer. He recognized that in several of the categories "we weren't able to put anything in for that day in certain areas for that day." This participant further suggested that there were several areas that, unless the new officer was exposed to a particular type of call for service, it would not be graded. He opined that these categories might not be needed at all. P2 indicated that his department attempted to simplify the grading process and started its own adaptation, a theme that others echoed. P2 further explained difficulties within the categories of evaluation, as follows:

> Because, oh, they would have categories like communications. And they would break that into, like, three communications. And we were finding that most of everything we're doing is falling into one category of communications – we don't need the other two, and we were finding that we were having to, we weren't being able to put anything for the day in, in those areas. So when the numbers got tallied, they had very little numbers in certain communications skills or, um, there, there was a couple other categories in there, 21, I think, yeah, it was 21, in the numbers system that, you know, there was so many categories, and we were finding maybe we don't need all these.

This same officer further described this process by this way, "the, the numbers system. Now it's a different system and they – and then, Lieutenant XXXX, who is now Chief of XXXX City, he tried to rewrite the whole program to where it would be a little bit easier for us to use. Within these discussions, therefore, is an admission that the evaluation criteria need to be revisited.

FTOs also suggested that the original documentation of the FTO evaluation process leaned towards protecting the agency, perhaps at the expense of new recruit learning:

> So, I actually spoke to this designer, this program, and I asked him, I said hey, how many times do you guys get called by cities having problems with recruits that are suing? He told me one time in five years. It had to do with a XYX Department officer that was involved in a shooting, um, and that it was a, it was a bad shoot, based upon the department policy. And that training officer was fired; he was a new recruit, I don't know the circumstances on it, this is what was told to me. And has since then, sued the police department, and it's, there's some ongoing litigation based upon that incident. But basically this is what this program is designed for. The one thing, it's the problem officer that we didn't have enough documentation on, and now is suing our department. And that's the unfortunate part. That's what I would like to see changed. (P1)

This participant felt strongly that such an approach to evaluation was "a disservice to our field training program" (P1). P6 echoed the same idea about the system being used in his own agency: "…the bottom line—there was documentation. It says, yes, we talked about this and you (New Recruit) said you understood it. You don't see that kind of coaching documentation." The system was intended to document capability within newly trained officers. It did not have the same informality of the earlier "good ol boy system." When asked about how new officers were evaluated in the past, P6 responded this way: "Gosh, back in the day, it was just get in the car with your senior guy and he's gonna teach you

how to do the job. And you're gonna listen to him and, you're gonna, and that was

successful."

FTOs also discussed problems inherent within a scoring system or a pass/fail type

evaluation. In speaking of his work with new officers, P7 examined this difficulty:

> I've seen our new recruits get totally tied up on our scoring and they, they, they
> walk around and they go, man, I am not passing any of these categories and they
> get into a slump. And I had that – I've seen those officers have the slump and then
> I get to the next phase and then we build upon all these little successes. And we
> allow our new recruits to make mistakes that are not egregious and that are not
> major officer safety concerns, that we allow that to kind of grow, but we address
> these mistakes. And we don't have to document every single little thing that they
> do wrong or right. I think this is just expected of us.

In continuing his discussion of grading, he argued that

> The other part of that, too, is driving. Uh, I, I could have a recruit that drives
> outstanding the entire day but the moment he hits a curb or we get a flat tire because
> he hit that curb, it's now not a passing score based upon that curb issue. And I think
> it's bull crap. (P7)

Such criticism of department policy with regards to minute details or failure of the policy

to acknowledge complicating factors within scoring were again expressed by P1, when he

explained how a new recruit can earn a failing score for something he should not be expect

to do:

> And yeah, um, you know, in our department, um, we have the evidence tech policy,
> and if, and if it's a domestic violence assault, we will call an evidence tech, uh, to
> our scene, to take pictures. It's, it's part of our standard procedure that we do, and
> then in our report, we will indicate that the evidence tech was called to the scene
> and the scene is ---. Or if an evidence tech was not available, the report will reflect
> that the evidence tech was not available and that photos probably need to be taken
> the next shift. But this is, uh, is a, is a, is a two or three week probationary officer,
> you're not gonna understand that.
> And then, based upon our grading, because I gave them an assist, it's not a passing
> score, and I think it's very, I don't like that.
>
> Now I have to explain to this new recruit at the end of the day that because you
> didn't that indicate that an evidence tech wasn't called to the scene, you didn't put

it on the report, I had to give you an assist for that report, now it's not a passing score.

FTO system: slow spin and crash. As mentioned in my discussion of department expectations, when new recruits start to falter in one area, they often find it difficult or next to impossible to succeed. A self-defeating attitude compiled with pass/fail or a non-passing numerical score kept new officers from excelling. This spiral downward was described by several participants. P1 described it this way: "I feel like this new system has shifted us to become field critics as opposed to trainers" and "I'm really disappointed at the emphasis for our new recruits right from the get go to either get it or they don't get it." He clarified that as an FTO he faced too little time to help them work on "getting better . . . if they don't get it within that time frame, they're out of the program (P1).

One of the concerns that presented itself was whether FTOs labeled new recruits too early on, thereby reducing their potential to complete the process. Again, P1 lamented, "And, unfortunately, what happens is sometimes these new recruits are labeled right from the start as either a good guy that's gonna make it or someone that's not gonna make it" (P1). P2 also mentioned this tendency, but more as a matter of fact: "Guys, I mean, let's face it, you know, new guys get a nickname right off the bat" and "it's something we as police officers pick up on real quick" (P2). This refers to the names that officers carry with themselves throughout their career.

