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# A Study of Academic Performance in Police Basic Training

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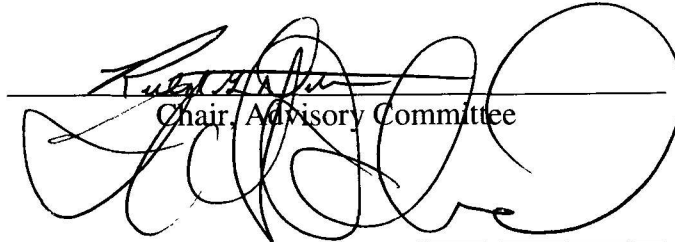
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A STUDY OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN POLICE BASIC TRAINING

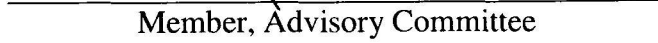
By

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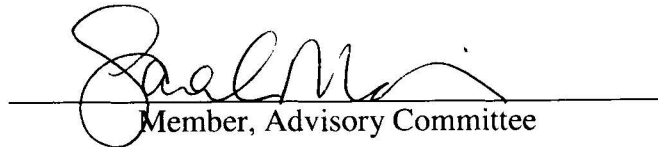
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A STUDY OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN POLICE BASIC TRAINING

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for the degree of  
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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the men and women who serve the state of Kentucky in Law Enforcement.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my professor and committee chair member, Ms. Sarah Morris for her guidance and patience. Without her encouragement, motivation, and support I would have never attempted this project. Also, I would like to thank the committee chair, Dr. Ron Dotson. His knowledge was instrumental in guiding me through this process. Both of you helped me at various times from getting completely overwhelmed. Also, both of you always made time in your busy work schedules to assist me and provide answers to any of my questions. Thank you.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of formal education and the effect it has on academic performance of the police recruits that attended the Department of Criminal Justice Training (DOCJT) for their basic training academy in Richmond, Ky. This study focused on the academic portion of recruit training only. This study assessed whether education level is a valid predictor of a recruit officers academic performance and will answer if higher education levels give a recruit officer an advantage academically while they are in basic training.

The sample chosen was from recruit classes that attended basic training at DOCJT between the years of 2008- 2014. The sample consisted of 63 basic training classes that graduated the eighteen week basic training academy between the years of 2008- 2014. Only recruits (n=1593) that completed basic training was included in the total sample.

Data analyses revealed that there were significant relationships between education and academic performance of the recruits that attended DOCJT from 2008- 2014. There was a significant difference in the mean final grades between recruits with a college degree and those with no college degree. It was also determined that there was a significant positive correlation between educational levels and final grade. As the level of education of the recruits increased, the final grade (GPA) increased.

The findings of the study revealed that recruits that had higher levels of education outperformed those recruits without degrees academically in final grade. Thus, those recruits had an academic advantage while they were in recruit basic training.



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**CHAPTER 1**

**INTRODUCTION**

**Background**

The importance of higher education has been a topic for decades in the law enforcement profession. The debate began as early as the professional reform movement in the 1900's. During this era August Vollmer single handedly attempted to create awareness that policing as a profession should require an upgrade in educational levels. Volmer's viewpoints were that the current education levels lead to ineffective and inefficient police officers (Paoline & Terril, 2007). Volmer's recognition of higher education got little notoriety until he became affiliated with the Wickersham Commission in 1931. The Wickersham Commission, also known as the National Commission on Law Observance suggested the standards of police officers should be increased to a college education (Paoline & Terril, 2007). The commission believed higher educated officers were needed to solve complex issues of crime solving but lacked any serious consideration from police agencies. Despite awareness levels raised for the importance of college educated police officers, reform movements were not significant in raising the level of education.

Three decades later the subject of higher education was revisited by the Presidents Commission of Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice in 1967 (Paoline & Terril, 2007). This was due enlarge to the numerous conflicts between police officers and large crowds (Vietnam War Protest and the Civil Rights Movement) of civil unrest (Smith & Aamodt, 1997). The policing profession was highly criticized for their decision making in the handling of these situations. The public began closely scrutinizing police

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officers professionalism, efficiency and decision making ability (Smith & Aamodt, 1997).

