

Spring 3-2006

The Study of a Contemporary Approach to Post-Academy Recruit Training

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**THE STUDY OF
A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH TO POST-ACADEMY RECRUIT TRAINING**

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**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
EXECUTIVE MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (EMPA)
GOLDEN GATE UNIVERSITY
MARCH 2006**

ABSTRACT

The field training officer (FTO) program, developed in the late 1960s, provides supervision and evaluation of new police officers in their local jurisdictions upon graduating the academy. The FTO approach, however, has not kept pace with the evolution of policing, specifically with the evolution of community oriented policing and problem-solving (COPPS) and developing officers with critical thinking and problem-solving skills. With federal assistance, training needs were assessed and a new Police Training Officer (PTO) program was initiated in the Reno Police Department and five other national sites. This descriptive study examines how and why this groundbreaking and essential approach to training came into being, as well as its theoretical underpinnings with regard to adult and problem-based learning.

This study will also assess whether the implementation of the PTO program at the Reno Police Department has effectively produced police officers who are capable of: (1) providing responsible, community-focused policing services, (2) employing problem-solving and critical thinking, and (3) utilizing these principles in all aspects of training to increase the overall performance of the Reno Police Department.

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INTRODUCTION

Standardized training is an integral part of the law enforcement profession today, but it has not always been that way. In the United States, national training standards for policing were not developed until the 1960s (Morris and Vila, 1999). Additionally, training in law enforcement has lagged behind research related to adult learning principles. When it comes to training new police officers, policing continues to use teacher-centered, behavioral and cognitive instruction techniques and methods. This type of training consists mostly of lecture by the training officer, behavioral modeling, simulations, skills drills, and positive reinforcement, followed by subsequent evaluation of the trainee.

E. Shannon's (2002) case study of police training states "research into police training as a form of adult and continuing education is virtually non-existent. There is also a noted absence of literature addressing the continued professional development of police officers." More research about law enforcement training as a form of adult learning is needed. This study presents another step in that direction. One of the goals of this study was to include adult and problem based learning principles in the field training of policing as a means to improve the overall effectiveness of law enforcement training and the performance of officers in the community.

Birzer and Tannehill (2001) stated that traditional police training is less focused on learning, and more focused on making sure trainees prove themselves. In the

traditional field training model, the trainers feel it is their responsibility to screen out those who are not up to the task of policing. The traditional model is becoming less congruent with the evolving police strategies used in today's community-oriented policing model of law enforcement. Traditional models follow a top down chain of command structure and philosophy of conventional law enforcement hierarchy. This is similar to teacher-centered methods where students are not part of the decision making process in naming what is to be learned.

In contrast, law enforcement organizations that foster community-policing and problem-solving are often less hierarchical, the decision making authority is shifted to the lowest organizational level, the police officer, who is involved in the decision making process, and determines what is needed to solve community problems, and is held accountable for the outcomes. This approach is similar to learner-centered methods utilized in adult and problem based learning, where learners are included as decision makers in naming what is to be learned, and held accountable to recreate the learning content that is useful.

Given the vast amount of information police officers must now possess in order to address society's problems of crime and disorder, as well as the omnipresent specter of civil liability, recruit training is an extremely vital part of the learning process. The basic recruit academy is certainly a major phase of the neophyte officer's career; as the recruits' point of entry into the world of policing, the academy is generally the

beginning point for their occupational socialization into the police role, providing them with essential formal training, shaping their attitudes, and developing technical occupational skills. However, once the recruits leave the academic setting of an academy, their training is still incomplete: They have yet to demonstrate that they can apply their academy knowledge to their daily roles and responsibilities in the community. And so, another very important part of this process is the learning environment created in the field training process while under the tutelage and supervision of a qualified field training officer. To accomplish this transition, police agencies have traditionally used a field training officer (FTO) program.

Many police executives, however, have come to believe that the traditional FTO approach is not relevant to the challenges of contemporary policing, especially those agencies that have adopted community oriented policing and problem-solving (COPPS). Therefore, another approach has been developed to better meet the needs of those agencies: the Police Training Officer program, or PTO.

This study will examine the history of police training, the traditional FTO program; a review of the federal and local impetus, support, and rationale for the development of PTO; an overview of the major learning theories that lie at the foundation of PTO; and finally an outline of the primary elements, phases, and evaluations that compose PTO is presented. This study concludes with a comprehensive

assessment of the effectiveness of the PTO program at the original test site, the Reno Police Department (NV).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although the term "adult learning" is relatively new to policing, it has surfaced in academic and medical literature for two decades. The purpose of the literature review is two-fold. First, the research collected will be presented in an attempt to influence the need for implementing adult learning principles into law enforcement training. The second purpose is to provide contemporary resources from the PTO program at the Reno Police Department to police administrators across America. The literature review focuses on:

1. Providing background information on the history of law enforcement.
2. Presenting information on the traditional field-training model.
3. Impetus and rationale for a new field-training model.
4. Providing research information of the tenets of adult and problem based learning.
5. Presenting the PTO program as a viable solution to obsolete traditional field training models.