When the number of items to do is at such a heightened state, just a little bit of stress is more likely to interfere with some officers' performance: "Just froze, absolutely froze, and, we had a lot of other issues with him." (P14) Because of the limited time to train new recruits, several FTOs felt they didn't have enough time to fix any issues or go

into more depth with the new officer in the event that something was not working. P1
described it this way: "They're, given training time and it just seems like once we start
dipping in their training time, um, there's a slow spin and crash—they slow spin and they
crash." (P1) This next scenario describes how a struggling recruit's performance was
complicated by his reaction to a car fatality:

> …because the nature of the run, the child was screaming as high as a child can
> scream, the fire department arrived, they quickly transported her over to (hospital),
> and we followed shortly thereafter. When we got there, we found out that, she had
> died. From that point onwards, his ability to do his job just continuously
> deteriorated and deteriorated and deteriorated. So by the time phase three rolled
> around, he had fizzled out of the program. (P13)

P14 described several areas that have been discussed and summarized the tension an FTO
feels when putting this great amount of effort into a newly hired police officer recruit.

> It really, it sucked because you, you usually, you put, you put the most effort into
>
> these guys. And it's like, and the, the times when you feel burnt out doing FTO is
>
> when you have, you know, this guy, that guy, you know, um, but it was, it was bad
>
> from day one. Um, just, not sure of himself, um, unable to initiate things, unable to,
>
> you know, find traffic stops, unable to, when he's on the traffic stop, unable to make
>
> a decision, you know, he's always looking to the FTO, or FTO, to, uh, to make the
>
> decision for him. And you know, I mean, it's fine when it's something you've never
>
> had before but when it's something like a, a minor traffic stop that, you know,
>
> you're making 2, 3, 4, times a day, it's, it's like, okay you should know this. Come
>
> on, man. Um, when like, you know, it's, we, I had a lot of things that, it felt like
>
> almost every day, there was something with this kid. And it was like, the days that

were good, you were like, holy shit, man, like, that was great. Like, and it was, it's

like, you're, you're praising him for doing, doing things that he should just be doing

normally. And that's when I knew that, it's like, this is not gonna work with this

kid. You know? (P14)

And the spiral continues downward, as explained by P14:

> I feel like when I did, when I did see a good day out of him, it was something like, we were like, oh yeah, good, you know, great day, you know, this is what we need, do more of this. You know, I feel like it, whatever was good was just not f*!king up.

Watch your six. All FTOs described the importance of watching your six. In police

terminology, *watch your six* means to keep an eye on your own and your partner's back

during the course of your tour of duty. In the words of P12, learning to be defensive can be

difficult for recruits without prior exposure to law enforcement:

> You know, this gentleman had never been a physical confrontation in his life other than in the police academy where you force them to do either wrestling or boxing. . . . never know what the signs were, if somebody was gonna get in a fight, you know, and they're squaring off on you and stuff like that. All that stuff has to be taught to this person. (P12)

In addition to teaching it, however, FTOs felt the burden to assure new recruits that their

FTOs had their backs:

> But I always would make sure they would know that I won't let you make a mistake. I won't let you do anything that is a violation of our policy, or that's gonna get you in trouble, or that's gonna hurt, you know, where you're gonna get hurt, or they're gonna get hurt, like, I've got your back. (P11).

FTOs often observed interactions that involved safety problems and good calls.

They concurred that such moments were important during debriefing, allowing FTOs to

strongly emphasize the importance of officer safety. As such, they advocated for regular

"debriefing after the call" (P9) and "real life, hands on type of training (P4), recalling PBL

learning, as acknowledged below:

> My academy didn't do a whole lot of scenario training. About those eight weeks, it just helps you, it's the stuff you deal with out here, the more you play it, the more you practice it, the more you think about it, the more confident you'll be and better officer you will be from it. . . . And, you know, I don't know if that's something that happens at the academy, where they just don't do enough scenarios, because we're very scenario-based driven at this department. (P4)

> Be able to rehearse a whole scenario, you know we don't have the ability or the manpower to run a whole scenario (P3).

Others praised their new recruits' "spidey senses" and "street smarts," as demonstrated below:

> But just that kind of the recognition, to see that kind of stuff. That is harder to teach new guys to pick up on your Spidey senses and act on them. (P6)

> …his, what would you call it, street smarts, were already there to where he knew what was gonna happen. He wasn't gonna be the guy standing there getting punched in the face because the bad guy was taking a position, or a maneuvering around him while he was talking to him. (P12)

These FTOs acknowledged that many signs of trouble came in a non-verbal form, in

reading patterns, such as the following:

> . . . wouldn't make eye contact; you're not watching this guy, you're not watching how mad he is, you're not watching his, his non-verbals, his clenched fists, and how pissed off he is, and I said, right, he's been a victim, so I don't think he's gonna, like, attack you, but you don't know, people are unpredictable, so you need to take back, you need to have interview stance, you need to look at people, you need to look at their eyes, look at their non-verbals. (P11)

In following up on the significance of these moments, P14 remarked:

> I want them to have their head on the swivel and looking around, I, you know, that's, that's the biggest thing that I was teaching. On top of, on top of officer safety, because obviously that was always number one to me, it was keeping your head on a swivel. Look for, look at the person, look at the people's eyes.

