

How Do We Train and Mentor New Staff in Law Enforcement?  
A Comprehensive Review of Field Training and Mentoring Models to Increase Problem Solving  
and Critical Thinking.

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### **Abstract**

Recent events have put police under a microscope. Misconduct, excessive force cases, and other incidents that affect trust and legitimacy. One area that could improve is the field training or on-the-job training. New officers enter the field with different educational backgrounds than the past due to different pedagogies or teaching methods. In addition there is a lack of critical thinking and problem solving seen by senior officers. The following paper will examine the current problems of field training and mentoring models supported by the literature and case studies, with the goal to offer recommendations and best practices. As a result, research will suggest that field training and mentoring processes need to be improved to meet the needs of policing in the 21st century

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## **Introduction**

There are many field training programs in law enforcement today. Locke and Sokolove and Locke, Kaminsky and Associates, and the Reno Model (A.K.A. Police Training Officer (PTO)), to name a few. Field training has increased in use, especially in the past two decades (Kaminsky, 2002). This review will look at the difference in scoring, documentation, length of time, and certification for new training officers. Each program will be listed, explained, and analyzed to be compared to each other. This paper will look at each program and document the positives and negatives as well as focus on problem solving and critical thinking.

## **Statement of the Problem**

New officers are required to have 60 college credits and attend the basic recruit academy in Wisconsin (Wisconsin Department of Justice, 2023). That is followed by a field training period of 6-15 weeks of on-the-job training with experienced police officers. During this time the new hire is supposed to learn how to think critically, be self-sufficient, and solve problems. However, more and more officers are completing field training unable to solve problems or think critically. As Vander Kooi and Bierlein (2014) explain that traditional training programs teach officers to obey without question rather than think critically and solve the problem.

Law enforcement is using methods in the police academy and field training programs that have been around for decades without many improvements. Formalized field training as we know it, riding with another senior officer as a mentor or trainer, was developed in the 1970's. Some of these models are still being used today. However, The President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing (2015), recommended changing to problem-based learning model for field training almost eight years ago. Yet, many agencies in Wisconsin and across the country are still using the model that was established in the 1970s. Cleveland and Saville (2006) found in their

research to create the Reno Model/PTO Model that over 70% of agencies were using the older model of field training. Many other benefits of problem-based learning can be found outside of the recommendations of a task force. Higher skill levels were seen in students who used problem-based learning versus traditional learning. Teachers and students both were more in favor of the problem-based learning rather than traditional learning (Vander Kooi and Bierlein, 2014).

In addition to the lack of skills coming out of the law enforcement academy and field training listed above, there are younger generations with different learning styles. The style of teaching for K-12 education has changed. For example, common core standards are being used today and educators are adding computational thinking to education (Yadav et. al., 2016). Officers completing the basic law enforcement recruit academy and field training programs are entering the workforce with different learning skills and abilities based on problem based learning and computational thinking. Training them in traditional methods used in the past will hinder their ability to perform efficiently and effectively. Agencies must adapt to change and provide adequate training for new officers to ensure learning occurs and reduce the liability of risk to the agency and the officer. Henning (2023) points out that Generation Z is very self-directed and enjoys doing their own work. This fits the problem-based learning model rather than traditional. He reiterates that adapting learning styles to the generation is what will lead to success by using this example. Some agencies are seeing 50% turnover rates due to retirements as the previous generations are aging out of law enforcement. For example, Mount Horeb, Wisconsin police department will have hired twelve employees out of twenty-one in three years. That is over fifty percent. This leads to a huge loss in institutional knowledge, a need for

excellence in training, and reduced level of skills. If an agency is not using a formalized training program that is effective and adequate, the learning curve will be reduced.

Officer training has been discussed, regulated, and changed since the 1930s. The Wickersheim Commission showed that 80% of police agencies at the time had no recruit training or preparatory training. The 1960s brought police training into light by the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration because of the civil unrest over civil rights. This was where the recommendation for field training was first established. Two other commissions, the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals (1973) and the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) both added to the conversations on training (McCampbell, 1987). CALEA is still a national accrediting agency for agencies across the country, improving standards all the time. And most recently the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) recommended establishing national standards for field training and academy training to improve law enforcement.

From the 1930s until 2023, there have been multiple commissions, committees, and changes to training programs for elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education that should lead to changes in the way we mentor and develop law new law enforcement officers. Yet, as of 2006, 70% of agencies were still using a method from the 1970s (Cleveland and Saville, 2006).

### **Purpose**

The purpose in this research is to recommend and highlight the different models of field training. It is also to help administrators and officers identify the needed changes to better develop an adequate and efficient training program. With the changes, the increase in numbers

of programs, and the mentality of, “We have always done it this way,” a comprehensive review is needed to compile all the information in one spot and identify the differences for comparison.

### **Method and Contributions**

This paper will examine existing scholarly research from library databases, Google Scholar, and other electronic databases containing scholarly research. The data will also be reviewed from the training manuals of the various programs that will be explained in this project. Each program will be analyzed and compared to the research in the literature review to determine which one will better prepare new law enforcement officers for the role of a police officer.

The conclusions will show that newly hired officers need a different style of training. Improving the training will increase the retention and satisfaction of new staff. It will also increase the longevity of careers. Officers are leaving the profession at higher and earlier rates for other professions (Charman & Bennet, 2021). Using critical thinking, problem-based learning, and engagement will better prepare them for the reality of the profession, causing less internal stress and conflict. They will also reduce intradepartmental conflict with their co-workers because they will be more self-sufficient and better prepared to be part of the team. This information will help administrators and training officers learn how to better mentor and develop staff.

### **History of Field Training Models Used in the United States**

The first development of a formal field training process occurred in San Jose, California. This was in 1972. It was viewed as an extension of the hiring process. Agencies now had the ability to see on the job performance rather than performance in the classroom. This was developed from several presidential commissions since 1931 until it was established in 1972,

showing the long journey of police training (McCampbell, 1987). As pointed out earlier, this is where the discussion started on problem-based learning that is currently being pushed.

