Police academy training: comparing across curricula

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to address two interrelated research questions. First, to compare the academy performance of police recruits trained under a traditional academy curriculum with the performance of those trained under a new academy curriculum based on community policing. Second, to investigate whether a different "type" of recruit performs better in the community policing curriculum compared with the traditional curriculum.

Design/methodology/approach – Regression analysis is used to estimate the effects of independent variables on three dependent variables that indicate academy success: average academy scores, failure experiences, and post-academy employment.

Findings – Results suggest that more highly educated recruits and female recruits fared better in the community policing curriculum but that, overall, recruits in the community policing curriculum performed similarly to their traditional counterparts.

Research limitations/implications – The findings suggest that newer police training models may be rewarding skills consistent with the community policing philosophy, such as education. This is a study of one police training center that has instituted a new training curriculum, so results cannot be generalized to other training centers. The community policing curriculum was in the early stages of implementation when data were collected and was therefore not yet standardized. Finally, the analysis is limited to predicting the success of police recruits in the academy, rather than predicting their job performance.

Originality/value – Few studies have examined academy training in community policing. This study is a first step to broadening understanding of the impact of academy training in community policing on police recruits.

Keywords Community policing, Training, Government agencies, Curricula, Weapons, United States of America

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Shooting. Defensive tactics. Mechanics of arrest. This is what comes to mind when most of us hear the term "police training." And that is only for the past 50 years, because before that, most police officers did not receive any formal training at all (Walker, 1999). The political era, which spanned from the 1840s through the early 1900s, was characterized by "watchman" style policing, and saw officers recruited informally and learning the ropes of policing on the job (Alpert and Dunham, 1997; Kelling and Moore, 1988). Recruits were not formally screened and any "training" they received was left to seasoned police officers in the field. Corruption in that time period led to reform beginning in the early 1900s. Reform, or legalistic, policing introduced

basic training of police officers (Alpert and Dunham, 1997; Kelling and Moore, 1988). However, training varied widely by state, agency, and budget, and most recruits were still insufficiently prepared for police work (Alpert and Dunham, 1997).

We have come a long way since then, and we are now well into the community policing era (Kelling and Moore, 1988). The new era highlights the importance of cultural diversity, communications, crime prevention, and problem-solving. Indeed, training is one of the key elements necessary for community policing to reach its full potential (King and Lab, 2000; Senna and Siegel, 2002; Zhao and Thurman, 1995).

"Community-oriented policing" (or COPS) is currently touted by academicians and practitioners as the answer to crime and disorder problems and police-community conflict (Rosenbaum and Lurigio, 1994). The federal government has also been supportive, providing financial incentives to agencies who agree to participate in community policing activities. For example, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, a branch of the Department of Justice, provided money for over 100,000 new officers for COPS in the 1990s (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000). To date, COPS has been a well-funded government program (Lab, 2004).

The definition of COPS has been the subject of much scholarly debate. Agencies, practitioners, and researchers tend to define it differently, though most advanced definitions contain similar principles, including problem solving, community involvement, and organizational decentralization (Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce, 2004). Quality of life and crime prevention are also emphasized (Community Policing Consortium, 2006). Whereas traditional policing was reactive and incident-based, COPS is proactive and seeks to solve problems that generate repeat calls for service. Generally, the COPS philosophy posits that officers work with neighborhood residents to define problems from the bottom up and then work together to *solve* those problems, rather than respond to calls for service as separate incidents. Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1990) offer the following definition of community policing:

> Community policing is a new philosophy of policing, based on the concept that police officers and private citizens working together in creative ways can help solve contemporary community problems related to crime, social and physical disorder, and neighborhood decay. The philosophy is predicated on the belief that achieving these goals requires that police departments develop new relationships with law-abiding people in the community, allowing them a greater voice in setting local police priorities and involving them in efforts to improve the overall quality of life in their neighborhoods. It shifts the focus of police work from handling random calls to solving community problems (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990, p. 5).

Though community-oriented policing (COPS) has sparked research and debate, training of police officers within such a framework has yet to receive much attention (or resources). Police training reflecting a community-oriented approach is a relatively new phenomenon, although COPS itself has existed in theory and practice since the 1980s (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990). Historically, training of police officers has been slow to keep up with policing practice, and training in COPS has been no exception (Bradford and Pynes, 1999).

The roles and responsibilities of police officers differ under COPS, and most existing training programs insufficiently address the underlying causes of crime and disorder, coalition-building, and crime prevention (King and Lab, 2000). Traditional training prepared officers for a narrow focus on law-enforcement duties, rather than the more

generalist approach that community policing entails. Traditional training focused on physical activities, such as firearms training, physical training, defensive tactics, and driving. Traditional training also included some knowledge areas such as law, arrest procedures, traffic enforcement, and officer safety. Neglected were areas such as communications, diversity, problem solving, and police-community relations.

