

## **Predicting Job Performance from Training: The Relationship Between Patrol Officer Basic Academy Training and Job Performance**

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*Organizations give a great deal of attention to training. One assumption made as a result of this attention is that training will predict future job performance. The purpose of this study was to test this assumption by examining the relationship between patrol officer basic academy performance and job performance as measured by field training evaluations. Two recruit classes (n=41) at a large southwestern metropolitan patrol officer basic academy were examined. Training academy tests were correlated with field training job performance evaluations. Virtually no relationship was found between training variables and job performance variables. Results were discussed in terms of the implications for training in general and of the necessity for proper training needs assessment programs.*

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Training has become an integral part of organizational life as organizations devote a great deal of effort, manpower, and money in the development and utilization of employee training programs. In fact, organizations spend over \$29 billion per year on employee training (Feuer, 1987). Virtually every organization uses training to teach new employees the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) needed to perform their jobs. Training programs are usually developed after a needs analysis has been performed by the organization. The needs analysis identifies the relevant KSAs required in the job and then training programs are developed to teach these KSAs. Organizations make the assumption that because training programs are high in content validity, they will also be high in predictive validity. That is, training teaches the KSAs needed to perform

the job, and therefore, the employees who perform best in training will perform best on the job. This assumption regarding training has even been used to justify using training performance as a criterion when validating selection tests (Kleiman & Gordon, 1986).

The assumption regarding the predictive validity of training supports the underlying concept of transfer of training. For training to be effective, the employee must be able to take what is learned in training and effectively apply that training to the job. Thus, the training should closely replicate the job environment to maximize job performance. Transfer of training theory says that not only should training and job performance be related, but that they should be related in a specific direction. Those persons who perform best in training should perform best on the job, and those persons who perform poorest in training should perform poorest on the job.

The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between training and job performance by correlating training performance scores from a police patrol officer basic academy to field training performance. Police patrol officer basic training was chosen for several reasons.

- 1) Patrol officer basic training nationwide is state mandated. All states require that patrol officers receive a specified amount of training before being allowed to serve as patrol officers. The number of training hours required by states ranges from 400 to 1200 hours.

- 2) Most patrol officer basic training is standardized. State commissions, such as Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards in Education in Texas and Police Officer Standards and Training in Arkansas and California, have developed standardized curricula to which all training academies must adhere.

- 3) Patrol officer basic training is extremely job specific. Patrol basic training focuses on the specific knowledge, actions, and behaviors which will be used on the job. Very little time is spent on theoretical constructs or extraneous material.

- 4) Many of the activities in patrol basic training are overlearned. A great deal of rote practice is afforded to learn basic skills. Arrest procedures, for example, once taught, are practiced by the trainee until the training ends.

- 5) Ample amounts of reinforcement are given to trainees and the reinforcement is given immediately. When a trainee performs a behavior or learns some material, an instructor is present to evaluate or comment

on the trainee's action. Also, the focus of this reinforcement is positive, not negative.

6) Learning is distributed across time. Material is presented in small sections, and these sections are then repeated several times over the course of the training period.

7) Patrol officer basic training involves many different types of training. Instruction includes the use of lecture, role play, programmed instruction, job simulation, case study, and behavioral modeling. Material to be learned is presented via the technique or techniques best suited to learning that material. In sum, patrol officer basic training emulates an ideal employee training program.

Job performance measures used in this study were field training evaluations. Studies relating police training to job performance have shown mixed results. Cohen and Chaiken (1973) and Kleiman and Gordon (1986) found training to be related to job performance. Other studies have reported no relationship between police training and job performance (Lerien, 1973; VanMaanen, 1975). It was believed that one of the reasons these prior studies showed conflicting results was due to other variables interfering with training.

The presence of moderator variables influencing the relationship between training and job performance has also been suggested by Landy and Farr (1975) and by Kleiman and Gordon (1986). Some suggested moderator variables have included the skills, attitudes (Schein, 1967), cognitive ability (Deane, Hammond, & Summers, 1972), nonconformity and open-mindedness (Loy, 1969), and intelligence (Kleiman & Gordon, 1986) of the trainee.

Whereas these moderator variables may influence the relationship between training and performance, it was believed that time on the job had a far greater influence on the relationship between training performance and job performance and played a more significant role in reducing this relationship. The longer a person is on the job, the less important basic training becomes. The initial training becomes replaced by factors such as experience, development of shortcuts, circumvention of procedures, and the everyday repetition of activity. For example, few patrol officers, after having been "on the street" for any period of time, perform a traffic stop per basic training academy. Instead, each patrol officer develops his/her own way of making a traffic stop, which the officer believes to be better than what was learned.