### **Kaminsky**

The San Jose model was used by Kaminsky, Sullenberger, & Associates, Inc. starting in the early 1970s. This model is used by agencies across Wisconsin and the United States (Sullenberger, 2015).

### **Sokolove and Locke**

Field Training Associates developed the Sokolove and Locke model in the early 1980s. This model is similar to the San Jose model, but has a slightly different rating system. They both rely on mentoring and demonstrating how officers should respond (Sokolove, n.d.).

### **Reno Model**

The Reno Model or “Police Training Officer” started in Reno, NV in the early 2000s. The methods started back in the 1990s with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police using problem-based learning. In 2006 it was funded by a COPS grant that pushed for the expansion. The development was a push against starting officers out as a “blank slate” or having no knowledge and using the skills and abilities they already have to develop them and create engaged learners instead of a modeling method as described above in the San Jose Model (Cleveland and Saville, 2007).

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

It is assumed that almost every agency has a field training process. Some may be extremely short and others may be much longer, but each agency has a method to onboard a new hire. It is also assumed that all officers have gone through a field training program. Lastly, this

paper assumes that agencies and officers are looking for improvements, changes, or other information regarding field training programs and improvements to adult learning.

The paper is limited to those programs that are established and widely used. There will not be programs included that are used by single agencies or that do not require training to be certified as a training officer.

### **Literature Review**

Police training has been a discussion point going all the way back to the 1800s. Sir Robert Peel first discussed the profession of policing and the culture that is needed (Law Enforcement Action Partnership, 2017). Since then, articles, studies, and discussions have occurred on how to improve, change, and develop policing. This includes recruit, field, and in-service training. Training today has to go far beyond the basic tactics and laws. The problems faced in law enforcement today require better education and training (Okhrimenko et al, 2020). The following will cover the literature review of field training, adult learning styles relating to policing, recruit attitudes, history of police training, costs, ethics, use of force, and other training topics as it relates to field training, mentoring, and developing new policing staff. Ultimately the goal of field training is to make the new officer, “work-ready (Hoel & Christensen, 2020).” Below we will see the best ways to do that through literature.

### **Field Training - Definition and Explanation**

McGinley et al. (2019) studied many aspects of police training in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US). The study was a review of major research into police training. They looked at various scientific studies on police training. One focus was the field training program. The US programs run longer than the UK programs. The training programs that were reviewed examined the differences between student centered and teacher centered

models. They also found scenario-based training to play a large role, but cautioned against just telling war stories. Scenarios have to be thought provoking and student centered. Field training must focus on working with academic training rather than replacing it. It is explained as bridging the theory with the practice. Hoel & Christensen (2020) echo that though. Part of professionalism is joining the theory with practice. It is also to think critically to help others solve their problems, the main point of service in police work. One downside to the studies, was that they were limited in identifying the mechanisms that ensured proper learning that were described above. The few that were referenced, such as scenario-based learning, showed that students were better at necessary skills such as critical thinking and decision making. The ultimate finding was that agencies must use evidence based and scientific research to plan and develop their trainings to meet the needs of the 21st century policing (McGinley et al, 2019). Another downside to field training, as pointed out by Hoel & Christensen (2020), is that it puts officers in the mind set of proving themselves rather than learning. For example, an officer is training with a senior officer. The senior officer tells war stories, shares accolades, and gets the officer excited to be proactive. The officer is so new, they still do not know the job, but they want to prove they are as good as the training officer. This will lead to mistakes. Tyler & Mckenzie (2014) put the field training model to the test. They looked at Australia and their 12 months on the job training model. Through this study, they interviewed training officers and students on what is needed to be a police officer. Traditional field training is based on an apprenticeship model. A senior mentor is assigned to a young apprentice and they learn by watching and doing. A different model of apprenticeship such as cognitive apprenticeship, focuses on learning what connects behind the skill and increasing the critical thinking and problem solving. During the learning process the student compares their thinking to the thinking

and reasoning of the teacher to better understand the meaning behind the skills and better learn them. The authors found that general skills such as communication and critical thinking were most important to police officers' success. Only one of the people interviewed spoke about the competencies listed in the training manual. With critical thinking and communication being important they should be largely included in training. Bradford & Pynes (1999) show that since 1986 there have been few changes made to curriculum at police academies. Approximately three percent is spent on the skills identified above as needed for success.

### **Adult Learning Styles**

McGinley et al (2019) discussed problem-based learning and student-centered learning in their review of major studies on police training. There were also discussions on debriefing and Kolb's Model of Experiential Learning Cycle as other methods of learning. Both Kolb's and debriefing focus on the student reflecting on what was learned and how it will be used in the future. Problem based learning focuses on problem solving methods, while student centered learning uses the teacher as a facilitator to learning rather than lecture style teaching. All of these would benefit field training and adult learning. All of these styles are focused on student engagement and participation.

Tyler and Mckenzie (2014) found that teaching methods and curriculum taught varied from trainer to trainer. When interviewed, the field training officers recalled past instructors that they tried to recreate or using their experiences to know what to teach officers. Only two field training officers used the training materials as reference. Almost all of them reported that they taught by modeling the behavior for the new officers. Some let the students go as far as they could, while one person said they were new to teaching and did not think about how to teach the material ahead of time. A lot of the learning occurred by the student asking questions of the

teacher. Many had these learning sessions immediately following an incident or call, once they returned to the squad car. These training methods, while effective, were negatively affected by the fast pace of emergency services. The ultimate finding in the study was that the trainers used their individual methods rather than having a cohesive, organized training program. Bergman (2017) highlights that due to the findings, field training and style of teaching are the most important. Higher based methods such as problem-based learning, critical thinking training, and high-level communication are required to meet the demands of police training and adult learning. Using methods that only have students reproduce skills based on modeling will not enhance the critical thinking and decision-making police officers need for adult learning.