Finally, some states such as Florida, Illinois and Michigan, have begun to address the importance of training in COPS in an effort to make COPS a success (Dantzker *et al.*, 1995; Trojanowicz and Belknap, 1986). Further, they have begun to implement basic recruit training programs reflecting a COPS and/or problem solving orientation. Still, the few COPS training programs that do exist tend to be in the early stages and may be struggling with implementation. Their impact has yet to be evaluated (Chappell *et al.*, 2005; Dantzker *et al.*, 1995; Trojanowicz and Belknap, 1986).

This research seeks to address a gap in the literature by analyzing police recruit training under a COPS philosophy by comparing it to the former traditional training curriculum used in Florida. It investigates how COPS and problem solving are being integrated into basic recruit training and the extent to which it is producing differences in recruit academy performance. Specifically, the study will address the following questions in depth:

RQ1. To what extent are quantifiable differences in academy recruit performance predicted by the community policing curriculum?

RQ2. Does a different "type" of recruit perform better under the community policing curriculum compared to the traditional curriculum?

What makes this study unique is the timing: As the author began research at the police academy, the traditional curriculum was undergoing a complete restructuring to reflect an innovative problem solving, community-oriented focus in what became known as the Curriculum Maintenance System (CMS) curriculum. The research spanned both curricula and thus allows comparison of the two training approaches.

Literature review
Police training
Police training in the reform era focused primarily on the technical and mechanical aspects of acquiring skills, such as marksmanship, driving skills, and defensive tactics (Alpert and Dunham, 1997), while neglecting "softer" subjects like communication and problem solving (Birzer, 1999). Many academies, or police training centers, continue to train this way today. Recruits spend 90 percent of their training time on firearms, driving, first aid, self-defense and other use-of-force tactics even though only 10 percent of their job duties will put them in positions where they need to use these skills (Germann, 1969; Mayhall *et al.*, 1995). Some jurisdictions base their basic recruit training on a Job Task Analysis (JTA) in order to ensure that training reflects what is done on the job. However, JTA often focuses on what has traditionally been done on the job and not necessarily what needs to be learned to do the job better or to prepare new officers for community policing.

We are still in the transition from the reform era to the community era. Though community policing has existed as a philosophy for over 30 years, the development of particular operational practices associated with the philosophy has taken longer to develop. Training, in particular, has been slow to adapt to community policing (or

COPS). The transition is especially difficult given the conflicting values and practices between traditional (or reform) policing and current policing. For example, while traditional policing emphasizes strict enforcement of the law, COPS emphasizes building relationships between police and community/neighborhood residents in order to work together to prevent crime and solve problems (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990). The emphasis is on resolving recurring problems rather than intervening in single incidents. Other attempts to improve or reform the police have often relied upon new or improved training (Buerger, 1998; Fogelson, 1977).

The purpose of community policing training is to "provide officers with a level of understanding that will allow them to effectively employ problem solving and community engagement techniques in their daily work" (Peak and Glensor, 1999). Further, newer training curricula aim to reflect what is realistically done on the job (i.e. order maintenance and service). Because the recruit academy is such an important part of occupational socialization for police officers, it is necessary that training centers teach the philosophy of COPS during recruit training (Peak, 1993). Without proper training, officers will be less likely to understand the philosophy of COPS and/or how to translate the philosophy into effective practice (King and Lab, 2000).

Few researchers have studied academy training and specifically looked at its coverage of problem solving and community policing, but the ones that have invariably reported a lack of sufficient coverage (Bradford and Pynes, 1999; Marion, 1998). For example, Bradford and Pynes (1999) examined syllabi and curricula from 22 police academies and concluded that less than 3 percent of basic training academy time is spent on cognitive and decision-making areas, such as scenarios, communications, reasoning, and application. They found that more than 90 percent of academy time was spent on task-oriented training associated with the reactive nature of traditional policing (e.g. defensive tactics, driving, mechanics of arrest).

Importantly, the shift in policing toward community relations, problem solving, and COPS heightens the need for improved knowledge bases and additional skills but does not diminish the need for traditional skills (Bradford and Pynes, 1999; Buerger *et al.*, 1999). For example, recruits would be ill-served if training in officer safety were short changed. COPS training *augments* the curriculum by including topics on human diversity, special populations (such as the elderly and mentally ill), "assessing situations," public speaking, ethics and integrity, proactive or "coactive" problem solving, crime prevention, stress management, domestic violence, and community building (see Palmiotto *et al.*, 2000). The skills necessary for COPS will not become second-nature if comprehensive training in the theories and methods of community-oriented policing are not provided. This means that recruits must understand the meanings and values associated with community-oriented policing (e.g. building trust within the neighborhood) as well as the skills needed to conduct community-oriented policing (e.g. SARA type problem-solving) (Eck and Spelman, 1987).