Slow acclimation to the mayhem. FTOs frequently mentioned their concerns about newly trained police officers being exposed to violence and death. Several FTOs offered a suggestion to increase the amount of ride alongs prior to this career choice. P9 described the chaos unfolding as "insanity" and resisted blaming new officers for freezing up on a call and not knowing what to do. With this in mind, P5 noted that "the mental stuff is harder to teach than the physical." Several FTOs also suggested an internship program where new recruits would be allowed to see the workload and reality of the job without operating under the stress of being evaluated prior to seeking employment. That this type of exposure would allow better acclimation to the policing environment:

It's not what you see on television or movies, um, you know. (P13)

I did mine out with the township, I did, like, three months of ride alongs. That was three days a week. And, uh, it, you, it was good because I got to see a gruesome dead body, I got to see violence and things, and I was just not in any sort of position of authority or any sort of position where I was expected to do anything. So it was a slow acclimation to the, the, the mayhem.

In emphasizing this point, P9 described a very gruesome scene:

And we had to go back to the station after that for about an hour, um, and just do nothing because like he turned white as a ghost, uh, and like I could just tell he was getting ready to lose it. . . My, my general go-to is, is like, is, these things happen, in spite, they're gonna happen anyways whether or not you're here. Don't worry about it. I, there's nothing you could have done to stop it and the bad things that you see are 99% of them, gonna happen in spite of your best efforts.

A little extra time. One of the areas that many of the FTOs talked about was the need for more time. They described not having enough time to truly develop new officers, even with the standard academy training. This theme emerged early and was echoed across several FTO interviews. The following examples demonstrate their concerns about the need for more time:

Uh, that, that first phase, man, it was sit down and shut up and you're gonna watch. And that was for four weeks. We don't have that. There is no time to, you know, uh, train these guys and let them see what's going on. (P1) Similarly another FTO offered this remark "More time with the FTO; more time with the more experienced officer". (P8) The FTO knows that there is such a short time to train these new officers to their department policy and procedures plus handle the call workload "because it's, um, three, 4 week phases, and, well, we start out with, um, two weeks of admin, um, three, 4 week phases, plus 2 week shadow. So we're looking at 14 weeks." (P5)

"For a new guy, like I was brand new when I started where I was – 3.5 months is just not long enough to then throw them in a car by themselves. No matter how well they do. It's just not long enough." (P9) Similarly another FTO offered this suggestion that their police department recognized the need for more time and extended it. "What he's done(Chief) is he has said, for the new people, no experience, you are going to have ten weeks in step one." (P11)

FTOs recognized the importance of training a new officer within their own departmental systems, but the addition of call volumes and going from call to call often did not allow them the proper time to debrief the new officer. To sum it up in this area this participant stated it this way. "If we could do it, which we're working towards, more time" (P8). With extra time, many FTOs were willing to give new recruits additional time to learn "if they were trying" (P7). This sentiment was echoed in the following statements, although sometimes this extra time could mean that FTOs were given better insight into the new recruits' failures, too:

If some of these kids don't have, never been exposed to it, they're not, it's gonna take them awhile to get to that, that confidence level. (P5)

So, my, my, the struggle that we have is that we don't get a chance to develop these people. (P1)

The more I got to know him, and the more we worked together, I could see that that, you know, his faults started to show. (P7)

Although this research focused on new officers, one FTO suggested that departments now look more at experienced lateral transfers coming into the departments,

which led him to acknowledge how different the time needs of new recruits were from those who had some experience:

> Laterals could make it through our program no problem at all, within the four week, four week, four week, two-week period. Because they already had the experience and they knew what to do. (P12)

I'm burned out. Several FTOs described the feeling of being burned out in the training of new officers. Although most enjoyed the job and knew the importance of being in training position within their department, FTOs dealt with not having any breaks and downtime in the training. These themes resonated throughout the interviews:

> Yeah, I got burnt out pretty good, um, I did, I did four in a row and two of them were, were tough. And um, it's just, I mean, I, I guess it would, it happens with everybody. Um, especially when you're, you're putting a lot of effort into it, you know, and not getting the results you want. It's another thing to have to be responsible for somebody else. And then to make sure he learns from it on top of it. You know? So, yeah, that, it'll burn you out. It's, it's definitely stressful, I'll be happy to go back into, into being an FTO again. (P14)

> It really, it sucked because you usually put the most effort into these guys. And it's like, the times when you feel burnt out doing FTO is when you have, you know, this guy, that guy, but it was bad from day one .(P14)

> The downside to any training is that if you are training someone that is having a difficult time then the FTO has a difficult time dealing with. (P14)

Although FTOs complained about the fatigue they encountered by being paired with particularly challenging recruits over a long span of time and of not having breaks from training at all, their concerns often fell on deaf ears:

> He had me go ten weeks with (new police recruit) and I told him ten weeks with one FTO is too much. So what he does is he does six weeks with one FTO. Ten weeks, and um, it was just too long. (P11)

> I think maybe sometimes almost to a fault. Uh, uh, a lieutenant we had, training lieutenant we had two years ago, he retired (number) years ago, um, he would not let FTOs out of the program. Just wouldn't do it. They'd come in and say listen I'm

burned out I can't do this, I'm not, I need a break, well, unfortunately, you're too good at what you're doing, so sorry, stick with it, it's for the good of the department (P6)