### **Recruit Attitudes**

One of the better ways to learn how to better teach new hires is to get the feedback from students in the process and after the training. Hoel and Christensen (2020) found that students excelled when pushed beyond their limits. They also found that students had difficulty with self-perceptions of their outcomes. How the learning took place was more important than the type of assignment. The higher the stress level, the more the students liked the learning. The stress pushed them harder and made them realize what they were capable of. The attitudes and statements of students clarifies the idea of proving they can do it rather than learning. Students said they wanted to prove to instructors that they could make it or show up their friends. One student said, "It became a challenge to impress the colleagues. Another struggle in the attitudes of recruits was the idea that they started getting an ego with trying to impress. They had to remind themselves that they were still students and it was OK to have difficulty. This led to feelings of failure and disappointment (Hoel and Christensen, 2020). The students themselves determined success of field training based on the attitude and abilities of the field training

officer. Some of the important skills and abilities included engaging, empowering, encouraging, and “street-smarts (Belur et al, 2019).” A negative effect of recruit attitudes is the misconception of what the job is. Huey & Ricciardelli (2015) compared the attitudes of rural and urban law enforcement officers after training. The findings showed that officers in rural situations who wanted action and glory, ended up being dissatisfied because they spent more time catching loose livestock or completing reports versus their urban counterparts who were handling the dangerous and high-risk calls more often. The take away from this study for administrators is that realistic conversations with staff to help understand their role to avoid misconceptions and disappointments.

### **History of Training in the United States**

Stone (1934) wrote about the professionalization of policing and how the word has been confused when compared to what agencies are doing. Chicago PD was not sending new officers to the preliminary training because they needed to be on the street. Stone (1934) said, “So broad are the problems with which police must deal that to learn police work entirely through experience would require a lifetime or more.” To prove the point that in 1934, American police departments were not living up to their call to professionalism, they looked to European police agencies. The training in Europe in the 1930s for police was six months to a year before they would be put out on patrol as compared to three months in America (Stone, 1934). In 1954, New York State started standardized training for law enforcement. This training was given to agencies of all size and was voluntary. Eventually this training transitioned to mandatory training. Recruit training started at 80 clock hours, but was later increased to 240 clock hours. In 1968, one of the first criminal justice colleges was created in New York. This was followed by a push to regulate and require college degrees for police. It was stated that the

future of law enforcement training should be in academia rather than with the police themselves. In 1970 there were 31 states using on the job training, a direct result of the push for professionalism in the 1950s. There were over 180 colleges offering criminal justice degrees at that time (Lankes, 1970). The first formalized field training model was the San Jose model, started in San Jose, CA in the 1960s (Adger et al., 2022). This was followed by the Sokolove and Locke model in the 1980s (Sokolove, n.d.). In the early 2000s, there was a push for problem-based learning. The Reno Model (also known as Police Training Officer) was started because it was felt that the current San Jose Model was not working, even though it was being used by over 4,000 police agencies (Cleveland & Saville, 2000). The Reno Model was based on problem-based learning, which was found by looking at how doctors were trained (Barrows & Lynda, 2010). This model has been pushed for by the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015).

### **Costs of Training**

Costs have been increasing as the economy fluctuates over time. Agencies are turning to educational institutions more for training rather than teaching in-house. Officers are also asked to put forth their own money to increase training instead of being sent to training or trained by their agencies for advancement (Cordner & Shain, 2011). While this sounds negative, Cordner & Shain (2011) point out that this could lead to more efficient and beneficial training for law enforcement. Using cost benefit analysis should lead to scrutinizing more training to ensure only the best training for the cost is used. They also recommend more scientific approaches to choosing and developing training.

### **Training versus Education**

Bergman (2017) researched Swedish field training officers on how they prepare and what it takes to train police officers. Similar to other studies listed above, each trainer created their own idea of what and how to train. Some were not aware of the curriculum or materials either. But when asked, almost all of them did not consider themselves an educator. They considered that they were training not educating. Some said because they did not have an educator's degree, they were not qualified to educate. (Cordner & Shain, 2011) Colleges are implementing problem-based learning, while police training is still using older methods. On the job training has been noted above as different than the academic training of the academy and college. Studies have shown that officers with higher levels of academic schooling may have less job satisfaction. Other indicators show mixed results of four-year degrees on police officer performance and professionalism, even though a lot of US agencies require them. The key part is how the officers are trained versus their educational levels. Modeling instruction for reproduction or problem based for critical thinking and thought process (Okhrimenko et al, 2020).

### **Training under Stress**

Another topic of discussion in the field training realm is how to overcome stress and understand stress. Police officers face stressful situations daily and those situations affect decision making and performance. This is relative to field training because the decision-making process and skills development is learned through trial and error by experiencing the job. So how we train officers is critical for their development and overcoming stress (Di Nota & Huhta, 2019). The only way to develop the physical skills, specifically use of force skills as discussed in Di Nota & Huhta (2019), is to practice them and perform the skills. Pushing officers outside

their comfort zone will improve their skills and create better motor skills. This matches what Hoel & Christensen (2020) found, as mentioned earlier. Outside of practice, officers must also have confidence. Their performance under stress was also related back to how well they believed they would perform. The additional tie into field training and how new officers are trained is that the more experience an officer goes through, the less effect stress has on their performance. So, using force on force training and scenario-based training can limit the effects and improve performance. This is done through a run-crawl-walk model. Build repetitions and muscle memory to develop basic function. Continuously increase the levels of training to adapt the skills to a variety of situations for better response under stress. Modern technology such as virtual reality could help with this, but it is too new to show an evidence-based result. The negative side to this level of training and adding new technology is the costs as discussed earlier. There are no blank checks in public safety budgeting and there is a finite amount of funding for training and development. Officers still have to patrol and respond to calls. They cannot spend every day-all day training. The end result is that, unlike an athlete that performs under specific parameters, law enforcement must respond with the same skills under different circumstances each time. We must consider stress, environment, and equipment when preparing the officer for what may happen (Di Nota & Huhta, 2019).