One challenge facing training concerns the incorporation of alternative learning models more suited for adults (Birzer, 2003, Glenn *et al.*, 2003). Traditional training in subject areas like law and communications builds on the pedagogical approach used when teaching children. The pedagogy is teacher-centered and structured, and it relies heavily on a lecture format (often referred to by trainees as "talking heads"). This style emphasizes mastery, obedience and discipline, and supports the narrow focus on law

enforcement that characterizes traditional policing (Birzer and Tannehill, 2001). Police recruits are adults and are likely to benefit from interactive adult learning techniques, such as andragogy (Birzer, 2003; Glenn *et al.*, 2003). Andragogy is a self-directed/learner-center approach that promotes the teacher as the catalyst of education (Knowles, 1990).

Therefore, training in COPS requires a substantive change in curricula as well as a change in delivery. Promoters of innovative training programs recognize that police recruits not only need to learn the traditional skills of policing (e.g. officer safety, mechanics of arrest, marksmanship), but they need a comparable amount of training in such subjects as problem solving, diversity and communications. Further, they recognize that police recruits are adults and interactive learning techniques are more effective than teacher-centered approaches that have historically been used in police academies (Glenn *et al.*, 2003). The current study compares the academy performance of police recruits in a training program based on traditional policing to the performance of recruits in the new CMS curriculum, which is based on community policing, problem solving and adult learning.

Current study

This study addresses two interrelated research questions:

(1) To what extent are quantifiable differences in recruit performance predicted by the CMS curriculum?

(2) Does a different type of recruit excel in the CMS curriculum compared to the traditional curriculum?

In other words, is the CMS curriculum rewarding recruits differently compared to the traditional curriculum? In order to address these questions, the current study examines background characteristics, demographics, and academy performance (including average examination scores, failure experiences, and job placement) for police recruits who entered the basic recruit academy between 1998 and 2003. Herein, the research setting and sample are described.

Setting

The police academy is a regional, non-residential training center that provides recruit and in-service training for police officers, corrections personnel, and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT). It includes a firing range, an agility course, physical training areas, a vehicle driving range, and several permanent buildings and temporary classrooms. Each basic recruit class (BRC) is administered by a class coordinator who sets the schedule and is responsible for overseeing recruit conduct and other issues. The training center employs many full-time instructors as well as "adjunct" instructors from local agencies (e.g. police and sheriff's agencies, District Attorney's Office) who teach courses in their specialty area.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) Standards and Training Commission completely redesigned its basic recruit curriculum and created a new training program reflecting a community-oriented, problem solving approach called the Curriculum Maintenance System (CMS). The CMS curriculum went into pilot form in May 2002 and final form on July 1, 2004. As of July 1, 2004, it became mandated by the State of Florida as the required training curriculum for all police recruits, but for

the classes studied for this research, it was closely monitored and updated by Florida Department of Law Enforcement (via close circuit television and on-site evaluators). Other feedback mechanisms were utilized as well, such as instructor and participant (recruit) surveys (see McLaughlin and Donahue, 1995). In other words, during the study period, the curriculum was not yet in standard format.

According to FDLE, changes include:

· redesign of the basic recruit curriculum based upon a problem solving model;

· incorporation of scenarios as the basis for all training;

· interactive CD-ROMs featuring a number of the problem solving scenarios; and

· complete design, on paper, of a virtual community and surrounding environment for use within the scenario-based training.

According to FDLE, the CMS curriculum is different from the traditional curriculum in the following ways:

· it focuses on application of learning rather than memorization;

· it utilizes a problem-solving model (SECURE) throughout the academy (see below);

· it uses scenarios as the basis for learning;

· it includes all-new lesson plans, support materials, in-class examinations, and student workbooks; and

· the new state certification exam (to be taken after graduation from the academy) includes both application and knowledge questions.

The CMS curriculum uses the SECURE model, which is similar to SARA (Scan-Analyze-Respond-Assess), but adds and changes several elements. SECURE represents Safety, Ethics, Community, Understanding, Response, and Evaluation. It combines a first response model to resolve short-term incidents and a long-term model to solve recurring problems. Additionally, CMS "threads" themes throughout the curriculum. That is, instead of covering a single topic and completing it in one course or module (e.g. diversity), it revisits certain important themes in each and every module. Such themes include problem solving/SECURE, diversity, community policing, and officer safety. For example, a module on "traffic stops" would presumable include lessons about diversity and officer safety.

The CMS curriculum is considered a "living" document, so instructors are encouraged to submit their feedback in order to update and improve the curriculum. This means that each class may be somewhat different because the curriculum evolves[1]. The police academy studied for this research was one of the first regional training facilities in Florida to adopt the CMS curriculum.

During data collection, the author spent over 100 hours observing academy instruction under both traditional and CMS curricula. The CMS curriculum was more interactive compared to the traditional curriculum. Many of the sessions began with a scenario (e.g. recruits got into groups and worked through a scenario from their text) and followed with a lecture that focused on the lessons learned from the scenario. The SECURE problem solving model was incorporated into the majority of the classroom lessons in an interactive format. For example, the instructor would ask recruits to

brainstorm about ethical (i.e. the "E" in SECURE) considerations in investigating a potential DUI (Driving Under the Influence) scenario. Some of the physical exercises, such as defensive tactics, appeared to change little with the change in curriculum. Overall, the CMS curriculum was more structured than the traditional curriculum and there was less "down" time. This could be attributed to the increased accountability of the staff (e.g. video cameras, observers) while the curriculum was in pilot form.