It's kind of unfair to ask them but until you can get the newer FTOs kind of caught up to speed, um, yeah, I mean the training unit knows who's good so they kind of lean on them. (P6)

Police departments need to assess their own training. By way of completing

their observations about what could be done to change the training process for new recruits,

several FTOs described what their department had been doing to improve both retention

and community relations. For example, P6 spoke of how his department was trying to hone

future applicants and make connections with the community:

> Well, we're starting grass root stuff. We're growing our own. So we have, um, one, I have officers going into schools. And I go into schools, those positive interactions we're starting. They get a little older, now they can join our explorer program, and that's kind of growing your own. I always had good interactions with the police, they always, waved at me, they always gave me a sticker, so I just had a lot of respect for them, so now I wanna be a cop. It's exactly what the goal is.

And, his department's efforts are working; it has a 93% success rate.

Others acknowledged that they needed a way to better get to know applicants before

they became new recruits, a process that did not rely on a simple background check and an

interview. To that end, P14 spoke of his desire to extend the interview into a social setting.

Perhaps tongue and check, he suggested:

> Let us take him out for a few drinks for a couple hours. We'll, we'll find out what kind of person he really is. You know? Because you know, they're, they're in these, in these interviews and they're like, and they're going over these, these regular, these questions over in their head – how am I gonna answer this, how am I gonna answer this, okay, alright, oh, yeah if you pull over your mother, blah blah blah, what would you do, this kind of bullshit – the bullshit questions – that they, they go over in their head and they, and they train themselves for. That's all gonna go out the window – you take them over to Fishbone's and you get a couple pops in them and lube them up and then start finding out what kind of person they are you

know? Are they, are they sexist, are they racist? Are they an asshole? Are they, are they just good guys? You know? Is this somebody I'm gonna be able to spend the next twenty years working with? I mean, right there, I mean, you know, it's, it's funny, it's like, you can get a lot more, I feel like you can get a lot more out of going to the bar and finding out and having a drink with somebody rather than going to their elementary school and asking their third grade teacher what kind of a student he was.

As FTOs considered better ways to hire and train their new recruits, they could not ignore the fact that there is a shortage of both qualified candidates and FTOs: "We're like begging for people, we can't, you can't find anyone and you're forced to almost take anyone who applies that passes the requirements at this point" (P7).

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to explore Michigan FTOs' perceptions of new police officer recruits and to determine if they observed noticeable differences between new academy recruits trained in a PBL environment and those prepared in non-PBL environments. To that end, I randomly selected new police recruits who had graduated from a Midwestern PBL-based training police academy in the last five years and entered a career in law enforcement as a police officer. Next, I focused on finding new recruit officers who had only worked in one police department in Michigan. I then cross-referenced these new recruits against a list of FTOs provided by graduates to locate recruits who had only one FTO during their training period. Finally, I sought participation from 119 FTOs, 46 of whom agreed to participate and 15 of whom were interviewed for a purposeful sample of FTOs from small, medium, and large departments in Michigan.

The 15 interviews yielded three primary dimensions, two conceptual categories, and numerous attributes, each discussed in detail in Chapter 4. This chapter discusses the implications of these findings as well as identifies limitations and provides suggestions for future research.

This section briefly reviews the three primary dimensions described in Chapter Four and discusses the implications of FTOs' insights into the attributes of exemplar and non-exemplar recruits. Moreover, it examines these attributes in relationship to PBL and explores their implications for police academy pedagogy.

Primary Dimension One: People Skills

The first dimension, people skills, emerged as I examined the attributes characteristic of exemplar police recruits. Four positive attributes, identified as Communication (*communication is key*), Control (*took control*), Confidence and Assertiveness (*sure of themselves*), and Detailed (*being sharp and picking up on things*) and their opposites arose from patterns in FTOs comments. When examined in the context of FTO examples and after comparing these attributes to one another, they were recognized as a primary dimension.

This first attribute, *communication is key,* was dominant in FTOs' descriptions of what they liked or disliked in a new police recruit. The theme of communication skills resonated throughout the FTOs' interviews. Although coding identified a multitude of skills a new police recruit needed to possess, communication was always number one. Over and over again, FTOs noted the importance of communication to handling and controlling the chaotic and rapidly unfolding scenes they described. In fact, communication was critical to all primary exemplar attributes within the primary dimension people skills.

In considering that these people skills are influenced by the type of learning style being taught to new recruits in a police academy, a better look at this is important in this research study. New police officer training in a controlled academy setting often is not the same as a real-life service call for a new police recruit. A typical classroom often involves choices that appear black and white with a focus on one area of learning or action at a time. Student centered learning, such as that within a PBL setting, however, allows more direct interaction with the material and facilitates a greater sense of student accomplishment. I

was only able to find two perceptional studies involving PBL effectiveness and traditional teacher centered learning methods in a police academy environment. Prior research focused primarily on academy recruits and their perceptions of the effectiveness of the PBL versus a NON-PBL law enforcement academy training environment (Queen, 2016; Vander Kooi, 2006). Vander Kooi (2006) demonstrated that new recruits felt they possessed better communication skills, problem solving ability, and critical thinking ability. Queen's (2016) study found that recruits perceived being better prepared for the police career based on their PBL academy training (Queen, 2016). This same study showed that PBL-trained recruits' MCOLES state licensing examination scores were four points higher in all tested areas than all other police training academies in the State of Michigan. This was the first empirical research to show such score differences between recruits trained in PBL and non-PBL academies. The current study built upon Queen's (2016) suggestion to interview FTOs to determine if they also noticed differences among new police recruits.