### **Training and Use of Force**

One of the most relevant topics surrounding law enforcement today is use of force. Whether justified or not justified, this topic will always get attention. This topic is shown to directly relate to field training. New officers are more likely to use force if their training officer has a history or propensity to use force more than others. This is key to assigning those that train other officers. This effect on newly trained officers was shown to last for over two

years after the training (Adger et al., 2022). The mental health and wellness aspect that can affect decision making can lead to poor critical thinking and poor performance under stress. When this poor performance occurs, improper force is used or force is used against the wrong person. Training methods and proper trainer selection can reduce this by improving motor learning in the field training process (Di Nota & Huhta, 2019).

### **Field Training and Ethics / Culture**

Another aspect of the role of the educator and the role of field training is ethics and culture. This aspect is based on the culture and environment within and outside an agency. This is often where the us versus them image comes from. International Association of Chiefs of Police (2021) defines an organization as, “a socially constructed entity that pursues collective goals, controls its own performance, and has a boundary separating it from its environment.” Organizations, such as police departments include subsystems of different shifts, groups, and specialty assignments (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2021). Field training is used as a socialization method to create the collective goals and vision and create the boundaries and performance of individual officers who are new to the organization. Students are taught in the police academy about ethics. New officers are adopted into the culture of an agency to include framing the ethical boundaries within the organization. This can be a positive or negative depending on the program or the mentor assigned to the new recruit (Hoel and Christensen, 2020).

A social assimilation or identity is formed from working within a set environment. If an agency has an immoral or unethical culture, the newly hired officer will assume that new mindset and belief. If an agency has a moral and ethical culture, the recruit will gain that through field training. The basis of the ethical dilemma in policing is that the agency has a culture and set of

ethics and the community has a culture and set of ethics (Hoel and Christensen, 2020). Using the International Association of Chiefs of Police (2021) definition, the agency is the organization and the environment is the community. If these do not align, there will be issues between the two. Field training needs to teach new officers to critically think and reflect on this and their actions to properly understand the dynamics to be successful (Hoel and Christensen, 2020). Culture of an agency can affect community relations as well. Belur et al (2019) discussed one of the biggest disconnects between academy training and field training is in community policing. Community policing is a large part of the academy training, but agencies do not assess officers during field training and it does not appear to be trained as frequently. This would be an effect of culture on an agency through field training. Hoel and Christensen (2020) describe field training as professional development. This is where you learn to work through problems and apply the culture (of the organization) and ethical framework to those problems to make a decision. New officers are placed between a rock and a hard place. They have the law and education from the academy that is meeting the culture of the organization. How they are trained and how the two roles are applied can have very positive or negative ethical implications, as noted in the section above on field training and use of force.

For those that think field training is just a formality and does not have an effect, look back at the various studies and topics above. The choice of who trains, how they train (pedagogy), and the newly hired officers' attitudes, all affect the outcome of training, the culture of an organization, and have long term impacts on the agency and community. Because of this, it is time to look at several case studies on how field training has been studied around the world from multiple perspectives.

## **Case Studies**

### **Overview**

In order to understand how field training programs are used, affect new hires, and their effectiveness, a deep dive into programs is needed. The following section will outline each of the three main programs used in the United States., Sokolove and Locke, Kaminsky and Associates, and the Reno Model. This will be followed by three specific case studies. A review of four Nordic countries and whether the field training program changes the views and perspectives of officers will start the case study. The second is a Norwegian study that looks into the perspectives of 12 newly hired officers and how field training affected their learning. Lastly, the perspectives of Australian field training will be outlined to wrap up the dive into field training around the world in the law enforcement field. The data in this section will be used to make recommendations and evaluate current methods used in Wisconsin to help administrators understand the best practices to mentor and develop the next generation of law enforcement officers.

### **Sokolove and Locke**

Sokolove and Locke (2000) train under the company name Field Training and Associates. This training follows the San Jose model, developed in the early 1970s. Field Training and Associates started in the 1980s and have been training officers ever since. This is one of the models discussed in the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) because the methods have not been changed since the 1970s. The basis of Sokolove and Locke is to use ten training standards for evaluation. These are interpersonal relationships, jurisdiction and geography, motor vehicle operation, telecommunication protocols, patrol strategies, patrol tactics, statutes and ordinances, information processing, problem solving and decision making,

and traffic enforcement and accident investigations. Training officers use these guidelines to evaluate how new officers perform on a daily basis. Officers are given a five-point scale to grade officers. These scales are used to show progress and needs for improvement. They are recorded on a daily observation report (DOR). Officers spend approximately ten weeks riding with senior officers. The senior officers are certified in this training method. Certification takes forty hours or five days of training. Through modeling and lecture, officers are explained how to do the job and evaluated on their performance. The ten weeks are broken up into five phases. The first three phases are each with a different training officer. The fourth phase is a shadow phase where the officer is observed but not taught to see if they have the skills necessary to work by themselves. The final phase is the remaining time on the probationary period. Officers ride with a training officer a couple times throughout the next seven to twelve months to ensure they are still learning and improving. This is the mentorship portion of the program.

### **Kaminsky and Associates**

Kaminsky (2002) uses the same San Jose model, but utilize slightly different guidelines. They use a one through seven scale to rate new officers. Their reasoning for the one through seven is that there are times where someone scores in between the listed standards. Having two extra numbers allows for fluctuation to allow for better rating of performance. This training model uses 31 different evaluative subjects in five different categories. The following are the five main categories: appearance, attitude, knowledge, performance, and relationships. Within the categories are sub categories such as driving skills (emergency and non-emergency), report writing, self-initiated field activity, officer safety, statutes/ordinances, and policies and procedures. This model is also based on tell, show, mirror, and let them go other own. Under the Kaminsky and Associates version, the training can take from eight weeks up to 18 weeks

depending on the agency and the needs. It is shown that the more technology involved (dispatching is discussed), the longer it takes. Many agencies are adding more and more time into the training periods. Certification for new training officers takes up to forty hours of instruction. Officers are evaluated at the end of each phase by meeting with a supervisor. A determination is made by staff involved in training on whether the officer may advance or not (Kaminsky, 2002).