Data
This research examines official data from recruitment and selection at the police academy (e.g. age, gender, race, education, military experience), as well as measures of academy performance (examination scores, failure experiences, and post-graduation employment status). The academy data were collected under two curricula: a traditional curriculum and the updated CMS curriculum which threaded COPS, problem solving, and scenarios throughout all training units.

Access was obtained to official data on a sample of 300 academy recruits, 155 of whom went through the traditional curriculum and 145 of whom went through the CMS curriculum. The sample includes all persons who were cleared to enter the Basic Recruit Curriculum (BRC) from 1998 through 2004. It includes classes 68, 69, 71-75 from the traditional curriculum and 76-79, 81-83 from the CMS curriculum[2].

Methods
The quantitative data on 300 academy police recruits address two interrelated research goals. The first goal is to examine the impact of various background and demographic characteristics, including CMS training, on recruit performance in the academy. This part of the analysis develops models that incorporate variables identified in previous literature that significantly influence policing performance. The models also include a variable that distinguishes between recruits taught under the CMS curriculum and the traditional curriculum. The second goal is to assess whether specific background characteristics better predict academy performance among CMS recruits compared to traditional recruits.

Dependent variables
The term "academy performance" is used to refer to recruits' success in the academy and likelihood of employment by a law enforcement/police agency. Three variables are used to measure recruits' academy performance: average academy examination score (average score across all examinations), failure experience, and post-academy employment.

Average academy score for each recruit is measured with an ordinal variable thus OLS will be used[3]. The scale is as follows: 1 refers to an average score of 80 percent or less, 2 refers to a score of 80.01 percent to 84.9 percent, 3 to a score of 85 percent to 89.9 percent, 4 to a score of 90 percent to 94.9 percent, and 5 to a score of 95 percent through 100 percent[4].

Failure experience is operationalized as a recruit who failed one module or unit, or a recruit who failed out of the academy. The original variable distinguished between those who failed any individual module during training and those who were dismissed from the academy, but due to the limited number of failures, it was recoded into a dichotomous variable. It is coded (0 'no', 1 'yes') and represents recruits who showed

significant problems completing their academy class. Logistic regression is used for this model (McClendon, 2002).

Recruits' employment status is based on the current information available in the academy's database when data were collected (July 2004). It includes recruits who were "sponsored" (hired by law enforcement/police agencies prior to commencement of the academy), those who were hired during academy training, and those who were hired upon and immediately after graduation from the academy. It is possible (and probable) that graduates of the academy who were not employed immediately upon graduation found employment later on and that is not accurately reflected in these data. Employment is a dichotomous variable coded '0' for unemployed and '1' for employed. Logistic regression is used to evaluate differences in employment likelihood between graduates of the CMS curriculum and the traditional curriculum.

Independent variables
Previous literature suggests a number of personal characteristics that may affect policing performance. Though most of the studies do not specify academy or training performance specifically, they are relevant to becoming a successful COPS officer.

Age. There is no research on the relationship between age and police training. However, some police departments are raising their age requirements based on the intuitive notion that older applicants will be more mature, have more life experience, and therefore make better officers (see Lanza-Kaduce and Greenleaf, 2000). Another reason for hiring older officers is that it gives the agency a longer work history to evaluate (Decker and Huckabee, 2002). As recruits get older, they become more responsible and possibly better police officers. Interestingly, Skogan and Hartnett found that older officers are more supportive of community policing (Skogan and Hartnett, 1997). Age is a continuous variable.

Race and ethnicity. By 1997, racial and ethnic minorities made up about 22 percent of full-time sworn officers in local police departments (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000). Some large cities now have police forces that represent the racial composition of their population. However, the National Academy of Sciences has concluded that "there is no credible evidence that officers of different racial or ethnic backgrounds perform differently during interactions with citizens simply because of race or ethnicity" (Skogan and Frydl, 2004). African American officers are more likely to support innovation and change, such as community policing (Skogan and Hartnett, 1997). Part of community policing is having a police force that represents the community, thus racial minorities may be more likely to thrive in the COPS environment. Race is coded as '1' if nonwhite (black, Hispanic, Asian, or other) and '0' if white.

Gender. Neiderhoffer (1967) recognized that chauvinism was a major characteristic of the police culture in the 1960s. Women have historically been considered to be more suited for staying home with their children than for a dangerous job like policing. However, women may be more suitable for the tasks required of community police officers because they are more empathetic. COPS calls for the use of de-escalation techniques, communication skills and problem solving, which may be skills that women are better at than men (Langworthy and Travis, 2003). Women now make up approximately 10 percent of all sworn police officers (Reaves and Goldberg, 2000). Gender is coded as '1' if male, and '0' if female.