The Presidents Commission of Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice studied crime in regards to the criminal justice system. Their recommendation to improve the criminal justice system was that all police agencies should have police personnel with baccalaureate degrees (Paoline & Terril, 2007). The difference between the Wickersham Commission thirty years earlier, and the Presidents Commission of Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice was the courses of action that resulted into change. As a result, the Omnibus Crime Control was created and as well as the Safe Streets Act of 1968, which provided funding to criminal justice students in the form of Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP) (Paoline & Terril, 2007). LEEP was given credit as major educational reform achievement that by providing federal loans and scholarships for students that attended colleges that were practitioners of criminal justice (Paoline & Terril, 2007). This was the first significant step in educating police officers to prepare in them in their eventual roles in the criminal justice system.

The next course of action was proposed in 1973 by the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals involving setting standards for LEEP funding (Paoline & Terril, 2007). These standards assigned referred to the years of college education required as an entry level police officer in regards to the years of college funded by the LEEP program. The more education that was funded equaled in more required years of service to be worked. The goal of this plan was to increase the numbers of police officers that were college educated. It was the commission's belief that a police officer that had at least three years of college education prior to employment

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increased a police department's professionalism (Smith & Aamodt, 1997). This was due to the development of interpersonal skills, writing, and problem solving skills. The commission failed to convince law enforcement agencies to implement standards requiring a minimum of three years college of education prior to employment.

There was federal opposition to the type of college courses emphasized for law enforcement officers during this educational reform era. The National Advisory Commission of Higher Education for Police Officers didn't agree with type of coursework offered from criminal justice programs. The National Advisory Commission of Higher Education for Police Officers believed that many college courses were no more than technical training found in current police academies (Paoline & Terril, 2007). The commission believed that a college education should be broader in scope than police science topics. The commission recommended that the study of social science education be applied to the policing occupation. It advocated a more traditional approach to college education with less of a police technical focus (Paoline & Terrill 2007).

Whether it was the viewpoint of the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals or the National Advisory Commission of Higher Education for Police Officers, they both subscribe that a college education is beneficial to the role of the police officer. To reinforce that sentiment the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) believed that police officers who have received a broader education have a better understanding of society in general (Mayo, 2006.) This translates into police officers being more capable of communicating with the citizens they serve and being able to critically think to solve problems.

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Due to a rising crime rate linked to narcotics trafficking, a significant number of police officers were needed in the 1980's. This influenced police agencies not to require college level education prior to employment. In 1988 the Police Executive Research Forum suggested that police agencies require a college degree as a prerequisite for employment but studies revealed in 1992 that only 14% of agencies had this requirement (Smith & Aamodt, 1997).

The research revealed that in general terms the number of people that have college degrees is usually proportional to the education levels of the communities they serve (Bruns, 2010). Even though a college education continues to be a viable solution for contemporary policing, it has failed to be a mandatory requirement for hiring police officers. In the last several decades most municipal police departments haven't required a two year or four year degree in the United States. In a Bureau of Justice Statistics study in 2000, statistics showed that only 1% of police agencies require a four year college degree to be hired as a police officer, 6% require some college, and 8% require a two year degree (Hickman & Reaves, 2003).

Research has shown due to the complexity of the role of a police officer in today's society it's imperative that they are equipped with a college education (Paoline & Terrill, 2007; Carter & Sapp, 1992). There are greater expectations placed on police officers than ever before to solve various problems. Police officers are still expected to handle disputes, respond to calls of service, prevent and solve crime. In today's contemporary policing world the officer's role has expanded to utilizing sophisticated problem solving solutions in the communities they serve, which includes the possible threats of terrorism (White & Escobar, 2008). In addition, the police officers roles as law

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enforcers has increased over time with the additions of social order and maintenance, which demands the police officer to be versatile to each dynamic of problem solving. This is a progressive change from the past where policing was deemed reactive in nature because it was incident based (Chappel, 2008). Today's police officers are expected to incorporate philosophies, which reduces the need for police services. The reduction for police services coincides with crime reduction.

The philosophies emphasized included the need for police officers to embrace a broader role orientation and work collaboratively with citizens. The police officer was asked to utilize other local government agencies that are responsible for community problems (Paoline & Terrill, 2007). This philosophy coincides with the concept of community orientated policing.

Community oriented policing (COP) is a concept of policing where police officers and private citizens work together to help solve and prevent crimes. Police officers collaborate with law abiding citizens to improve the overall quality of life in their neighborhoods addressing social and physical disorders in their communities (Chappel, 2008). This simply means that community policing entails police officers to problem solve while making decisions rather than just merely responding to incidents after the fact.