### **Reno Model (A.K.A. Police Training Officer)**

Cleveland and Saville (2000) worked with the Community Oriented Police Services to fund and develop a new model of field training. This model is based on problem-based learning. It is a student-centered style of teaching rather than teacher based as the two models listed above. Officers are assessed on fifteen core competencies. These include police vehicle operations, conflict resolution, use of force, legal procedures and policy, organizational philosophies, report writing, leadership, problem solving, skills, community specific problems, cultural diversity, legal authority, officer safety, communication skills, ethics, and lifestyle stressors (Wellness). The program is broken up into four different phases. These include emergency response, non-emergency response, patrol strategies, and investigations. During these phases, an officer is assessed on their performance against the core competencies listed above. Being student centered, the new officer has to complete journaling and assessment of themselves. The training officers then assess the officers' self-assessment and provide feedback. Throughout the training, officers are given problems to apply their competencies to solve. These problems are related to the four phases and each phase has a problem in addition to the journals. There is also an assignment at the end of each phase where the new officer picks an incident they responded to. The officers present to their training officer how they used the core competencies to solve that

incident. Each phase is three weeks long. The new officer applies five of the competencies to an incident for each week. That way they show their skills in all competencies in each phase.

Decisions to progress to the next phase and complete the program is made by a board of evaluators. At the end of each phase, all involved in training will meet and discuss the progress. A new officer can be terminated, held back, returned to a previous phase, or progress to the next phase.

## **Nordic Review of Field Training**

### ***Background and Study Overview***

Fekjaer & Petersson (2018) describe policing as a legal perspective where the parameters are set in law and must be followed. They use the Hollywood image of Dirty Harry as results override the methods to keep order and peace. This challenges the self-image of police so far as do they follow the rule of law or do we look the other way to get the job done for the “safety” of the community. The authors of this study wanted to see if the field training process erodes the rule of law by creating “Dirty Harry” officers who are out to use the end result to justify the means. The study gave a survey before and after on the job training to determine attitudes and beliefs toward different topics.

The officers in this study were from Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Iceland. There are differences between the groups, but all go through some form of on-the-job training. Iceland for about four months, Sweden for six months, and Norway and Denmark both provide approximately one year of on-the-job training for new officers. Norway, Denmark, and Iceland officers complete this training in the middle of their academic training. Sweden completes their on-the-job training after completing the academic portion of training (this is most similar to the United States). Even with the difference in lengths and timing of the on-the-job training, they

asked students before their academic training and after their on-the-job training to make the results comparable. The biggest question was whether or not the field training process changed their beliefs to more get the job done or kept the rule of law as a key parameter of how they do their job. Because, as the authors state, they must maintain order (key role of law enforcement) but are also held to the laws of the respective governments (Fekjaer & Petersson, 2018).

Areas looked at are discretion, autonomy, and how certain things are handled by the officer. Discretion has to be based in law rather than pure ego and an officer abusing their authority just to show power. But officers must have autonomy within the law to handle minor matters on a daily basis. This is what defines the continuum of research that the authors use to assess the four agencies reviewed. The one edge is defined as an officer that will ignore any law to get the job done. They will base everything on their authority rather than rule of law and cover up wrong doing by peers. On the other end of the spectrum, the officers will follow the law completely, without flexibility. They will turn in their colleagues for any violation to stay within their roles and responsibilities to the law (Fekjaer & Petersson, 2018).

Fekjaer & Petersson (2018) spent three years, from 2010 to 2013, collecting surveys from the different jurisdictions to show the changes in attitudes and perceptions from recruitment through field training. The response rates varied from 69% (one outlier) to 97% to give a very accurate understanding of the outcomes. They looked at societal changes and found no significant societal changes such as crime rates during that time that could have skewed the information. Because Sweden did not have a field training component during the academic period, they were used as the comparison.

## ***Results***

The deciding factors discussed were whether or not officers became more autonomous after field training. The autonomy led to more actions outside the rule of law. There was a slight increase in autonomy after field training, while Sweden showed less autonomy after graduation without field training. But the authors explain that the difference is minor, -2.4 points on a 1-100 scale. Explanations on why new officers do not turn as autonomous after schooling include the hiring demands of agencies. If an agency does not want to hire autonomous officers, the recruits are required to follow those rules or not get hired. The authors also looked at the crime rates and acceptance of the general public on reasons for autonomy versus strict adherence to law. But there was no statistical significance to accept this explanation. The other explanation involves following the agency culture. As noted in the literature review above (Hoel and Christensen, 2020), field training leads to new officers copying the attitudes and beliefs of training officers. The authors in this study do not show statistical significance that there is an effect from the culture and field training officers. The results did not match the hypothesis of the authors, but they found that too strict of rules (explained as bureaucracy) can lead to inability to intervene or make service-oriented decisions, so having some autonomy may produce better results, any least in Nordic policing situations. The outcome of officers training and change of attitudes is a product of many other factors than just field training and education (Fekjaer and Petersson, 2018).

## **Participation and Relationships in Field Training (Norway)**

### ***Background and Study Overview***

Hoel (2019), took a similar approach in reviewing how new officers feel about their training, but changes the angle. Instead of does the field training program impart the culture,

leading to a more autonomous officer, but how does the field training officer impact and impart knowledge on the officer. This study covers the relationships and the perspective of the learning officer. This study has a similar aspect of the socialization into the new organization. The authors relate the training officer or “tutor” to a significant other for the trainee due to the amount of time spent with them and the relationship that is built. The aim of the study is to evaluate the importance of the role of onboarding a new officer.