Brief History of Law Enforcement

Professional law enforcement originated in the early 1800s. In 1829 Sir Robert Peel succeeded in creating the London Metropolitan Police (Morris and Vila, 1999). Peel's years of persistence led to a professional police force in which the public and police work together to address community problems. Peel's initial vision of community-based policing also included the paramilitary organizational structure. In 1845 in New York City, America's first unified, prevention free police force was patterned after the London Metropolitan Police (Morris and Vila, 1999). However, problems developed in the policing model. At the close of the era of prohibition in the 1920s, President Herbert Hoover empowered the Wickersham Commission to look into problems in American policing. An excerpt from the Wickersham reports:

The commission discovered that official lawlessness by police, judges, and others in the criminal justice system was widespread. It investigated illegal arrests, bribery, entrapment, and police brutality. In addition to examining the behavior of police and court officials, the commission investigated the conduct of other officials (p. 139).

These shocking conclusions, however, were never addressed in any significant public actions. In response to the recognition that policing in America needed improved professionalism, the American Bar Association (ABA) published a "Model Police Training Act," in 1953 that outlined eight broad functions (e.g., mandatory training standards, determination and approval of curricula, instructors and training facilities, certification of police officers who acquired various levels of education,

training and experience) that should ideally be performed by police regulatory agencies. Today, this regulatory agency is known in most states as the Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) Commission. All training, including field training, is required to comply with the respective state's POST commission guidelines. Prior to 1953, training varied from agency to agency. At many agencies training was non-existent (H. Barbier, 2003).

The Traditional FTO Program

The first structured field officer training (FTO) program was developed in the United States in the late 1960s, in San Jose, California (Kaminsky, 1970). The purpose of the FTO program was to provide new sworn police officers and sheriff's deputies a smooth, supervised, and educational transition from the academy to field training at their respective agencies.

Most FTO programs typically consist of three identifiable phases: introduction (recruit learns agency policies and local laws); training and evaluation (recruit is introduced to more complicated tasks confronted by patrol officers); and the final phase (wherein the FTO trainer may act as an observer and evaluator, while the recruit performs all the functions of a patrol officer). The length of time a recruit is assigned to an FTO will vary, but normally the range is from one to 12 weeks (Dunham and Alpert, 1989). The original evaluation criteria written for these programs were developed in the early 1970s and have remained relatively unchanged.

The FTO program was arguably one of the most important policing innovations ever implemented (Department of Justice, 2006), and it remains in widespread use today. FTO programs provided agencies with structure and the documentation of recruit officers' performance during post-academy training. While structure and documentation are still important today, the Skinnerian behavior methods (Skinner, 1938) of training and evaluation upon which FTO programs are based, are outdated in the opinion of many chief executives surveyed. More importantly, the FTO approach has changed very little in the past 40+ years and is devoid of contemporary approaches to training that include adult, problem-based learning and leadership principles.

Impetus and Rationale for the Police Training Officer (PTO) Program

In today's policing environment, law enforcement executives expressed concerns with traditional recruit training, specifically its overemphasis on evaluation and lack of attention to creating a learning environment that promotes critical thinking and problem-solving. Many agencies attempted to include contemporary issues (e.g., community policing, problem-solving, and leadership) in their FTO program; such attempts, however, were ineffectual, and many FTOs simply consider them as optional performance standards.

To address these concerns, in 1999 the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) provided a \$300,000 grant for the Reno, Nevada Police Department (RPD) to collaborate with the Police Executive Research

Forum (PERF) to study police training and to develop a new post-academy training program for the COPPS strategy. From 1999 to 2001, the RPD worked with experts across the nation to accomplish these tasks, surveying more than 400 police and sheriffs' departments in the United States and Canada to determine what they needed in a field training program. These efforts ultimately resulted in the development of the Reno PTO program.

The RPD received another \$200,000 COPS grant in 2001 for program implementation, and PTO was deployed within the RPD; later, over a period of several months, police agencies in five other cities (Savannah, Georgia; Lowell, Massachusetts; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Richmond, California; and Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina) were selected to test the new program. The final product was submitted to the COPS office in April 2003 for implementation nationally.

PTO was designed to provide a foundation for life-long learning that prepares new officers for the complexities of policing today and in the future. This approach is very different from traditional police training methods that emphasize mechanical repetition skills and rote memory capabilities. PTO focuses on developing an officer's learning capacity, leadership, and problem-solving skills. While applied skills (e.g., weaponless defense, shooting and defensive tactics) are essential, they constitute only one set of skills required for contemporary policing. The PTO approach is also highly flexible and takes into consideration the unique needs of police agencies.

FOUNDATIONS: LEARNING THEORIES AND APPROACHES

Police officers represent a unique challenge for their trainers. As Michael E. Buerger (1998:32) stated:

Training is usually discussed in terms of a benefit provided to the rank-and-file. From the perspective of those receiving it, however, training is easily divided into two main categories: the kind officers like, and the kind they despise. What they like fits into their world view; what they despise is "training" that attempts to change that view.

Because policing often attracts action-oriented individuals, officers tend to be more receptive to hands-on skills training that includes arrest methods, weaponless defense, pursuit driving, firearms proficiency, and so on. Certainly, these skills are needed and for that reason (and because of the specter of liability) police personnel must receive training in those areas. If training is to prepare officers do their jobs, it must focus on developing a learning process that improves their performance, while being driven by the mission of the agency.

It must also be remembered that police training is best conducted—and is better received by officers—when it reflects skills with immediately recognizable application to the job, and when that message is constantly reinforced throughout training.

DEWEY'S PHILOSOPHY AND BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

John Dewey's (1916; 1929; 1933) philosophy of learning was taken into account when conceptualizing and developing the Reno PTO program. Dewey understood the importance of education as being more than lecturing facts. He encouraged students to learn skills and knowledge that they could apply to their lives. Dewey's premise was that education should focus on expanding the intellect and developing problem-solving and critical thinking skills. For Dewey, experience was the most important element in learning.