Military experience. Military experience has been one of the favored characteristics for police recruits since Sir Robert Peele's police force (Alpert and Dunham, 1997). It is thought that because policing is a paramilitary occupation, those who have military experience are better prepared to deal with the environment. However, given the goals and nature of community policing, the impact of military experience on police performance seems less clear-cut. In fact, such experience may actually impede the development of the types of policing strategies that are at the heart of the community policing philosophy. Recruits are coded '1' if they are listed as "active duty" or "reserves" in the military, and '0' otherwise.

Education. An increasing number of police officers have at least some college education (Senna and Seigel, 2002), which is not surprising considering that higher education for police officers has been recommended by national commissions since 1931 (Hoover, 1975). Overall, 16 percent of state police agencies require a two- year college degree and 4 percent require a four-year degree. A total of 9 percent of large municipal agencies have a degree requirement (Reaves and Goldberg, 2000). Police recruits with a college degree are said to be better at verbal and written communication, make better discretionary decisions, and have greater empathy and tolerance (Carter and Sapp, 1992). They are also said to exercise better judgment and be better problem solvers compared to those without college degrees (Worden, 1990). These are skills important to community policing. Education is coded '1' if the recruit has an Associate's degree or more education, and '0' otherwise.

Special position. "Special position" refers to recruits who either held a ranking status within their recruit class (such as class lieutenant, etc.) or achieved an award for excellence or most improved (e.g. "high academic award" or "most improved fitness"). Recruits were given the opportunity to apply for these positions by writing a letter to the Class Commander explaining their qualifications and motivations for leading the class (prior to commencement of the academy). The Class Commander chose officers based on this information.

There is no literature pertaining to the link between holding a rank in the academy class and policing performance. However, it makes logical sense that those who show initiative up front (and lead the class) should perform better compared to those who do not hold these positions. This variable is coded '1' if the recruit held a ranking status and/or won an award and '0' otherwise.

CMS versus traditional. As stated above, one goal of this study is to analyze whether a different type of recruit excels in the CMS curriculum compared to the traditional curriculum. Thus, a variable was constructed to denote which curriculum the recruit attended. CMS is coded '1' if the recruit attended the CMS curriculum and '0' otherwise. Theoretically, officers who graduated from the CMS curriculum will benefit in their policing careers because the CMS curriculum reflects current policing practices and up to date material (though, notably, it is beyond the scope of this analysis to measure job performance).

A note on interactions
There are theoretical reasons to explore why background characteristics may enhance or detract from success in the new CMS curriculum. Because some variables may operate differently under the two curricula, separate analyses are conducted for recruits in the traditional academy and recruits in the CMS academy in order to show

whether background characteristics are significantly and/or differently related to performance in one group rather than the other[5].

Results

First, I analyze how recruit characteristics affect academy performance among all recruits. Second, I look at predictors of academy performance among CMS and traditional recruits separately. Results will provide insight as to whether certain "types" of recruits perform differently under the two different curricula and how the CMS curriculum impacts the relationships between recruit characteristics and academy performance.

Descriptive statistics

Full sample. The full sample contains 300 recruits from both CMS and traditional curricula. The sample is comprised of 155 recruits from the traditional curriculum and 145 recruits from the CMS curriculum. Approximately 24 percent of the full sample is nonwhite. Overall, 79 percent are male, while only 8 percent have military experience, 28 percent have an Associate's or higher degree. Recruits were an average of 26 years old in the academy (median 25, mode 24). A total of 48 percent of them attended the academy based on CMS (see Table I for Descriptive Statistics).

About 48 percent of academy recruits found employment by the time they graduated from the academy (or immediately upon graduation). About 18 percent of those who entered the academy failed to complete all of their classes without at least one failure (and/or they failed out completely; this variable includes those who failed one or more units or modules and came back in later classes to complete them). Of academy recruits, 29 percent of academy recruits in the sample either held a ranking position in their recruit class and/or received an achievement award for fitness, firearms, or academics ("special position").

Split samples. The full sample was split based on training mode (CMS versus traditional) in order to assess whether background characteristics predict academy performance under one curriculum better than the other. The background characteristics and demographics vary slightly in the two samples. A higher percentage of CMS recruits found employment upon graduation compared to traditional recruits (51 percent versus 46 percent respectively). Traditional recruits were more likely to have military experience compared to CMS recruits (10 percent versus 7 percent respectively), and interestingly, traditional recruits were much more likely to have an Associate's degree compared to CMS recruits (32 percent versus 23 percent respectively). Though there is pressure to increase educational requirements for police officers, there is a "cop crunch," meaning that many departments are struggling to find qualified police applicants and therefore have had to lower their selection criteria (Fridell *et al.*, 2002). Finally, CMS recruits were more likely to hold a "special position" in their recruit class compared to traditional recruits (34 percent versus 25 percent respectively).