Part of the study looks at the learning process. When a person learns by doing (field training) the process to include differing opinions and discussions, is the most important aspect. Another aspect of the process includes the confidence, past experiences, and personality of the student. The study looks at police work in Norway. Norway has a three-year police education program. Newly hired officers go through field training in year two of the three-year program. The training program lasts ten months during that second year, where an officer is paired with a senior officer as a “tutor.” Two to three months after completing the field training program, 12 students, who had been randomly preselected, were interviewed about their perspectives. The questions were focused on how students felt about their learning, when the learning took place, where it took place, and what was most effective to aid in learning. The focus was not to identify poor trainers or fix the issues. The point was to identify what worked and what does not work to help guide agencies into how to train new officers (Hoel, 2019).

### ***Results***

Hoel (2019) extracted three main themes from the study on new officers’ perspectives. These themes were; “to be put in front, mentoring as ongoing training, and to be taken care of.” These themes were all explained in detail in the study results. This includes defining the themes and giving officer examples through quotes from the interviews.

The first theme of, “to be put in front,” related to a type of learning process. Officers described being the one doing to work so they could learn while doing. Students described getting told their assignment and the instructor would let them go do it. Examples of doing rather than observing was more helpful. It was described as being helpful because officers have to react to different social circumstances. By being put in these situations, they can learn what to do. One way the author described it was that students built confidence by being a police officer rather than a police student (Hoel, 2019).

“Mentoring as on-going training,” is a method of continuous conversation. The authors described being in such close proximity (riding in the same car) allowed for continuous conversations. These discussions allowed for preparation before an incident response, discussions after the incident to increase learning, and the ability to understand what was learned or not learned by questioning the student. One takeaway for the on-the-job training, is that this type of learning occurs more during informal conversations and preparation rather than structured events and activities. Another explanation for the benefit of this type of learning is that the officers did not necessarily view this type of learning as mentoring because the conversations were naturally occurring rather than planned. But these conversations helped connect the experiences and the social norms of the agency. As officers experience different situations, the teachers and the students can share their perspectives and allow the student to improve decision making and learn the boundaries of the agency (Hoel, 2019).

Hoel (2019) describes the third theme as, “to be taken care of.” The officers interviewed for this study focused heavily on the fact that their supervisors and teachers were concerned for their wellbeing and were aware of the experiences that could cause them harm, such as death scenes. This also included confidence. The students described knowing they had help and

support, so they were more likely to act and do the job. The feedback confirmed this and confined in the growth.

Ultimately, Hoel (2019) found that being successful in this field and learning the professional identity of a police officer cannot solely be taught in a classroom. The three themes listed above must be involved during on-the-job training to correlate the theoretical knowledge from academics into the social norms of the police agency. Trainers need to think about the learner's perspective on the socialization of a new officer.

### **Police Training Officers Perspectives (Australia)**

#### ***Background and Study Overview***

Shifting gears, Tyler and McKenzie (2014) focused on the perspective of Australian field training officers. Instead of looking at what new officers need to learn, the angle was what training officers feel is needed to make an officer successful. Thirteen training officers of various experience levels were interviewed about their preparation to train, what is important to train, and what a successful officer looks like.

In Australia, new officers are put through a new constable program that involves twelve months of on-the-job training. A senior training officer is assigned to mentor the new officer during this term. One aspect of the study revolves around whether mere participation in on-the-job training can make someone successful. This requires more than just senior training officers. Training officers need to be fully vetted and prepared to teach and mentor (Tyler & McKenzie, 2014).

The authors identified the main theme in law enforcement on the job training as cognitive apprenticeship. Cognitive apprenticeship is explained and defined in the study as having two parts. The first is to model, coach, scaffold (get increasingly more difficult), and fade out of the

process. This means the senior officer will explain and demonstrate what is needed and how to be a police officer. They will then help and coach the student as they continue to grow and learn. Finally, the senior officer will start with easier calls and slowly increase the level of calls as the new officer gains more knowledge and skill. As the officer improves, the teacher will help less and less (fading) (Tyler & McKenzie, 2014).

### ***Results***

Tyler and McKenzie (2014) found that training officers varied and modified their approach throughout training. Depending on who was training the new officer, their experience and what was important would vary. Key findings were the importance of communication, the “basic ability to police,” making good judgments, and understanding the knowledge of the law. An interesting point was that only one of the individuals discussed the actual objectives and outcomes listed in the training materials as a measure of success. One person interviewed described acting like his training officer years ago, so the new officer had the same experience he did. One of the negative findings involved the differences in pedagogies. Some officers spent little time preparing and used their own ideas for what and how to train. Others were certified instructors and knew how to plan lessons and spent time preparing. Overall, each student would get different experiences from different instructors. At least one training officer expressed difficulty teaching someone how to do something when someone else told them to do it a different way.

Using disconnected methods that varied widely and the fast-paced nature of emergency police services made it difficult to train. But using the cognitive apprenticeship model with feedback and interrogatory to understand what is learned by the new officer will help with learning. The main point at the end of the study was to standardize the teaching methods and

find time for discussion and learning in the fast-moving environment for success (Tyler & McKenzie, 2014).

Three different models used in the United States (U.S.) currently compared with three similar, yet different programs in three different countries outside the U.S. gives a lot of insight into what works and does not work in law enforcement field training. The field of law enforcement, while based on what the individual community needs and wants, faces similar challenges and demands. This means that looking at the differences and similarities in training methods can help identify best practices to modernize and evolve the current methods. The next section will compare the research with the case studies to give recommendations.

### **Analysis and Recommendations**

#### **Analysis**

Several areas of the three programs currently used in Wisconsin and the United States will be compared and contrasted to see how they relate to one another. The areas of comparison will be how long certification takes, the style of teaching (pedagogy), whether they are learner-centered or instructor-centered, what type of rating system is used, and how long each training program takes for the new officer to complete. Once the analysis of each program is completed, there will be recommendations made for agencies based on the research in the literature review and the case studies above.