Additionally, Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy (1956) was felt to be highly relevant. Bloom's cognitive domain for learning was utilized, which emphasizes intellectual outcomes. Bloom's taxonomy of six learning activities, in ascending order, are as follows:

1. Knowledge: remembering or recalling previously learned material;
2. Comprehension: understanding meaning, and to explain and restate ideas;
3. Application: applying learned material in new and different situations;
4. Analysis: categorizing material into segments and demonstrating their relationships;
5. Synthesis: grouping or combining the separate ideas to form a new whole and to establish new relationships; and

6. Evaluating the material for appropriate outcomes based on established criteria.

The Reno PTO approach primarily uses the levels of knowledge, application, and evaluation to apply Bloom's taxonomy to trainees' learning levels.

For example, a trainee may be asked to explain how to handle a robbery-in-progress call. If the trainee could explain how to handle a robbery response as required by policies and procedures, he or she has reached the *general knowledge and comprehension* level. If the trainee could further explain how to control the scene; use proper tactics; coordinate with other units; and make proper notifications to forensics, supervisors, and detectives, he or she will have reached the *application* level.

If, however, the trainee could go farther and elaborate on the differences between various types of robberies, and possibly robbery trends and analysis in the area, he or she has attained the levels of *analysis, synthesis*, and possibly even *evaluation*.

ADULT AND PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

Malcolm Knowles (1913-1997) was a central figure in developing methods of adult learning in the United States. Knowles brought attention to the concept of *Andragogy*. He related this term to adult learning and contrasted it with *Pedagogy*, or child-based learning. Knowles believed that adult learning should produce the following outcomes:

- Adults should acquire a mature understanding of themselves.
- Adults should develop an attitude of acceptance and respect toward others.

- Adults should develop a dynamic attitude toward life.
- Adults should learn to react to the causes, not the symptoms, of behavior.
- Adults should acquire the skills necessary to achieve the potentials of their personalities.
- Adults should understand the essential values in the capital of human experience.
- Adults should understand their society and should be skillful in directing social change.

Knowles felt that most adult learning was informal and directed toward changing society.

Social relationships and human experience were two of the important foci of Knowles' work.

Characteristics of adult learners include the following:

- Self-concept
 - As a person matures his self concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being.
- Experience
 - As a person matures he accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.
- Readiness to learn
 - As a person matures his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles.
- Orientation to learning
 - As a person matures his time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem centeredness.

- Motivation to learn
 - As a person matures the motivation to learn is internal

What has been learned from Knowles that may be applied to field training programs is that learning will occur but certain conditions should be present. Those conditions are: Adults must be partners in their own educational plans and evaluations. Malcolm Knowles' (1981) principles of adult learning were determined to be relevant. Knowles believed in self-directed learning, and that adult learning should produce the following outcomes:

- Adults should acquire the skills necessary to achieve the potentials of their personalities, and understand their society, and be skilled in directing social change;
- Adults should learn to react to the causes, not the symptoms, of behavior;
- Adults should acquire a mature understanding of themselves, as well as an attitude of acceptance and respect toward others.

It was also determined that in order for the Reno PTO approach to succeed, the following learning conditions had to be considered:

- Adults had to be partners in their own educational plans and evaluations;
- The material had to be relevant;
- Adult (trainee) learning had to be problem-centered, rather than content-oriented.

A study conducted by Birzer and Tannehill (1999) reported that an andragogical approach in training police officers has several advantages. The andragogical approach treats trainees as adults, respecting their life experiences. The learner-centered approach is adaptable to the diverse needs and expectations of participants. The andragogical approach develops critical thinking, judgment, and creativity in the learner. Considering these observations, the andragogical approach is more in alignment with the tenets of community policing and problem-solving.

Another fundamental theory that was seen as apropos to the PTO approach was problem-based learning (PBL) (Barrows, 1980). PBL is a learning process that stimulates problem-solving, critical thinking, and team participation. Like adult learning theory, the purpose of PBL is to make learning relevant to real world situations. In PBL, the trainee engages in self-teaching; trainees *begin* with a problem, rather than following the traditional approach whereby a class is given a problem to solve at the end of the class.

The sole aim of PBL is not to solve the problem, but rather to help the students fill gaps in their knowledge and involve them in self-directed learning techniques. Instructors and facilitators guide the students, so that they can ultimately learn what they are supposed to learn. Using the PBL format, the Reno PTO approach adopted a five-step process:

1. Ideas: the trainee lists his or her initial ideas for solving the problem.

2. Identifying facts: the trainee lists all known facts about the problem.
3. Learning issues: the trainee asks, "What do I need to know to solve this problem and what available resources do I have?"
4. Initial course of action: the trainee develops an initial action plan based on his or her research.
5. Evaluation: the trainee and trainer evaluate both the product and process, and transfer what was learned from that problem to future problems.

PBL, like other adult learning principles, is a learner-centered teaching method using problem-solving as its primary vehicle for learning. PBL departs from traditional learning models by beginning with the presentation of a real-world problem that the trainee must attempt to solve. The trainee follows a path of inquiry and discovery whereby he or she expresses initial ideas about how to solve the problem, lists known facts, decides what information is needed, and develops a course of action to solve the problem.