Police officers best equipped to handle social problems are the ones who possess a college education. The benefit of having college educated police officers are they often have educational backgrounds in psychology, government, sociology, public management, communications, business and natural sciences would serve to benefit a police officer in all aspects of their duties (White & Escobar, 2008). Two extremely



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important aspects of police work involve communication and writing, both of which can be enhanced in college.

Law enforcement is a complex vocation where the skills and knowledge are necessary to do the job successfully. This vocation can be learned in the classroom setting, not solely on the on the job training, which gives an advantage to college educated officers. Today's society has become more educated and it's imperative that our police keep pace with the general public. College educated police officers tend to be more mature, older, and well rounded (White & Escobar, 2008). One of the most important advantages is that college students are exposed to different cultures and belief systems; therefore this exposure creates a greater tolerance and understanding with the people who are different from them. As departments transitioned to problem oriented styles of policing, critical thinking and analytic skills have become adherently important. These skills are learned and developed in a college classroom. Development of these skills improves community orientation and local accountability (Paterson, 2011; Paoline & Terrill, 2007).

Educational requirements will inevitably be the perception and reality of law enforcement in the future. Help centered professional services such as education and teaching, health and nursing, social work and psychology all have basic higher educational requirements. The U.S. Census bureau categorizes policing as a service worker not as a professional occupation (Baro & Burlingame, 1999). If police officers were required to be college educated it could enhance the status and legitimize the profession. Whether it's enforcing statutes, abiding by the constitution, or critically thinking to solve problems, police officers need a college education to acquire the basic

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skills for modern or future police work (Carter & Sapp, 1992; Mayo, 2006; Paoline & Terrill, 2007).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Police academy basic training is the critical first step for formative knowledge and skills for recruits to enter the world of professional police work. In the history of policing there has been relatively little research done examining the relationship of higher education and academic performance while in recruit basic training. In the past there has been little merit to the thought that a college education benefits a recruit in basic training. The police academy has been viewed as vocational in nature and it's been questioned how a college education is beneficial to the academic performance for a recruit officer while in a basic training academy setting (Baro & Burlingame, 1999).

Currently, the Kentucky Revised Statute (KRS) has seventeen pre-employment standards to be a police officer in the state of Kentucky but having a college education isn't a requirement. The only education requirement is a high school diploma or completion of a General Education Development (GED) Examination. This educational standard is consistent nationally. In the State of Kentucky there are four basic training academies; Department of Criminal Justice Training (DOCJT), Lexington Fayette Urban County Government Division of Police (LFUCGPD), Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD) and Kentucky State Police (KSP). LMPD and KSP are the only two agencies within the state that have an educational requirement as a prerequisite for employment to be a police officer.

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### **Purpose of the Study**

Throughout the history of law enforcement it has been widely discussed the need for some form of college education in the policing profession. There has been relatively little research on how educational level affects overall academic performance in a basic training police academy. This study is intended to address a significant gap in the research base. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between education level and academic performance while the recruits are in the Department of Criminal Justice Training's Basic Training Academy.

### **Research Question and Null Hypothesis**

Research Question: How does educational level affect overall academic performance at the Department of Criminal Justice Training?

Hypothesis: Education level does not affect overall academic performance at the Department of Criminal Justice Training.

### **Quantitative Research**

Due to the statistical data used in this research it would be considered quantitative research. The quantitative relationship is the recruits overall GPA upon completing Department of Criminal Justice Training's Academy and the educational level achieved prior to basic training. The researcher is anticipating the statistical numbers obtained from the Department of Criminal Justice Training will yield an unbiased result that can be generalized to a larger population. The goal of the quantitative research results is to answer the question how does educational level affect overall academic performance at the Department of Criminal Justice Training. Academic performance was chosen as a variable because it was true measurement of academic achievement rather than skill

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(hands on) related areas in basic training such as firearms qualifications and defensive tactics.

### **Potential Significance**

Protect and serve was always a cliché associated with the role of the police officer. Today's society expects law enforcement to handle a multitude of problems. Communities place high demands on police officers to solve many diverse problems and prevent future incidents. Recruitment, selection, and training are important issues for law enforcement agencies nationally. This study fills a gap in the research that expands the understanding of education and its impact on academic performance in police basic training. By identifying the association of academic performance and higher education, law enforcement agencies can focus their recruiting efforts in manners that target better prepared recruits.