Multivariate models

Does CMS training make a difference? The first goal of the analysis is to identify the impact of various demographic/background characteristics on measures of recruit

	Full sample			CMS recruits			Trad recruits		
	Mean	SD	Range	Mean	SD	Range	Mean	SD	Range
Dependent variables	n = 300			n = 145			n = 155		
Academy score (ordinal)	3.3	0.90	1-5	3.3	0.78	1-5	3.3	1.0	1-5
Failure (1 = yes)	0.18	0.38	0-1	0.19	0.40	0-1	0.17	0.37	0-1
Employment (1 = yes)	0.48	0.50	0-1	0.51	0.50	0-1	0.46	0.50	0-1
Independent variables									
CMS (1 = yes)	0.48	0.50	0-1	–	–	–	–	–	–
Race (1 = non-white)	0.24	0.43	0-1	0.23	0.43	0-1	0.25	0.44	0-1
Gender (1 = male)	0.79	0.40	0-1	0.79	0.41	0-1	0.80	0.40	0-1
Age (continuous)	26.4	5.28	19-46	26.3	5.1	19-45	26.5	5.4	19-46
Education (1 = Assoc. degree)	0.28	0.45	0-1	0.23	0.42	0-1	0.32	0.47	0-1
Military (1 = yes)	0.08	0.28	0-1	0.07	0.25	0-1	0.10	0.29	0-1
Special position (1 = yes)	0.29	0.46	0-1	0.34	0.48	0-1	0.25	0.43	0-1

Table I.
Descriptive statistics of
study variables

	Academy score			Failure			Employment	
	B (SE)	Beta		B (SE)	Exp(B)		B (SE)	Exp (B)
Race (1 = non-white)	−0.22 (0.12)	−0.105**		0.618 (0.34)	1.86**		0.429 (0.29)	1.54*
Gender (1 = male)	0.146 (0.13)	0.065		−0.145 (0.38)	0.865		−0.156 (0.30)	0.856
Age (continuous)	−0.003 (0.01)	−0.015		−0.006 (0.03)	0.994		0.071 (0.03)	1.074**
Education (1 = Assoc. degree)	0.249 (0.11)	0.124**		0.263 (0.35)	1.30		0.206 (0.28)	1.23
Military (1 = yes)	0.04 (0.19)	0.012		−0.891 (0.78)	0.41		−1.20 (0.50)	0.30**
Special position (1 = yes)	0.525 (0.112)	0.265**		−0.1.42 (0.47)	0.241**		0.395 (0.28)	1.49*
CMS (1 = yes)	0.031 (0.10)	−0.017		0.309 (0.32)	1.36		0.216 (0.25)	1.24
Academy score (ordinal)					0.28*		0.448 (0.15)	1.57**
Intercept	3.1 (0.29)**			−1.29			−3.6 (0.92)	0.027**
R-Square	0.11			0.103			0.139	

Notes: **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.10$; *p*-values computed for one-tailed significance tests

Table II.
Regression models
predicting academy
performance of academy
recruits ($n = 300$)

performance. In particular, the analysis seeks to evaluate whether CMS recruits perform "better" at the academy compared to traditional recruits.

Table II shows results for the full sample of recruits. Looking first at predictors of average academy score, results indicate that white, more educated recruits, and those who held a special position in their class obtained higher academy scores compared to their counterparts. The strongest predictor among these is special position status. Significant predictors of failure experience include race and special position. Nonwhites are more likely to experience failure and those with a special position status are significantly less likely. Finally, race, age, military experience, special position, and academy score significantly influence the last measure of performance: post graduation employment status. Nonwhites, older recruits, those without military experience, those with higher academy scores, and those with special position status are more likely to gain employment by graduation compared to younger, white recruits with military experience who did not hold a special position in their class.

In general, race was significant in all three models: nonwhites had lower academy scores, were more likely to fail, and more likely to gain employment upon graduation. In light of community policing, agencies are being pressured to hire officers who reflect the racial makeup of the communities they serve, and this often means hiring more non-white officers. Therefore, it makes sense that although nonwhite recruits may not perform as well (in this sample), they were more likely to find employment upon graduation from the academy.

Recruits who held a special position in their academy class fared better in terms of academy score, failure experiences, and post graduation employment. This makes intuitive sense, as recruits who held a special position showed initiative, lead the class, or showed a significant improvement, either academically or physically, during their academy experience.

Analyzing performance among CMS versus traditional recruits. The second goal of the analysis is to identify whether a different "type" of recruit performs better under the two different curricula. In particular, the analysis seeks to evaluate how the CMS curriculum impacts the relationships between recruit characteristics and academy performance.

Table III shows results for the CMS recruits while Table IV shows results for the traditional recruits. They can be compared to see which variables predict success similarly for both curricula and which predict success in only one of them. Looking first at Table III and predictors of average academy score, whites, recruits with at least an Associate's degree, and recruits who held a special position in their class obtained higher academy scores compared to their counterparts. The only significant predictor of failure is special position; recruits who held a special position were less likely to experience failure. Finally, gender, age, military experience, and academy score influenced the likelihood of post-graduation employment at a police agency. In particular, older recruits, females, those without military experience, and those who had higher academy scores, were more likely to find employment by the time they graduated.