The power of PBL lies in the trainee's discovery of information, and resources not found in task-based training models. The trainee is allowed to develop a learning system (e.g., ideas, known facts, learning issues, course of action) that can be applied to diverse problems he or she will face in policing. There are several evaluation methods

that determine if the course of action would succeed or fail. This approach to learning teaches the trainees to look at problems from a broader perspective. It encourages trainees to explore, analyze, and think systemically, while they also collaborate with peers, open lines of communication, and develop resources for solving future problems.

The Society for Problem-Based Learning (PSPBL) published *The Need for Change* (Saville, 2003), citing the failure of traditional training programs in policing. Saville stated that traditional models have actually been under attack since the latter part of the last century. The social conflicts in the 1960s began a long period of close assessment of the police profession and its methods, leading to many reforms in the roles that police have within the community.

The most significant reform today is COPPS. The early attempts to implement COPPS in police organizations relied on traditional police training systems, which were task oriented and event driven. Even the most progressive police training has merely crafted new educational methods into traditional police training. Often this type of curriculum is oriented toward the needs of the instructor or the organization.

One of the most influential police reformers of this era is Herman Goldstein, creator of Problem Oriented Policing (POP). Goldstein describes the training requirements for COPPS reforms as significantly different than what traditional training is capable of providing. A recent study on effective training approaches explains it this way: "If the intent of community policing training is to produce fundamental change in

policing, then training materials and approaches must explicitly reflect and support those changes. Learning to think critically, to solve community problems, or to share responsibilities with citizens is not fostered by the authoritarian training approach.”

Several features of the PTO program distinguish it from the traditional field training programs:

ELEMENTS OF THE PTO PROGRAM

SUBSTANTIVE TOPICS AND CORE COMPETENCIES

The PTO program covers two primary training areas: substantive topics (the most common activities in policing) and core competencies (the required, common skills in which officers engage and are required to utilize in daily performance of their duties).

Substantive Topics

The four substantive topics that define the key phases of training are:

- Non-Emergency Incident Response
- Emergency Incident Response
- Patrol Activities
- Criminal Investigation

Core Competencies

There are 15 core competencies that must be met under PTO; these are specific skills, knowledge, and abilities that have been identified as essential for good policing.

Core competencies represent commonly encountered skill sets, they include:

- Police vehicle operations
- Conflict resolution
- Use of force
- Local procedures, policies, laws and organizational philosophies
- Report writing
- Leadership
- Problem-solving skills
- Community specific problems
- Cultural diversity and special needs groups
- Legal authority
- Individual rights
- Officer safety
- Communication skills
- Ethics
- Lifestyle stressors/self-awareness and self-regulation

THE LEARNING MATRIX

The learning matrix, shown below, serves as a guide for trainees and trainers during the training period, and demonstrates the interrelationships between the core competencies and daily policing activities. The matrix assists trainees to determine what they have learned, what they need to learn to improve their performance, and which performance outcomes will be utilized to evaluate their performance.

The learning matrix includes the core competencies listed above. Each cell (A1 through D15) has a corresponding list of skills required to achieve competency in the areas listed. Additionally, there are a series of learning activities tied to each phase of study. For instance, Phase A refers to Non-Emergency Incident Responses, and Cell A8 next to the core competency for community specific problems lists the following skills; here, the trainee must identify different community-specific problems, demonstrate proficiency in creating partnerships, and solve problems specific to the community or their geographic assignment.

PROGRAM PHASES

Following is an overview of the eight phases of PTO:

Orientation Phase (length determined by the agency): many police agencies have discovered that recruits graduating from the academy, especially regional academies,

require additional training in agency specific skills or information. The orientation phase is intended to provide this necessary training and information prior to the trainee entering the field training experience.

Integration Phase (1 week): this phase is designed to teach the trainee what is needed daily to report for duty. This is a period of time for the trainee to acclimate to the new environment while under the supervision of the PTO. Areas of instruction may include learning how to acquire necessary equipment, familiarization with the various department resources, understanding services rendered by other governmental organizations, administrative procedures, and the PTO learning processes. The trainee does not receive an evaluation during this phase.

Phase A (3 weeks): Phase A is the initial training and learning experience for the trainee emphasizes non-emergency incident responses.

Phase B (3 weeks): Phase B, the second training and learning experience for the trainee emphasizes emergency incident responses.

Mid-Term Evaluation (1 week): Following the successful completion of Phases A and B, the trainee transfers to a police training evaluator and participates in a mid-term evaluation. The trainee's transition from the PTO trainer to another trainer who serves as a training evaluator ensures that the trainer is not occupying a dual role. Police training evaluators utilize the learning matrix as an evaluation tool to assess the trainee's performance during the course of the week's activities. If the trainee

experiences difficulties and does not successfully complete the mid-term evaluation, he or she may be returned to a prior phase for prescriptive training to correct the problem. Prescriptive training is unique to the needs of the trainee, but lasts approximately two weeks.

Phase C (3 weeks): This third training and learning experience for the trainee emphasizes patrol activities.

Phase D (3 weeks): This is the final phase of actual training and learning, and emphasizes criminal investigation.

Final Phase Evaluation (1 or 2 weeks) and the Board of Evaluators: This phase lasts one to two weeks, depending on agency specific needs and requirements. The trainee transfers from the PTO to a police training evaluator and is deployed in single-officer status. The police training evaluator will utilize the learning matrix as an evaluation tool to assess the trainee's performance the during course of this evaluation. If the trainee experiences difficulties or does not successfully complete the final phase evaluation, he or she may repeat a previous phase of training as specified by the PTO staff. If a trainee does not respond to training and is recommended for termination, all materials will be forwarded to the board of evaluators, which conducts a review of the trainee's performance, PTO performance and prescriptive training prior to making a written recommendation to the program commander concerning the appropriate outcome. The board of evaluators consists of managers, supervisors and trainers in the

PTO program. The board of evaluators' duties include evaluating trainee and trainer performance, conducting PTO program audits to insure consistency and accuracy, and providing recommendations for program adjustments to agency executives.