#### ***Certification***

This is one area where all programs are the same. All three programs (Sokolove & Locke (2000), Kaminsky (2002), and the Reno Model (Cleveland & Saville, 2000)) have the training officer complete a forty-hour course to become a certified trainer. The Sokolove and Locke and Kaminsky and Associates training is more lecture based with some small group and discussion

sections. The Reno Model is mostly small group and hands on training. All three courses cover assessment, documentation, and planning for training. The certification comes with pre-designed forms for use in the Sokolove and Kaminsky programs. These are allowed to be used by agencies that have completed the training. The Reno Model has sample forms but is designed to be adapted to each agency. Officers certified in the Reno Model will have to prepare their own documents based on agency needs and program specific information.

### *Pedagogy*

Sokolove and Locke as well as Kaminsky and Associates both are based on the cognitive apprenticeship model as defined by Tyler and McKenzie (2014). The student is shown how to do the work (model). Then the new officer is asked to participate (practice). Throughout the process the training officer is coaching and helping. Over time, the training officer helps less and less until the new officer is able to complete the tasks by themselves (scaffolding). One key aspect to this model is the feedback at the end. In order to understand the learning, there needs to be discussions and questions after an incident or activity. The instructor is responsible for assessing the learning of the student (Sokolove and Locke, 2000 and Kaminsky, 2002).

The Reno Model is a problem-based learning pedagogy (Cleveland and Saville, 2000). The problem-based learning pedagogy uses the teacher as a facilitator to help with self-directed learning. This allows new officers to create problem solving and team-oriented skills to solve their own problems as they will need to do once training is complete (Barrows & Lynda, 2010). Students are taught how to problem solve and are given resources to solve the problems. Students are shown how to apply different problem-based learning techniques to any problem and are in charge of their own learning. The feedback and reflection portion of the Reno Model uses journaling and core competency logs to assess progress. At the end of each day, the student

completes a journal outlining what was learned, how it was applied, and how they will use it to improve. At the end of each week, the student completes a project or written report detailing how they applied to the core competencies they learned to a specific incident or activity that week. The student is responsible for assessing and documenting their learning and understanding (Cleveland & Saville, 2000).

### ***Learner focused versus instructor focused***

Using the cognitive apprentice definition, both Sokolove and Locke and Kaminsky and Associates are instructor focused. An “expert” or senior officer is assigned to share their knowledge with the new officer. This involves imparting culture, skills, and department policy in the newly hired officer so they can work within the means of the agency. So, the onus is on the instructor to teach and mold the new officer (Sokolove and Locke, 2000 and Kaminsky, 2002).

The Reno model is based on a learner or student-based learning model. The student has to complete specific problems each week, document their learning each day in a journal, and complete weekly assessments of core competencies. The teacher acts as a safety net, but the student must do the work, the problem solving, and the assessment of their own learning (Cleveland & Saville, 2000).

### ***Rating Systems***

**Sokolove and Locke (2000).** Rating is based on a three-option scale to rate newly hired officers. There is a meets standards or does not meet standards. The standards are set for each of the ten categories of rating. The officers are assessed daily with a daily observation report. Each shift, the training officer determines if a trainee meets the standards or not. If they do not meet the standards there needs to be written justification of why the rating did not meet

standards. The third category is exceeds standards. The candidate that is assessed in this rating must also have written justification for the score. There is a section on the back of this report that allows for the trainer to complete written documentation of performance and learning options. This report is signed by the trainee, the trainer, and a supervisor when it is reviewed.

**Kaminsky (2002).** Rating is based on a scale of one through seven. The scale is broken down between acceptable, not acceptable, or superior. A score of one through two is considered not acceptable. A score of three through five is considered acceptable. And a score of six through seven is superior. There are three choices like Sokolove & Locke, but there are more options so it is not just black and white with acceptable or not acceptable. There is a sliding scale to show improvement and allow for more detail. These scores are also rated on a daily basis through a report called the daily observation report. This report has a written component for details on what was learned and how each task was performed. There is supposed to be time set aside each shift to go over the report and the trainer, trainee, training supervisor, and training coordinator will all review it and sign it once completed.

**Reno Model (Cleveland & Saville, 2000).** Journaling, core competencies log, and a review board are used to rate new officers in this model. Most documentation is completed by the student and reviewed by the training officer. Each day the officer in training completes a journal that outlines an overview of the activities that led to learning, what was learned by each activity or event, and how the learned material will be used to improve performance. Training officers will review this journal and write a brief summary to hold the new officer accountable and keep them honest. Officers also complete an assignment each week to assess their core competencies. There are fifteen core competencies and three weeks for each phase of training. New officers will pick five competencies and use an example to show competency for each week

of the phase. Then the next week they will pick five more and the next week five more to show proficiency in all fifteen competencies over the three weeks of each phase. The last part of the rating system is a board of review. The board of review is made up of training staff and supervisors that will review all documentation and determine if an officer has met the standards to move on in the process.

### ***Length of training periods***

Training period lengths vary from program to program, but are similar. Kaminsky (2002) recommends at least an eight-week minimum if the officer has past law enforcement experience, also known as a lateral transfer. However, for a new officer with little to no experience, it is recommended to have a training length of fourteen to seventeen weeks.

Sokolove & Locke (2000) establishes four steps for training over fourteen weeks. The program is pretty rigid in that timeline, but they allow for shorter timeframes if an officer has experience. The caveat is that if an officer completes the training early, they still must show that they meet or exceed the standards in all categories before completing training.

The Reno Model is a complete program that is set at fifteen weeks. There are four steps that last three weeks each. Then there is a week of orientation at the beginning, a week of evaluation in the middle, and a week of evaluation at the end (Cleveland & Saville, 2000)

## **Recommendations**

### ***Learner Centered***

As seen above, programs could be learner centered or teacher centered. To be effective in modern policing, agencies should pick a learner centered model to create better critical thinking and problem solving. McGinley et al (2019) showed the problem-based learning and learner centered training is more effective with critical thinking and problem solving for new

officers. This is also necessary for pushing officers outside their comfort zone. If a new officer is forced to find their own information and solve the problem on their own, they will at times be forced to confront things they do not know. Di Nota & Huhta (2019) discusses pushing officers outside their comfort zone to increase learning. Hoel & Christensen (2020) echoes this by explaining that the only way to improve skills is through hands on practice. Engagement is key. Getting students involved and engaged rather than just sitting idly by and watching (McGinley et al, 2019).