Table IV shows the results of the regression analysis for the traditional recruits. In terms of academy score, recruits who held a special position and those with military experience achieved higher scores. Recruits who held a special position were less likely to experience failure compared to their counterparts who did not hold a special position

	Academy score B (SE)	Beta	Failure B (SE)	Exp (B)	Employment B (SE)	Exp (B)
Race (1 = non-white)	−0.331 (0.14)	−0.180**	0.59 (0.49)	1.80	−0.159 (0.44)	0.853
Gender (1 = male)	0.175 (0.15)	0.092	−0.112 (0.54)	0.894	−0.634 (0.46)	0.531*
Age (continuous)	−0.001 (0.012)	−0.010	−0.064 (0.06)	0.94	0.075 (0.04)	1.08**
Education (1 = Assoc. degree)	0.461 (0.14)	0.248**	0.39 (0.50)	1.48	0.367 (0.44)	1.44
Military (1 = yes)	0.12 (0.24)	0.038	−0.558 (1.1)	0.572	−1.14 (0.77)	0.32*
Special position (1 = yes)	0.517 (0.13)	0.315**	−0.1.29 (0.59)	0.275**	0.373 (0.40)	1.45
Academy score (ordinal)	–	–	–	–	0.531 (0.27)	1.70**
Intercept	2.99	0.36**	0.40 (1.6)	1.49	−3.28 (1.4)	0.038**
R-Square	0.220	–	0.122	–	0.156	–

Notes: **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.10$; p-values computed for one-tailed significance tests

Table III.
Regression models
predicting academy
performance of CMS
recruits ($n = 145$)

	Academy score B (SE)	Beta	Failure B (SE)	Exp (B)	Employment B (SE)	Exp (B)
Race (1 = non-white)	-0.102 (0.19)	-0.044	0.62 (0.49)	1.86*	0.883 (0.41)	2.42**
Gender (1 = male)	0.05 (0.21)	0.022	-0.346 (0.56)	0.707	0.104 (0.44)	1.11
Age (continuous)	-0.001 (0.02)	-0.007	0.037 (0.04)	1.04	0.062 (0.03)	1.06**
Education (1 = Assoc. degree)	0.09 (0.17)	0.041	0.070 (0.49)	1.07	0.13 (0.37)	1.14
Military (1 = yes)	0.01 (0.28)	0.003*	-1.17 (1.1)	0.310	-1.26 (0.67)	0.28**
Special position (1 = yes)	0.566 (0.19)	0.244**	-0.160 (0.78)	0.20**	0.595 (0.41)	1.81*
Academy score (ordinal)	-	-	-	-	0.39 (0.19)	1.47**
Intercept	3.15	0.44**	-2.2 (1.2)	0.011**	-3.5 (1.2)	0.03**
R-Square	0.068	-	0.11	-	0.158	-

Notes: **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.10$; p-values computed for one-tailed significance tests

Table IV.
Regression models
predicting academy
performance of
traditional recruits
($n = 155$)

in their academy class, but non-whites were more likely to fail. In terms of employment, race, age, military experience, special position and academy score were significant. In particular, older, nonwhite recruits without military experience who held a special position and achieved higher academy scores had a higher likelihood of finding employment upon graduation compared to their counterparts.

Again, older recruits fared better in terms of finding a job. Interestingly, recruits with military experience had higher average academy scores but were less likely to find employment in the sample of traditional recruits. Perhaps the traditional curriculum was more consistent with military training so those with military experience were more successful academically. Again, those who held a special position achieved higher academy scores, were less likely to fail, and were more likely to find employment upon graduation. Higher academy scores were associated with a higher likelihood of finding employment.

Age, military experience, and academy score had similar effects on academy performance across both curricula. Thus, no interactions were present. On the other hand, there were a few inconsistencies across models. In the CMS curriculum, racial minorities received lower average academy scores than whites, while more educated recruits earned higher academy scores compared to those with less education. This could indicate that CMS is a more academic environment than the traditional curriculum. In terms of race, it is possible that well-educated racial minorities are earning opportunities in higher education and self-selecting out of policing. Additionally, females are more likely to become employed after graduation from the CMS curriculum compared to males. This indicates that CMS is rewarding skills consistent with COPS (i.e. empathy compared to physical prowess).

In the traditional curriculum, racial minorities did not perform as well, but they were more likely to gain employment. Again, this could be due to the pressure on police agencies to increase minority representation. Finally, special position was positively associated with finding employment in the traditional curriculum, but not in the CMS curriculum.

Discussion

One purpose of this study was to research whether recruits in the CMS curriculum performed "better" in the academy compared to recruits in the traditional curriculum. A related goal was to investigate whether the CMS curriculum rewards a different "type" of recruit compared to the traditional curriculum. According to these analyses, recruits going through the CMS curriculum did not perform significantly "better" in the academy compared to those in the traditional curriculum, but that CMS may be rewarding a more educated, empathetic recruit.