COACHING AND EVALUATION

As noted previously, a primary concern with FTO is the amount of time and effort spent on evaluation, with trainees being evaluated on as many as 31 categories each day. These evaluations, commonly using a Likert Scale, often focus on the trainee's *failure* to perform a certain task. This type of environment has proven to be problematic, causing trainees to become intimidated at the prospects of a failing score, and therefore reluctant to extend themselves during the training. It also provides a rationale for trainees who may be doing well in one area to not aspire to learning or improving.

Evaluation is a component of the PTO program, but it is emphasized that the primary purpose of the evaluation is to support the training of new officers, rather than the termination of the marginal few. The PTO evaluation process is meant to focus on measuring learning and development. If the trainee does not perform well, then the trainee engages in what might be termed "failing forward": learning from, and progressing through his or her mistakes (Geller and Swanger, 1995). PTO encourages training officers to make the evaluation process a positive one. This approach can have a tremendous impact on the learning environment of trainees. The evaluation process is

not based on daily checklists; rather, the evaluation of trainees occurs in the following manner:

- Coaching and training reports are completed at the end of each week of training. Assessments are made of a trainee's response to selected calls for service pertaining to the current training phase. The trainee is required to maintain a daily journal of his or her daily activities, as well as what was learned and needs to be improved; this information is used to develop the Coaching and Training Report. The trainee responds to the application of all 15-core competencies as they relate to the incidents selected. Once the trainee has commented on the relationship of core competencies to that week's activities, the PTO reviews those comments and then makes comments or suggestions. The coaching and training report allows the trainee to reflect on his or her performance, improve the capacity to regulate stress, and design obtainable performance outcomes (Goleman, 1995).
- Problem-based learning exercises are developed for each phase of training. These exercises provide for critical thinking and problem-solving not experienced in traditional FTO programs. The information learned from the problem-based learning exercises is transferred to performance in the field through a dialogue process between the trainee and trainer. Trainees follow the steps provided in the problem based learning model (Delisle, 1997) to

discover new and effective methods for dealing with complex community problems.

- A neighborhood portfolio exercise is developed during all four phases; it is a detailed, trainee-developed overview of the beat area where the officer works. Included are an identification of key community stakeholders, a characterization of the social and cultural aspects of the area, and a description of key crime and quality of life issues. The purpose of the neighborhood portfolio exercise is to develop trainees' capacity to network and identify resources in the community. This exercise may be presented to executive staff, in patrol briefings, or to the board of evaluators.
- Mid-term and final phase evaluations follow Phases A and B, and then Phases C and D.

RENO PTO: AN OVERVIEW

Reno, Nevada, is a city of approximately 70 square miles, located on the northeastern slopes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in Nevada. It has a resident population of approximately 208,000, and an average tourist population of 5 million visitors annually. Gaming and other diverse activities serve to make Reno a 24-hour, year-round destination.

The RPD, with 390 sworn members and 550 civilian employees, is divided into three geographic areas of command: North, Central and South. Each area of command

is organized into several beats. The department is headed by a chief of police, who is supported by a two deputy chiefs, and four commanders. The RPD subscribes to COPPS as its core philosophy. Department wide training in COPPS began in 1986, with mandatory annual training in such areas as advanced problem-solving, situational and environmental crime prevention, crime analysis and crime mapping.

During this period the Reno PD used a field training program that was based on the traditional FTO model, relying heavily on daily observation reports of a trainee's performance and standardized evaluation guidelines. The RPD modified its FTO program to include some components of COPPS; however, it was quickly discovered that this was not a viable approach. Therefore, in 1999, the RPD began development of the PTO program.

The following observations were derived from data collected during a qualitative (e.g., observations and interviews) assessment following the implementation of PTO at the Reno Police Department and the five other agencies.

In general terms:

- Early involvement of all key personnel, at all levels in the department, is essential for enhanced cooperation and buy-in; ideally, officers receive information about PTO one year prior to its implementation, and add their ideas concerning PTO implementation.

- Command staff should be familiarized with the PTO program at all stages.
- The agency should develop and implement extensive leadership training to effect change philosophies and to provide leaders with new standards for performance.
- All supervisors should be given an orientation and executive summary about PTO.
- The PTO program is adaptable to the needs of various agencies.
- The PTO program produced high-quality police officers.
- Officers were proficient in basic skills, but also excelled in performance related to community interaction and problem-solving.
- The PTO program developed not only the trainees', but also the organization's understanding and utilization of adult learning principles in training.

RECENT RESEARCH

During the literature review for this study it was apparent that there is very limited research into the effectiveness of post-academy training models in policing. In 2005, Thomas Sabido conducted research into post-academy models and compared the traditional field training model to the PTO program, titled *An Exploratory Study of Police Field Training Programs*. The purpose of Sabido's research was to determine if the two

post-academy programs kept pace with the new challenges facing policing, and if the adult learning principles were effective in the training environment. Sabido's research provided the following general information:

- The most effective methods utilized by trainers included: mentor, coach and guide. This type of relationship with the trainee establishes an environment conducive to learning.
- The use of the PTO program, which emphasizes learning instead of evaluation, was much more effective.
- The structure of the PTO program allows for "failing forward" and focuses on developing specific skills. The core competencies in the PTO program are not just evaluation components, but learning competencies that influence development within a given competency.
- When comparing the resources utilized for struggling trainees, it was learned that the PTO program includes the trainees perspectives when identifying deficiencies and constructing a training plan. The traditional model relies on the expertise of trainers and does not include the trainee when constructing a training plan.
- The PTO program was seen as a tool to develop or "imprint" an organization into a problem-solving vs. task oriented culture.