All FTO participants realized the value of people skills. Many also described some new recruits as better than others at exemplifying these people skills. These exemplar attributes were found to be more characteristic of recruits who attended a police academy that was primarily grounded in PBL. A significant finding of this research is that 13 of 15 FTOs (nearly 87%) identified an exemplar academy trained recruit as coming from a PBL training academy. In the cases of the other two FTOs, one identified an exemplar from a non-PBL academy who grew up in police household and who had direct access to the police lifestyle and his employing department well before entering the training academy learning setting. This outcome was unforeseen and therefore did not serve as an exclusion criteria

for the research. In the second case, the FTO discussed a PBL-trained recruit as a non-exemplar who lacked communication skills but excelled at technology. The recruit was characterized as "smart enough to build a rocket ship and fly it to the moon, but just had no people skills" (P12). The people skills primary dimension, specifically the communication skills attribute, led to the next primary dimension of what police departments looked for with new police recruits coming into their domain.

Primary Dimension Two: Department Skills

Two primary attributes of the second primary dimension, department skills, emerged from FTOs' perceptions, primarily their discussion of non-exemplars. The first one discussed was deemed "compounding issues," characterizing non-exemplar recruits whose struggle in one area often led them to struggle in another. FTOs identified this negative attribute as being a slow spin and crash. In other words, once a recruit started on a downward spiral from a difficulty within one skill, it affected his/her performance in other areas, ultimately leading to the new recruit's dismissal during the FTO process. The second area was described as "corrective action needed" and referred to an area in which the recruit needed to improve. In such a case, the FTO identified an area that needed improvement and used documentation to track the new recruit's progress or lack thereof. The more corrective actions a recruit received, the greater the predictability of failure during the FTO process. According to the FTO participants interviewed, once these negative attributes were identified as compounding issues or were documented under corrective action needed in relationship to a new recruit, the failures just continued to occur.

Primary Dimension Three: Technical Skills

The next primary dimension reflected recruits' physical and mental capabilities in the technical skills area. This dimension evolved into two areas: driving and technological savvy. Although police work requires an ability to drive a patrol vehicle, often for hours at a time and for several miles during a standard shift, both exemplar and non-exemplar recruits appeared to lack the physical ability to drive a police car. Responding to a call for service involves many things and this is a multi-tasking ability for a new police recruit. Officers have to contemplate what type of call they are responding to, remember an address, know the geographical area, safely navigate traffic with lights and siren activated to that location, park in a secure area, and tactically respond to the potentially dangerous situation rapidly unfolding with a multitude of factors present.

While exemplar and non-exemplar recruits struggled with driving, both tended to excel in the use of technology. In today's law enforcement environment, access to a cell phone and computers appears to have helped in this area. This generation of new police recruits who grew up with technology at their fingertips seems to be more proficient than those who did not have that instant access to information capability years before. New police recruits, according to FTO participants, appeared more adept with technology and operating systems currently in place in new police departments. As such, many FTO participants described new police recruits as having an almost innate ability to navigate computer systems and to embrace the technology when allowed to use it. Despite all new recruits' affinity for technology, it appears that driving needs to be better addressed with

the requirements set by MCOLES because both exemplar and non-exemplars struggle with this skill.

FTO Insights

Additional insights were gleaned in response to an open-ended question that asked what could improve the FTO process within a police department as well as what could help assure new police recruits' success throughout the FTO process. Participants responses were coded as follows: 1) *a class where we make them talk to one another*, 2) *are we too critical*, 3) *slow spin and crash*, 4) *watch your six*, 5) *slow acclimation to the mayhem*, 6) *a little extra time*, 7) *I'm burned out*, and 8) *police departments need to assess their own training*,

By asking whether the FTO process was *too critical*, participants acknowledged their concerns that FTOs might be too critical in the early stages, basing their evaluation of new recruits on expectations that reflected what experienced officers should be able to do. Perhaps as a way to mediate potentially unwarranted criticism, they also recommended a *communication class where we make them talk to one another*, a potential approach to help new recruits develop the ability to talk to people within a guided curriculum. Communication and problems with it become the cornerstone of this research about exemplar and non-exemplar recruits. By raising the need for *a little extra time*, FTOs acknowledged that they did not have enough time to properly train recruits, especially considering the amount of material knowledge that is necessary to function independently in police work. This led into the next topic, *slow spin and crash,* in which FTOs spoke of recruits whose initial failures in one area of training eventually spread to others and

predicted their terminal failure in the FTO process. FTOs also recommended that *police departments need to assess their own training*. Several police departments in this research often were able to identify what is currently a critical area in recruiting qualified candidates for law enforcement. (MCOLES, 2015) These police agencies offered suggestions to what was working for them and self-initiated plans developed to work towards solving this shortage. *I'm burned out* indicated, while FTOs enjoy most the training process, they struggled with the time consumed, particularly by failing recruits, and requested a break in the training process after a difficult recruit. They reported, however, that this request was almost never granted. The *slow acclimation to the mayhem* represented their growing realization about the sheer reality of the job in a landscape of multiple moving parts and much chaos. Finally, *watch your six* (*officer safety*), indicated their ongoing concern that despite their efforts to prepare new recruits, they remained concerned to ensure that no one would get hurt.