The use of field training evaluations overcomes the job performance

problems previously addressed and those used in prior research. Upon completing a basic patrol academy, patrol officers undergo a field training program. In the field training program, the new patrol officers are assigned to experienced officers who have specifically been trained to be field training officers. The new patrol officers perform all activities required, and their performance is then evaluated by the field training officer (FTO). In the field training program, patrol officers are actually performing the job and their performance is based solely upon the training they received in the basic academy. Time on the job does not become a factor.

## METHOD

### Participants

Participants were 41 patrol officer recruits in a large southwestern city who attended a 26-week patrol officer basic training academy sponsored by the local police department. The participants came from two separate academy classes ( $n=22$ ,  $n=19$  respectively). Twenty-four of the participants were White, 14 Hispanic, and three were Black. There were 40 males and one female. Twenty-four of the recruits were married. The age of the recruits ranged from 24 to 42 years.

### Variables

**Training Academy Variables** - The training academy variables included the following:

**Quarterly Exams** - The 26-week basic academy was divided into four quarters of instruction. During each quarter of instruction, participants took a variety of multiple-choice written tests of variable point values. The variables Exam1, Exam2, Exam3, and Exam4 represent the quarterly average test score for recruits on the various written tests for that quarter.

**Academy Final Exam** - Upon completion of the basic academy, recruits were required to pass a written multiple-choice examination covering all material presented in the basic academy. The variable AFE represents recruits' scores on this written final examination.

**State Standard Exam** - All recruits were required to pass a state

mandated test before becoming certified as police officers. This test was a 100-point multiple-choice exam and the variable TCLEOSE represents the recruits' scores on this test.

**Cooper Physical Abilities Test** - All recruits had to pass the Cooper Physical Abilities Test (CPT). The CPT was given to all subjects in the final week of the academy and determined their physical ability to perform the job of patrol officer.

**Job Performance Variables** - Upon completion of the training academy, all recruits were required to enter and complete a 16-week field training program. Recruits were required to perform all patrol activities which arose, and were evaluated by an experienced FTO. The field training program was divided into four-week blocks. At the completion of each block, the FTO completed a 25-item evaluation form on the recruit. The items on the evaluation form were:

- Driving Skills: Normal Conditions
- Driving Skills: Stress Conditions
- Orientation/Response Time to Calls
- Field Performance: Stress Conditions
- Self-initiated Activity
- Officer Safety
- Control of Conflict: Verbal Skills
- Control of Conflict: Physical Skills
- Radio: Comprehension/Usage
- Routine Forms: Accuracy/Completeness
- Report Writing: Organization and Detail
- Report Writing: Appropriate Time Used
- Field Performance: Non-stress
- Investigative Skills
- Interview/Interrogation Skills
- Problem Solving/Decision Making
- Department Policies/Procedures
- Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedures, City Ordinances
- Vehicle Code
- Acceptance of Feedback
- Attitude Toward Police Work
- Relationship with Public in General
- Relationship with Ethnic Groups
- Relationship with Other Officers and Supervisors

### General Appearance

Each recruit was rated on a seven-point Likert scale, where one = Not Acceptable by Field Training Program Standards and seven = Superior by Field Training Program Standards. Because of missing data, evaluations completed incorrectly, or evaluations not completed for each recruit, only the last available evaluation was used.

## RESULTS

Table 1 presents the intercorrelation matrix for the training academy variables. As can be seen in Table 1, the training academy variables, overall, correlated highly with each other. The one exception was the CPT. This low relationship with the CPT is not surprising as the CPT measured physical behaviors whereas the other training academy variables measured academic performance.

Table 1

Correlation Matrix for Patrol Officer Basic Recruit Training Variables

Training Variables	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	AFE	T	CPT
<b>Quarterly Test Scores</b>							
1st Quarter (Q1)	1.00	.67**	.67**	.52**	.37*	.73**	-.03
2nd Quarter (Q2)		1.00	.51**	.48**	.09	.35*	.02
3rd Quarter (Q3)			1.00	.35*	.39*	.54**	-.16
4th Quarter (Q4)				1.00	.22	.44*	-.04
Academy Final Exam (AFE)					1.00	.52**	-.02
TCLEOSE (T)						1.00	-.14
CPT							1.00

Table 2

Correlations Between Patrol Officer Basic Recruit Training Variables and  
Field Training Performance Variables