- Three agencies surveyed were of the opinion that their post-academy training model was outdated and needed improvements. Focusing on the trainee's learning is primary to the need for change within the traditional program, but also for organizational change.

One person interviewed during Sabido's research stated "This is a philosophical approach, it's a cultural shift in policing, and we are trying to teach people to think on their feet, develop leadership skills early, and do the right things all the time." Haarr (2001) described the informal culture as a stronger predictor of officers' attitudes.

The PTO program in Reno is bringing about a paradigm shift in the agency. The shift of the trainers focus on the learner will have far-reaching effects on the agency. Vella (1994) posited that change in an organization could occur as a result of educating its members with reinforcement over time. The PTO program was developed to influence life long learning and development. Research in this field is critical to the development of the PTO program and other post-academy training in policing.

METHODOLOGY

This research utilized a survey instrument (Appendix A) with a total of 16 questions. The survey included 11 questions utilizing a 6 point Likert scale and 5 questions requiring qualitative summaries. The researcher selected a facilitator to reduce bias and distribute the survey to a cross section of personnel at the RPD. The survey was presented as voluntary to 110 personnel at the RPD, and specifically

included administrators, police supervisors and police officers. The survey instrument was transferred to the RPDs local area network and distributed electronically. The purpose of the survey instrument was to elicit common themes regarding:

- The effectiveness and ineffectiveness of FTO and PTO programs.
- Whether the PTO program has improved policing skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving.
- The PTO program's impact on improving organizational performance at the RPD.
- Will implementing the principles utilized in the PTO program into all aspects of training improve overall police performance at the RPD.

FINDINGS

The findings were obtained after a review of the data from the survey instrument, and represent the 48 (43%) participants perspectives on the effectiveness of the PTO program at the RPD. Of the 48 participants 4 (8.3%) were female, 44 (91.7%) were male. The experience level of participants included 12 (25%) with one to five years of experience, 9 (18.8%) with six to ten years of experience, 6 (12.5%) with eleven to fifteen years of experience, and 21 (43.8%) with more than fifteen years of experience. The assignments of the participants included 33 (68.8%) were police officers, 8 (16.7%) were police sergeants, and 7 (14.6%) were lieutenants or above. In an attempt to

improve accuracy and validity the survey instrument was assessed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program (Appendix B).

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Which of the two training models is more effective, FTO or PTO?

The PTO program was selected as the most effective training model by 39 (81.3%) of the participants. Participants commented that the PTO program is developed specifically as a training and teaching model and not an evaluation model. The PTO program provides flexibility, failing forward, and allows the trainee to be a participant in their training and learning. The role of the trainer in the PTO program creates a relationship between the trainer and trainee of a coach, mentor and facilitator. The PTO program appears to produce officers who are more focused on learning, problem-solving and interacting with the community they serve.

In addressing the ineffectiveness of the FTO model participants commented that standardized guidelines minimized learning and developed an evaluative environment for the trainee. FTO trains officers toward tasks and events, not problem-solving and independent thought. The role of the trainer in the FTO model is that of "sage on the stage," "expert," and "guru." This role produces trainees who want to model the trainer and limits the development of the trainee's style and independent thought.

The PTO program has improved policing skills.

18 (37.5%) of participants commented that the PTO program has significantly improved policing skills and 21 (43.8%) participants somewhat agree that the PTO program has improved policing skills at the RPD. Comments of participants include: the PTO program creates an environment for free thinking and problem-solving; the trainee becomes more responsible for his neighborhood and beat; trainees learn the importance of problem-solving and being creative early in their careers, and trainees are able to rapidly adapt to the ever-changing environments in policing.

The inclusion of problem based learning has allowed trainees to identify crime trends, community problems, and to develop the appropriate resources to address those problems within the community.

Only 3 (6.3%) participants commented that the PTO program has not impacted policing skills. These participants commented that due to personnel shortages and increases in calls for service, there seems to be no time for officers to perform proactive policing efforts. One participant suggested that officers need at least fifteen years of experience before their effectiveness can truly be measured. 3 (6.3%) participants commented that they somewhat disagree that the PTO program has improved policing skills. These participants commented that it is not the program, but the person, that is individually responsible for improving policing skills.

The PTO program has improved problem-solving.

28 (58.3%) participants commented that the PTO program has significantly improved problem-solving skills and 16 (33.3%) commented that they somewhat agree that the PTO program has improved problem-solving skills at the RPD. Observations collected include the PTO programs flexibility to allow for problem-solving while developing individual policing skills. The PTO program is based upon life long learning and adaptation. This provides trainees with a philosophy and method for assessing the challenges facing policing in the future. The PTO program develops trainees who have a more in-depth knowledge of COPPS and who utilize a variety of available resources to solve community problems.

2 (4.2%) participants commented that they did not notice a difference in problem-solving skills. Once again the comments were directed at officers not having enough available time to participate in crime fighting and community problem-solving.