In terms of whether certain demographic variables predicted performance in either of the two curricula, the data suggest few consistent, clear-cut patterns. "Special position" emerged as a significant predictor among most of the models, which makes intuitive sense, because recruits who hold a special position, by definition, must be motivated (recall that recruits must either "apply" to be chosen for a special position or they are selected based on outstanding performance). Race also emerged in some of the models as a significant predictor of performance. In general, nonwhites did not perform as well compared to whites, but they had a higher likelihood of finding employment. Older

recruits and those with higher academy scores had better luck finding jobs in all three models. This indicates that police agencies may value a more mature police officer.

Surprisingly, those with military experience were consistently less likely to gain employment. A possible explanation for this is that the study only looked at law enforcement employment, and ex-military personnel have a high employment rate in the area of corrections (correctional officers also go through basic recruit training). Another possibility is that those with a military status were called to active duty and therefore did not continue to seek law enforcement employment (especially considering that the timeframe includes Sept. 11, 2001).

Education was associated with a higher average academy score in the full sample and the CMS sample, but not in the traditional sample. This implies that the CMS curriculum rewards a more educated recruit compared to the traditional curriculum, which is in line with the COPS philosophy. According to the literature, more educated recruits make better decisions and are more sophisticated problem solvers and communicators, compared to their less-educated counterparts (see Worden, 1990).

In the CMS curriculum, females were more likely to secure employment compared to males. Women are said to be better at exercising "de-escalation" techniques with suspects and may exhibit more empathy with victims and witnesses. In other words, females may be more suited for the skills of a COPS officer than the duties of the traditional crime-fighting officer (Langworthy and Travis, 2003). This is an important finding in terms of COPS.

There are several issues that must be considered when assessing the relative "success" of the CMS curriculum. First, it must be noted that the CMS curriculum was in pilot form during the study period. Thus, instructors were encouraged to submit feedback so that the "bugs" could be worked out. The majority of the changes were editorial (e.g. changing "bad" test questions, experimenting with different approaches to teaching the new material), but each subsequent class was likely somewhat different from the one that preceded it. Along those lines, it should be noted that academy examinations were changed in the CMS curriculum as well. The new curriculum included all new material.

Another important consideration involves the well-documented police subculture. Community policing commentators recognize the police subculture as the single biggest impediment to the successful implementation of policing reforms. Sociological theory suggests that although formal training is important to behavioral outcomes, the informal content of the academy experience is equally significant (Lundman, 1980). Such arguments indicate that even with significant changes in the formal curriculum, the transformation towards a COPS philosophy may not occur if the informal culture among officers remains static. Similarly, research has shown that the effectiveness of COPS training is largely dependent on the instructor; specifically his or her endorsement of the COPS philosophy. Academy instructors are often veteran officers – police insiders – who may have strong internalized definitions about traditional policing, and therefore may struggle to accept the ideals of COPS (Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce, 2004). Senior officers who have spent the majority of their policing years practicing traditional policing may be more comfortable teaching what they know. Research suggests that it is important for instructors to be "on board" with COPS themselves in order to be successful COPS trainers (Dantzker *et al.*, 1995). If instructors do not buy into the COPS philosophy, recruits are unlikely to. This study was unable to account for the "informal" component of the

training experience, nor did it measure academy instructors' endorsement of community policing. Future research should take into account these issues.

Further, police recruit performance was measured by analyzing average academy score, failure experiences, and recruit employment. Analyzing such measures does not indicate whether the CMS curriculum affects the way police officers do their jobs (arguably a much more important question). The curriculum may affect a recruit's performance in the academy or his or her likelihood of securing employment, but the more substantive question is whether it impacts the qualitative nature of his or her policing style. The answer to this question likely lies several years down the road. Thus, in future research, it would be ideal to compare recruits from the two curricula in terms of their ability to communicate with residents and solve problems. One way to do this is through ride alongs with officers.

The value of this study lies in its ability to compare characteristics and preliminary outcomes of the two curricula. It provides insight into the myriad issues associated with academy training in community policing. Although CMS recruits are not "more successful" in the academy compared to traditional recruits, the data suggest that different qualities are emerging as significant in policing, such as education and empathy. Having more educated and diverse police academy graduates will likely have implications for the job performance of our future police officers. Indeed, this is a step in the right direction.

Notes

1. One limitation of the study is that the CMS curriculum is constantly being updated based on instructor and observer feedback. Thus, the traditional curriculum had long been standardized, while the CMS curriculum (as of the date of this study), was not yet standardized.

2. Classes 70 and 80 were designated for correctional officers only and were therefore eliminated from the analyses.

3. The score was computed into an ordinal variable due to several outliers. The technique, OLS, is robust (Akers *et al.*, 1979).

4. A total of 23 recruits had missing scores on this variable and mean substitution was used. The analysis was also run without those with missing values and the results were similar. These 23 recruits graduated from the academy, despite missing data on this variable.

5. An alternative method to performing interactions is to compute interaction terms. In the research process, I computed several interaction terms as well (e.g. CMS X education and CMS X race) and they were not significant in the model.

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