Field Training Variables	Basic Recruit Training Variables						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	AFE	T	CPT
<b>Driving Skills</b>							
Normal	-.01	-.02	.06	-.09	-.26	-.23	.01
Stress	-.09	-.10	-.05	.03	-.20	-.23	.11
Response to Calls	.21	-.03	.14	.07	-.05	.00	-.19
<b>Field Performance</b>							
Stress Conditions	.11	-.01	.16	.02	-.11	-.04	-.17
Non-stress	.12	.11	.21	-.05	-.14	-.19	-.15
Self-initiated Field Activity	.11	.00	.05	.11	-.08	-.11	-.10
Officer Safety	-.05	-.14	.03	-.16	-.15	-.25	-.16
<b>Control of Conflict</b>							
Verbal Skills	.14	-.04	.24	-.03	-.08	-.09	-.16
Physical Skills	.11	.05	.09	.02	-.10	-.10	-.18
Radio	.09	.06	.28	-.01	-.09	-.22	-.12
Routine Forms	.17	-.03	.14	.07	.01	-.00	-.19
<b>Report Writing</b>							
Organization	.15	.05	-.03	.18	-.02	-.00	-.10
Time Used	.32	-.01	.07	.20	.00	.08	-.17
Investigative Skills	.15	.16	.24	.13	-.08	-.04	-.17
Interview/Interrogation Skills	.09	.07	.16	.07	-.03	-.15	-.01
Department Policies and Procedures	-.00	-.08	.10	-.07	-.14	-.18	-.10
Penal Code and City Ordinances	.00	-.04	.09	-.01	-.11	-.15	-.11
Vehicle Code	.01	.01	.11	.04	-.09	-.15	-.12
Acceptance of Feedback	-.03	-.17	-.08	.06	-.18	-.20	.01
Attitude toward Police Work	-.14	-.17	-.13	.08	-.16	-.33*	-.20
Relationship with the Public	-.17	-.14	-.12	-.07	-.25	-.40*	.11
Relationship with Ethnic Groups	-.10	-.17	-.05	-.07	-.13	-.31*	.09
Relationship with Other Officers	-.13	-.18	-.13	-.01	-.21	-.34*	-.02
General Appearance	-.13	-.21	-.11	-.10	-.15	-.32*	.16

Table 2 lists the correlations between training academy performance and job performance. These results were surprising. As can be seen in Table 2, only three of the correlations between training academy performance and field training performance were significant. The standardized state exam (TCLEOSE) correlated significantly with Attitude toward police work ( $r = -.33$ ) ; Relationship with the public ( $r = -.40$ ) ; and Relationship with other officers ( $r = .34$ ). It was suspected that these three correlations were significant due to chance alone rather than to some type of true relationship. None of the other correlations approached significance.

## DISCUSSION

It was hypothesized that many of the job performance variables would correlate with training academy performance. The almost total lack of any significant correlations between the two sets of variables was startling.

It could be argued that some of the nonsignificant correlations between performance and training would be expected. For example, none of the training variables specifically measured driving skills. None of the trainees actually drove a vehicle and were tested. Thus, there would be a lack of significance between the driving items on the field performance evaluation and with the training variables. This is not a valid argument due to the high correlations between items on the field performance evaluation which indicated a consistency between job behaviors.

It could also be argued that the training academy variables were the wrong variables to use. Although no data exist to support this assertion, it was believed that the training academy variables had a high degree of content validity. The quarterly and final training academy examinations did adequately sample the material taught and were representative measures. This was especially true for the TCLEOSE examination, which has been shown to be content valid.

The lack of significant results suggests that the training program does not show trainees how to apply what is learned to the job. The patrol officer basic training program does do a good job of teaching the KSAs necessary to perform the job. What is lacking is instruction in how to use those specific KSAs on the job. For example, the patrol recruit training academy staff spends considerable amounts of time on teaching the fundamentals of shooting firearms and provides realistic shoot/don't shoot exercises. What the academy staff does not teach is how to assess a



street situation for lethality prior to the involvement of firearm usage. The assessment skills are those skills necessary to utilize transfer of training. More time should be spent teaching the trainees how to actually transfer the training from the academy to patrol. This would also tend to minimize individual differences in training and job performance.

It may also be the case that other, untested moderator variables are more important than previously thought. As suggested previously, trainees may need to be grouped according to other variables, such as skills and attitudes of the trainees, cognitive abilities, nonconformity and open-mindedness, and intelligence. Kleiman and Gordon (1986) did offer evidence that conformity and intelligence may be important moderator variables with patrol officers. There may be other moderator variables which effect the relationship between training and job performance. As occurred in this study, those moderator variables may become even more important with small sample sizes where statistical power is lost. The importance of identifying the importance of other moderator variables becomes even more crucial when attempting to use training academy performance in selections test validation efforts.

This study also demonstrated that some assumptions made concerning training may not be valid. It is suggested that much more attention be given to training programs, especially those which are not as concrete as patrol officer basic training. For jobs where KSAs are not as clearly delineated as they are for patrol officers, the issue of training and its relationship to job performance may be even more nebulous. Also, training needs assessment research should be reexamined and more efficient strategies developed which would more closely related KSAs to training. Training needs assessment programs should involve a complete job analysis, and the training program based upon that job analysis.

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