The principles taught in the PTO model have improved organizational performance.

23 (47.9%) participants commented that they strongly agree and 17 (35.4%) commented that they somewhat agree that the PTO principles have improved organizational performance. Participant comments suggesting PTO program effectiveness in organizational performance point to development of officers who are critical thinkers and more effective at problem-solving. The PTO program also encourages interaction and discussion in a variety of environments (e.g., the community, governmental meetings, and agency programs). The capacity of trainees in

the PTO is much larger than that of traditionally trained officers. PTO trainees identify and utilize outside resources more often and more effectively.

Several participants commented on the effectiveness of a previous Leadership Program offered at the RPD. The Leadership Program was offered from 2000 to 2002 and participants commented that it was very effective sharing leadership principles, problem-solving and critical thinking at many levels in the organization. The correlation of the previous Leadership Program and the PTO program is drawn due to the strong emphasis placed on police officers in the PTO program to accept leadership roles within the organization and community.

7 (14.6%) participants commented that the PTO principles have had no impact on organizational performance. Comments suggesting no performance are once again directed at the available time to practice the principles taught in the PTO program.

Implementing learning principles from the PTO program into all aspects of training will improve organizational performance.

32 (66.7%) participants commented that the infusion of PTO principles into all aspects of training will improve organizational performance and 14 (29.2%) participants somewhat agree that PTO principles will improve organizational performance at the RPD. The principles in the PTO program that encourage honoring the learner's experience, interactive discussion, critical thinking and problem-solving create a learning environment that influence participation and development.

CONCLUSIONS AND AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study of the PTO program explains the rationale and development of the first new post-academy training program for local law enforcement agencies in more than 40 years. The design and implementation of the PTO program, which incorporates a number of prominent learning theories, make it one of the strongest training innovations in policing history.

The use of the PTO program is spreading. It is being employed in jurisdictions, including academies, across the U.S. and Canada. As with any new departure from tradition in policing, work remains to be done with such an innovation. To this point, the outcomes of the PTO program, although positive, are predominately anecdotal in nature. More rigorous empirical research is needed.

Continued research needs to determine the following:

- Whether or not PTO-trained officers are more capable and successful as a result of adult and problem-based learning methods.
- Are these officers selected to special assignments or promoted sooner because of their demonstrated learning skills?
- Are officers more adept at utilizing problem-solving to identify and resolve neighborhood issues?

- What new skills, knowledge and abilities do these officers demonstrate that may lead to new criteria for recruiting, testing and hiring new recruits?
- Does the PTO program promote the development of a learning organization?
- Would the development and implementation of a Center for Public Leadership improve law enforcement performance?

These are just a few of the many questions that require further structured research. Only when these and other relevant questions are addressed will the PTO program truly have an established place established in the tool chest of policing.

Although grounded on learning theory and having been tested in six police agencies, PTO remains a work in progress. Indications are, however, that PTO officers enter the field with problem-solving skills rarely seen at that career level; potentially they possess greater leadership ability and capability for working as partners with the local community to fight crime and disorder. PTO will ensure that today's officers have the necessary knowledge, skill, and abilities for protecting society in the future.

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APPENDIX A

FTO and PTO Training Models

This is a comparison between Field Training and PTO Training Models. My name is Steven Pitts. I am a graduate student from Golden Gate University conducting research on the impact of the Reno Police Training Officer (PTO) Program at the Reno Police Department. This survey will provide information for my research. Your help in answering the following questions would be greatly appreciated and is very important to the success of the project. It should only take you a few minutes to complete and all responses will remain strictly confidential.

Answer all 16 questions using checkbox responses or written responses where indicated. Please note that questions requiring a narrative allow for 300 words per entry.

* Required Field(s)

1) What method of field training was utilized when you started working at the Reno Police Department? (If you check PTO, skip to Question 5.) *

- ☐ Traditional Field Training Officer Model (FTO)
- ☐ Police Training Officer Model (PTO)

2) Which of the two field training models is more effective? *

- ☐ FTO
- ☐ PTO
- ☐ Unfamiliar with both models.

3) What are the strengths of the FTO model? *

4) What are the weaknesses of the FTO model? *

5) What are the strengths of the PTO model? *

6) What are the weaknesses of the PTO model? *

7) The PTO process has improved problem-solving. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ No Difference
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Not familiar with FTO

8) The PTO process has improved policing skills. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ No Difference
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Not familiar with FTO

9) The PTO process has provided you with the needed resources. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ No Difference
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Not familiar with FTO

10) The PTO teaching principles (Student-Centered/Adult Learning) is more effective than the FTO teaching principles (Teacher Centered/Evaluation Based). *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ No Difference
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Not Familiar with FTO

11) The principles taught in the PTO model have improved the organization's performance. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ No Difference
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

12) Please explain your response to Question 11, above. *

13) How long have you worked at the Reno Police Department? *

- ☐ Less than one year
- ☐ One to five years
- ☐ Six to ten years
- ☐ Eleven to fifteen years
- ☐ More than fifteen years

14) What is your current assignment? *

- ☐ Lieutenant and above
- ☐ Police Sergeant
- ☐ Police Officer
- ☐ Trainee

15) Your gender is: *

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

16) Implementing the adult-learning principles in the PTO model into all aspects of police training will improve police performance. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ No Difference
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

APPENDIX B

PTO Study Analysis
Statistical Package for Social Sciences

What Method Training 1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Police Training Officer Model (PTO)	12	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Traditional Field Training Officer Model (FTO)	36	75.0	75.0	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