### ***Feedback Necessary***

Feedback on performance is a key component to learning. In field training this is sometimes referred to as a debriefing that is done at the end of the day or after each incident. Hoel (2019) explains that continuous mentoring and feedback is important to new officers. They cannot change or learning if they do not know what they are doing or how they are performing. All three programs use a feedback and coaching type model. Sokolove & Locke (2000) and Kaminsky (2002) both have the feedback completed on a daily observation report. There are discussions happening after each incident and at the end of the day, but most feedback is on this form through rating and comments. The Reno Model (Cleveland & Saville, 2000) uses the journal and core competency log to document learning and feedback. This is completed through the learner centered model where the new officer documents and justifies learning by completing tasks to identify and debrief what was learned and how it will be implemented.

A negative aspect of the emergency services training is that at times the job is very fast paced and busy. This leaves very little time for debriefing and learning. Sometimes there is little time for a new officer to figure it out or work through the problem due to split second

decisions needing to be made (Tyler & McKenzie, 2014). Even with the fast paced environment, this feedback and debriefing must occur and is needed.

### ***Objective Based - Pre-Planned Programming***

New officers or anyone that is learning something new must be aware of objectives so they know when they succeed or meet the objectives (Barrows & Lynda, 2010). Tyler and McKenzie (2014) explained that most training officers wanted to see the primary skills of communication, police decision making, and understanding and knowledge of the law from news officers to consider them successful. However, they found most training officers were not using the objectives of the program to assess. Agencies must write the objectives of what you are looking for and train to the objectives. Focusing on the objectives rather than telling war stories and showing how good the trainer is. Hoel & Christensen (2020) show this where officers are trying to impress their training officer rather than learning the basics and the objectives. Tyler and McKenzie (2014) showed only two of the studied trainers referenced the learning materials in planning for training a new officer. Borrows & Lynda (2010) discuss learning in action and learning by doing. A person who learns through active processes will learn faster than listening to lectures or being talked to. The example given was using active engagement, practice, and feedback rather than just talking and telling stories.

### ***Proper Selection of Training Officers***

As important as pre-planned programs and objectives, agencies must take care to select the right person for the field training officer role. Fekjaer and Petersson (2018) explain that new officers copied their training officers. Field training officers are models for the new officers and studies show that new officers will do as modeled. If an agency wants to make a change (think about the recommendations from the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015)

that changes in training and culture are needed), the agency must select the officers based on performance they want copied. If the training officers are teaching the unwanted culture, the unwanted culture will continue. Adger (2022) said the effects of training officers on their newly hired officer can last up to two years. Tyler and McKenzie (2014) identified that the training methods varied widely from officer to officer, showing that they are not following the same programs or models of the agency. Or the agency does not use a standard model.

### **Conclusion**

There are many field training programs in law enforcement today. Locke and Soklove, San Jose Model, and Police Training Officer (PTO), to name a few. Field training has increased in use, especially in the past two decades (Kaminsky, 2002). But field training, in general, has not changed much over that same time. The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) and other presidentially convened commissions have suggested adjustments, best practices, and changes, but little has changed.

There are three current training models in the United States. These are similar in some ways and have vast differences in others. Kaminsky & Associates (2002) and Sokolove & Locke (2000) both are based on the San Jose Model where there is a numerical score given on daily observation reports with feedback from a training officer. Both involve a tell, show, and model type program where the teacher is the focus as the "expert." The Reno Model (Cleveland & Saville, 2000) focuses on the student and uses the teacher as a facilitator. There are daily journals completed by the student and weekly projects that are presented to show competency in core skills.

Through the literature review it was shown field training is extremely important. Field training has an effect on use of force, stress response and culture and ethics. Officers are more likely to use force if their training officers uses more force (Adger et al, 2022). The only way to

improve stress response is to practice the skills over and over (DiNota & Huhta, 2019). The socialization of a new officer is how a culture is developed and maintained. Training officers must be selected carefully to ensure the proper training and development for newly hired officers (Hoel and Christensen, (2020).

In addition, three case studies showed the attitudes and opinions of new recruits and field training officers. These studies gave insight into what works and what does not work. Thus, establishing a basis for recommendations on best practices. Fekjaer & Petersson (2018) studied students in four Nordic countries to see if their training made them more likely or less likely to strictly adhere to the legal parameters of the job versus being like the movie character Dirty Harry where the ends justify the means. The main result in this study showed that being too strict and following the letter of the law is less effective than having some autonomy and addressing the main concerns even outside the black and white of the laws. being too strict will not allow flexibility to solve problems. Hoel (2019) being out front (hands on working versus just observing), feedback, and being taken care of are the key components to make learning on the job successful according to new officers in Norway. Tyler and McKenzie (2014) found that there was varied instruction from one training officer to another, officers copied how they were trained (similar to how culture is transferred and socialization occurs), and some prepare more than others.

Ultimately, agencies need to select the right people to train new officers, there needs to be structured objectives that are used to develop a planned training program, the program has to be learner centered, and there has to be a feedback process in place to help guide or mentor the student. The right people will put in the time and make a difference. They will also follow the program rather than going rogue. Clear objectives help students know what they need to do and

using the objectives to plan the program will aid the training officer in teaching. Focusing on the learning will lead to better problem solving and critical thinking rather than the modeling process with the teacher as the “expert.” Lastly, the program has to have a developed feedback system. This gives the students information to continue growing and developing. The feedback should be given and take to allow for the exchange of ideas.

Some agencies see field training as a formality to “check a box.” Others see it as the most important part of an agency. As seen above, the impact is great. A training officer can have an effect on a trainee’s performance for up to two years. It affects almost every aspect of a new employee and when done right can prevent future issues as we have seen in current events around the world in the past three years.

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