Implications for Police Academy Training

This study focused on new police recruits and new recruit attributes that were identified within participant FTOs' own words. Problem based learning has been used in the medical field for many years and has shown success for medical personnel in handling this fast pace work environment. The law enforcement world represents a similar fast-paced environment in which communication, quick decision making, critical thinking, and problem solving are critical. Participant FTOs not only described attributes related to PBL but also identified the PBL-educated recruit as the exemplar in 13 of 15 cases.

The attributes that participant FTOs identified may be crucial to predicting the successful integration of new recruits into their departments. This research was designed after reading two similar dissertations, each that played a part in the analysis of problem based learning and training new police academy recruits. As mentioned in Chapter One, Vander Kooi (2006) explored what new police recruits thought about their training in a problem based learning environment. His findings indicated that new recruits appreciated hand-on exercises more than the standard lecture format. A subsequent dissertation by Queen (2016) explored PBL-trained police officers' perceptions of their training academy and the level of satisfaction they felt with their training. It then compared the results of these PBL-trained officers to the results of their non-PBL peers on the state license examination. The scores in all the key MCOLES training categories were a minimum of 4 points above all other training academies' state licensing examination scores. The independent variable in both sides of Queen's research was whether or not the PBL learning methodology affected 1) police officers' perceptions of their problem-solving ability, critical thinking, communication skill development, academy class satisfaction, and academy preparation for policing; and 2) state examination scores. Both of these dissertations indicated that recruits were more satisfied with the training received in a problem based learning training academy environment. Recruits also were found to believe that they had better problem solving ability, improved critical thinking skills, higher level of academy class satisfaction, and an overall higher feeling for being prepared for the police career environment. This study extended the research beyond the PBL training site and students' own perceptions to those of the FTOs who supervise new recruits as they moved

into the department. It sought to determine if FTOs noticed a difference between the performance and attributes of PBL-trained new recruits and non-PBL trained recruits. FTO participants interviewed for this study indicated that in all but two occasions, exemplar new recruits came from an a PBL-based law enforcement training academy. With two prior dissertations related to a PBL-police academy training methodology and this current research showing that 86.6 % of recruits selected by FTOs as exemplars were PBL-trained, it appears that training methodology is an important factor not only in student success but also in new recruit acclimation to the force.

Implications for Learning Design and Technology

Equally important to FTOs' insights about new recruit attributes is what the study revealed about the problem-based learning methodology that was used to teach these exemplar recruits in the police academy setting. This research suggests that further exploration is warranted in using problem-based learning as a teaching platform, especially in areas such as a police academy where higher order thinking is important. Multiple skillsets are needed, especially at the early stages of a recruit's career. This research study suggests that curriculum design assists in developing objectives that align with MCOLES. Teaching practitioners and learners to properly implement a problem-based learning methodology can help promote better problem-solving capabilities. One important consideration would be for a practitioner not only to be educated on how to facilitate the problem based learning process but also on how to construct scenarios that simulate real life based upon their own experiences. Law enforcement practitioners in an academy setting often model their own training from their professional real life experiences. This

aligning of the material needed to perform job tasks is crucial when leaving the academic setting and entering the real-world setting. The model that the problem based academy has designed and adapted as revealed within this research study appears to be a valuable blueprint for other police academies to consider.

An interesting aspect of this research was FTOs' ability to recognize differences in the critical thinking skills and problem-solving ability among recruits. Several FTOs' reflected on the origin of this difference. Although FTOs considered recruits' family upbringing and scholastic achievement, both which are relevant factors, it may be that the academy setting was ultimately the most recent. Most likely due to the close proximity of the direct academy training in starting of the recruits' career. What appears to be the dominant factor in this research is problem based learning and the proper implementation and design process are what make these exemplar recruits stand out and go further ahead than other non-exemplar recruits.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study examined a potential relationship between PBL training and new recruit attributes identified by FTOs from small and large police departments in Michigan. This section addresses new directions subsequent studies could take with this research.

FTO perceptions of the attributes of successful new recruits and the relationship of these attributes to new recruit success offer additional evidence for the PBL pedagogy originally suggested by MCOLES. This study examined the perspectives of FTOs, but it did not include the insights of others within their working police organizations. These others who also have immediate contact with new police recruits include police academy

instructors who often travel between police academies to train other recruits, some of whom even travel out of state to other state police organizations. Thus, conducting this type of research in other states or even foreign countries may help advance our understanding of the best approach to educate future new police recruits. Research also should be extended to line staff in a police organization to determine if they can identify any differences between police recruits coming from a PBL-based academy and those new recruits from a non-PBL academy. Just as this research was an affirmation of two prior dissertations that explored the efficacy of PBL for police training academies, subsequent studies could help us better determine if PBL is the linchpin for better-trained police officers. To that end, future researchers could interview new recruits immediately after the last phase of their FTO training to yield yet another perspective on the level of preparedness they felt in regards to their academy training. Finally, as discovered during this research, a future study may include identifying new police recruits who have a direct family law enforcement connection to see if their rates of employment and FTO process completion are higher than those that do not.