More Effective Method 2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	FTO	3	6.3	6.3	6.3
	PTO	39	81.3	81.3	87.5
	Unfamiliar with both models.	6	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

PTO improved problem-solving

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Difference	1	2.1	2.1	2.1
	Somewhat Agree	16	33.3	33.3	35.4
	Strongly Agree	28	58.3	58.3	93.8
	Strongly Agree Unfamiliar with FTO Program	1	2.1	2.1	95.8
	Unfamiliar with FTO Program	2	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

PTO improved policing skills

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Difference	3	6.3	6.3	6.3
	Somewhat Agree	21	43.8	43.8	50.0
	Somewhat Agree Unfamiliar with FTO Program	1	2.1	2.1	52.1
	Somewhat Disagree	3	6.3	6.3	58.3

Strongly Agree	18	37.5	37.5	95.8
Unfamiliar with FTO Program	2	4.2	4.2	100.0
Total	48	100.0	100.0	

PTO provided needed resources

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid No Difference	3	6.3	6.3	6.3
Somewhat Agree	12	25.0	25.0	31.3
Somewhat Disagree	1	2.1	2.1	33.3
Strongly Agree	31	64.6	64.6	97.9
Unfamiliar with FTO Program	1	2.1	2.1	100.0
Total	48	100.0	100.0	

PTO principles more effective than FTO

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid No Difference	2	4.2	4.2	4.2
Somewhat Agree	9	18.8	18.8	22.9
Somewhat Disagree	1	2.1	2.1	25.0
Strongly Agree	34	70.8	70.8	95.8
Unfamiliar with FTO Program	2	4.2	4.2	100.0
Total	48	100.0	100.0	

PTO principles improved organizational performance

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid No Difference	7	14.6	14.6	14.6
Somewhat Agree	17	35.4	35.4	50.0
Strongly Agree	23	47.9	47.9	97.9
Strongly Disagree	1	2.1	2.1	100.0
Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Tenure

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Eleven to fifteen years	6	12.5	12.5	12.5
More than fifteen years	21	43.8	43.8	56.3
One to five years	12	25.0	25.0	81.3
Six to ten years	9	18.8	18.8	100.0
Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Assignment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Lieutenant and above	7	14.6	14.6	14.6
	Police Officer	33	68.8	68.8	83.3
	Police Sergeant	8	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	4	8.3	8.3	8.3
	Male	44	91.7	91.7	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

PTO Principles in all Training

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Somewhat Agree	14	29.2	29.2	29.2
	Somewhat Disagree	1	2.1	2.1	31.3
	Strongly Agree	32	66.7	66.7	97.9
	Strongly Disagree	1	2.1	2.1	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH PROPOSAL FOR
THE STUDY OF A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH TO POST-ACADEMY FIELD
TRAINING

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Working Title

Standardized training is an integral part of the law enforcement profession today, but it has not always been that way. In the United States, national training standards for law enforcement were not developed until the 1960. Additionally, training in law enforcement has lagged behind research related to adult learning principles for teachers and students. When it comes to training new officers, law enforcement continues to use teacher-centered, behavioral and cognitive instruction techniques and methods. Training consists mostly of lecture by the training officer, behavioral modeling, simulations, skills drills, and positive reinforcement, followed by subsequent evaluation of the trainee. Research into police training as a form of adult and continuing education is virtually non-existent. There is also a noted absence of literature addressing the continuing professional development of police officers. More research about law enforcement training as a form of adult education is needed. The study presented here is a first step. One of the goals of this research is to increase awareness of adult learning principles in the field of law enforcement as a means to improve the effectiveness of law enforcement field training and to change the perceptions about what the goals of training should be.

Central Problem

The field training officer (FTO) program, developed in the late 1960s, provides supervision and evaluation of new police officers in their local jurisdictions upon graduating the academy. The FTO approach, however, has not kept pace with the evolution of policing, specifically community oriented policing and problem-solving (COPPS). With a half million dollars in federal assistance, training needs were assessed and a new Police Training Officer (PTO) program was initiated in the Reno Police Department and five other national sites. This

study examines how and why this groundbreaking and essential approach to training came into being, as well as its theoretical underpinnings with regard to adult and problem-based learning.

Research Justification

This study will examine whether the implementation of the PTO program at the Reno Police Department has effectively produced police officers who are capable of: (1) providing responsible community-focused policing services, (2) employing problem-solving and critical thinking, and (3) increasing the overall performance of the Reno Police Department.

Methodology

This project will use the case study method seeking to obtain qualitative research data. This research will include the use of semi-structured interviews, and a quantitative survey instrument. The semi-structured interviews will allow the researcher to note the explanations of the behavior and interactions of officers who were trained in the PTO program.

Participants for this project will be selected from various ranks within the Reno Police Department, and from various areas of professional experience (e.g., training, administration, investigations, and patrol). A survey instrument was developed and the instrument was sent to over 100 personnel in the Reno Police Department.

Conclusion

This topic for research was selected because of the significant need for progressive police agencies to adopt training methods that develop personnel who practice critical thinking and problem-solving, provide community focused policing efforts, and begin to develop a leadership role within the organization. Further research will include the

effectiveness of the PTO approach in developing a learning organization (Senge, 1990).

According to Peter Senge learning organizations are:

“ Organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, and collective learning is developed and practiced.”

The rationale for such organizations in policing is that in situations of rapid change only those that are flexible, adaptive and productive will excel.