Limitations

I approached this research with transparency and made all attempts to distance myself from any inherent bias. Participants' words echo throughout the identified attributes. I look at this study not only my research but also as the FTO participants' contribution to this area of inquiry. I realize the difficulty of resisting my own assumptions based upon my law enforcement career and educational training. I also realize that another researcher may find subtleties in participants' words and could derive a different set of

attributes. What would not change, however, are the details provided by the participants and the exact words they provided. This research was a new journey into untraveled territory in an attempt to better understand FTOs' experiences with new recruits and to unpack how their perceptions of new recruit attributes might help researchers to better understand effective ways to prepare police academy students for their future role as police recruits.

This qualitative research was developed from participant FTO interviews. This type of research often is criticized because it is based upon participants' views and because the researcher is a participant to varying degrees. However, one's view of the arena in which s/he is directly immersed showcases his/her direct lived experience. Thick description derived directly from participants' own words generates an environment that even with the passage of time can take a reader back to the feeling that was captured from the developing situation. Categorizing participants' words was condensed by using Dedoose, which allowed me to keep the data intact and to track similarities across responses. To reduce the potential for cross contamination, I avoided new recruits who had attained employment at more than one police department. I also attempted to gather insights from more than 15 participant FTOs. Due to the inherent safety and security in a police officer's occupational nature, however, some FTOs were hesitant to participate due to fear of supervisory ramifications in their current career, even under conditions of anonymity.

Another factor should be mentioned in regards to study limitations. The educational process chosen in the PBL based police-training academy is based on a 35-week academy.

The length of the non-PBL academies averaged between approximately 18-20 weeks. The length of academy recruit training was not considered in this research.

Recommendations

These findings can assist new police recruits, FTOs, and police academy instructors. Results demonstrate that in the eyes of FTOs from small and larger police departments, PBL-trained police recruits rise to the top. To be sure that new academy recruits have a better chance of not only getting hired, but also of understanding or developing the attributes necessary to increase their success during the FTO training process in a police department, police academies should consider using PBL training exercises.

The following six suggestions are placed in the hands law enforcement practitioners who have a direct connection to training new law enforcement officers:

1. FTOs should attend a PBL-based instruction course to better understand not only how new recruits are trained but also to better understand their own training techniques, so they can help new recruits better adapt.

2. Police training institutions should consider adopting PBL as the basis for training to help new officers develop communication skills, problem solving abilities, and critical thinking.

3. The training used for police officers in developing their driving skills should be improved, perhaps by increasing the number of mandatory hours or via PBL simulations, because driving was identified as recruits' weakest skills. Moreover, since new recruit driving appeared to be a major issue from the perspective of most

interviewed FTO participants and because officers spend more time driving than many other policing tasks, MCOLES should mandate more time for this skill.

4. PBL-based instruction scenarios should be developed to improve new recruits' communication skills, particularly regarding diversity. Several FTOs in this study indicated the multi-racial communities in their own jurisdictions.

5. In light of FTO concerns about new recruits' hesitancy to act, techniques should be developed using PBL- based scenarios to ensure that new recruits will develop the confidence and ability to take control of a scene.

6. MCOLES should update its training objectives to incorporate more scenario-based training during the new recruit police academy. Lecture based training does not yield the quality new police recruit that PBL training does.

Conclusions

This research was designed to identify exemplar and non-exemplar new police recruits and to determine whether their performance might be related to the training methodology used in police academies. More specifically, it asked FTOs to identify new recruit attributes and examined these perceptions for ideas about how to improve the success of new police recruits. The research identified four primary dimensions, two conceptual categories, and fourteen attributes. It appears evident from this research into FTOs' perceptions that PBL-trained new police recruits rose to the top in most cases, a finding that complemented earlier feedback from PBL-trained police academy graduates (Queen, 2016; Vander Kooi, 2006). This study shows that additional research is necessary to substantiate whether or not current findings will hold true on a larger scale and when

compared to academies and departments outside of Michigan. I hope this inspires future research in this area for those who operate in the police training environment.

Closing Thoughts

As a former law enforcement practitioner and a current full-time scholar who helps train new generations of police recruits, I wholeheartedly opine that PBL makes a difference. The focus of my research was not to question which FTO training system was considered better or to attempt to explain the generational gap between FTOs and new police recruits. The research was intended to determine which learning methodology is more effective once a police recruit leaves the training academy setting. When considered along with the other two dissertation findings on this PBL police academy, my research suggests that PBL is a promising platform upon which to provide a better foundation for new police recruits. Could this be, as MCOLES has suggested, the start of a new curriculum design for police academies in the United States and perhaps throughout the world? I believe this research suggests that it does.

APPENDIX A

Research Informed Consent

FIELD TRAINING OFFICER'S PERCEPTIONS OF NOVICE OFFICER'S
PREPAREDNESS

Principal Investigator (PI):   Steven J. Amey
        Wayne State University
        College of Education
        Instructional Technology
        (231) 591-5083

Purpose
You are being asked to participate in a research study that will explore field training officers' perceptions of newly hired officers. Because you are a Field Training Officer in the State of Michigan, you were randomly selected. The study is being conducted by Steven J. Amey, a doctoral student in the Ph.D. Instructional Design and Technology program at Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

Please read this form in its entirety and feel free to ask any questions before agreeing to participate.

The purpose of this research study is to identify themes about police recruits that have arisen from interviewing Field Training Officer's in the State of Michigan.

Study Procedures
The study will include at least one conversational interview regarding your experience in training newly trained police academy recruits. The interview will be arranged for your convenience and is expected to last approximately one hour. The interview will be digitally recorded. The transcript will be shared with you for review. Once the final report is completed, you will have the opportunity to review it as well. There may be additional information needed after the first interview for clarification; in this event, you may be asked for additional information.

Benefits
There may be benefits to participating in this research. The information the study obtains from you may be helpful in determining the effectiveness of training at police academies. It is hoped the results will help to format training, which may improve the abilities in new officers hired by your department.

Risks
There are no risks for your participation in this study.

Study Costs
There are no related costs to you in this study.

Compensation
You will not be paid monetarily for this study.

Confidentiality

In this study, you will be identified by a code name or number. Your identifying information will not be released without your written permission. However, the study sponsor, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Wayne State University, or federal agencies with appropriate regulatory oversight [e.g., Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Office of Human Research Protections(OHRP), Office of Civil Rights (OCR), etc.) may review your records.

When the results of this research are published, or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may cease participation at any time. You are free to only answer questions that you want to answer. You are free to withdraw from participation in this study at any time. Your decisions will not change any present or future relationship with Wayne State University or its affiliates, or other services you are entitled to receive.

The PI may stop your participation in this study without your consent. The PI will make and inform you of the decision. This would be to protect your health and safety, or because you did not follow the instructions to take part in the study.

Questions

If you have any questions about this study now or in the future, you may contact Steven Amey at the following phone number (231) 591-5083. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, the Chair of the Institutional Review Board can be contacted at (313) 577-1628. If you are unable to contact the research staff, or if you want to talk to someone other than the research staff, you may also call (313) 577-1628 to ask questions or voice your concerns or complaints.

Consent to Participate in this Research Study

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. If you choose to take part in this study you may withdraw at any time. You are not giving up any of your legal rights by signing this form. Your signature below indicates that you

have read, or had read to you, this entire consent form, including the risks and benefits, and have all of your questions answered. You will be given a copy of this consent form.

Signature of participant / Legally authorized representative *   Date

Printed name of participant / Legally authorized representative * Time

Signature of witness**   Date

Printed name of witness **   Time

Signature of person obtaining consent   Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent   Time

APPENDIX B

Demographic Information

Please choose one answer for each of the questions.

What is your age? (Choose One)

21-25

26-30

31-35

36-40

41-45

46-50

51-55

56-60

61-65

1. What is your gender? (Choose One)

Male
Female

2. How would you classify your ethnicity?

Arab
Asian/Pacific Islander
Black
Caucasian/White
Hispanic
Indian
Indigenous or Aboriginal
Latino
Multiracial
Other

3. How many years have you worked in law enforcement?

1-5
6-10
11-15
16-20
21-25
26 or more

4. Do you have any military experience?

Yes
No

5. What is your current job title in your department?

Deputy/Police Officer
Sergeant
Lieutenant
Captain
Undersheriff
Sheriff
Chief
Other

6. What shift do you currently work?

Dayshift
Nightshift
Other (rotating?)

7. What is your current educational level?
G.E.D.
High school graduate
Some college
Associates degree
Bachelor's Degree
Master's Degree
PhD/ Doctorate

8. What is your current annual income?
20,000-29,999
30,000-39,999

40,000-49,999
50,000-59,999
60,000-69,999
70,000-79,999
80,000-89,999
90,000-99,999
100,000 or more
Would rather not say

APPENDIX C

Interview Format Template

Q1. From your experience as an FTO, tell me about an exemplar police academy recruit that you trained and provide any job related experiences that relate directly to this.

Q2. From your experience as an FTO, tell me about a non-exemplar police academy recruit that you trained and provide any job-related experiences that directly relate to this.

Q3. What was particular about the above situations that stood out to you.

Q4. Can you explain in detail that particular incident further?

Q5. What surprised you most about that situation?

Q6. What, if any, areas can help improve the new police officer's success with the Field Training Officer in your department?

Q7. What areas in the Field Training Process itself could be improved upon?

Areas of interest for exploration

Notes:

- Promote story telling
- Be cognizant of voice inflection
- Be an active listener

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ABSTRACT

ACCLIMATING TO THE MAYHEM:
FIELD TRAINING OFFICERS' PERSPECTIVES OF NEW POLICE RECRUITS
FROM A PROBLEM BASED LEARNING ACADEMY

by

STEVEN J. AMEY

May 2019

Advisor: Dr. Monica Tracey

Major: Educational Design and Technology

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Field Training Officers (FTO) are the first line of observation when a new police recruit enters the work force from a training academy setting. Prior research with FTOs, specifically regarding whether they notice differences between problem-based learning trained academy recruits and those who graduate from a non-problem based learning training academy environment, is minimal at best. This qualitative, grounded theory research study focuses on FTOs' observations of new police officers. More specifically, it identifies attributes of exemplar and non-exemplar recruits from the perspective of 15 FTOs from a variety of departments in Michigan. The most significant finding was that FTOs identified the exemplar as a PBL-training academy recruit the majority of the time. Key words: Problem based learning, Field Training officers, police academy recruit, new police recruit

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Steve Amey is currently an Associate Professor at Ferris State University. He is a primary instructor in motor vehicle code, use of force/defensive tactics, physical conditioning, criminal investigations, computer investigations, firearms instruction, and precision and pursuit driving. He is also heavily involved in implementing techniques using problem based learning methodology and incorporating it in a police academy setting.