This study and its findings may be used to change prerequisites for applicants applying with law enforcement agencies during the hiring process. The majority of the agencies rather than the minority could go above the minimum standard requirement of a high school degree or equivalent GED. As a result, law enforcement would select and recruit potential future officers that are college educated. The emphases of having college educated officers could inspire additional agencies to promote incentives for current officers to pursue some form of higher education. In both instances this would aid in increasing the status of policing as a profession.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on this area of study derived from various sources from the Eastern Kentucky University Library. The majority of the searches and references of studies was conducted through Academic Search Premier and Google Scholar.

#### **Purpose**

Police academy basic training is the critical first step for formative knowledge and skills for recruits to enter the world of professional police work. Throughout the history of law enforcement it has been widely discussed the need for some form of college education in the policing profession. There has been relatively little research on how education affects overall academic performance in a basic training police academy. Thus, this study is intended to address a significant gap in the research base. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between education and the impact it has on academic performance while the recruits are in the Department of Criminal Justice Training's (DOCJT) Basic Training Academy.

#### **History of Higher Education and Policing**

In the history of law enforcement there has been relatively little study done on the relationship between higher education and academic success in a police academy. Police agencies have been reluctant to embrace the idea that higher education adds value to the training of the police officer or aids them academically in a basic training academy setting as a recruit officer. The traditional viewpoint in the past has questioned the added value higher education brings to police training, due to police academy training being vocational in nature (Baro & Burlingame, 1999). It was either believed that the basic

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training academy taught the skills required for an officer to be utilized on the street, hence making higher education irrelevant or true learning occurred on the job. Basic academy training provides the formative knowledge and experience for the recruits representing the first step in fielding professionally skilled officers (White, 2008). The formalized academy training a recruit receives ranges from but not limited to skills areas including; vehicle operations, physical training, defensive tactics, firearms, to knowledge based curriculum including state and constitutional law. The research conducted will show if higher education gives a recruit an academic advantage while in basic training at the DOCJT. Currently, the Kentucky Revised Statute (KRS) has seventeen pre-employment standards to be a police officer in the state of Kentucky but having a college education isn't required. The only education requirement is having a high school diploma or completed a General Education Development (GED) examination. In the state of Kentucky there are four basic training academies; Department of Criminal Justice Training (DOCJT), Lexington Fayette Urban County Government Division of Police (LFUCGPD), Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD) and Kentucky State Police (KSP). LMPD and KSP are the only two agencies within the state that have an educational requirement above a high school education or equivalent as a prerequisite for employment to be a police officer. It should be noted that LMPD, LFUCGPD, and KSP trained officers are exclusively trained for those agencies by their own basic training academy. DOCJT trains recruit officers that potentially come from 409 different sponsoring agencies that spread over 120 counties in the state of Kentucky (US Census Bureau, 2010).

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The majority of police agencies (local, state, and special jurisdiction) don't require anything more than a high school diploma or equivalent (Bruns, 2010). This educational standard is consistent nationally. Also, this minimal educational requirement is consistent internationally as well. Research showed internationally most countries have the same requirement with the exception for management level officers (White & Escobar, 2008).

Higher education is not only important in a basic training academy setting but previous research has shown that having a college education is a positive performance indicator throughout their career (Paoline & Terrill, 2007; Smith & Aamodt, 1997). The significance of this is that there is a correlation between education and the increased production of police officers, who are effective in preventing and reducing crime.

Educating police officers beyond the conventional high school diploma has been discussed since the beginning of the professional reform of policing movement in the early 1900's (Paoline & Terrill, 2007). This movement was headed by August Vollmer. Vollmer attempted to upgrade educational levels but was relatively unknown until he became part of the National Commission of Law Observance and Enforcement (Wickersham Commission) in 1931 (Paoline & Terrill, 2007). Vollmer's belief was that standards should be increased to be a police officer requiring them to have a college degree. The belief was that higher education requirement would lower the level of police ineffectiveness and inefficiency. In 1973 the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals pushed to have police applicants to have three years of a college education by the year 1978 (Paoline & Terrill, 2007; Smith and Aamodt, 1997). That commissions reasoning was that higher education increased department

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professionalism through the development of writing, interpersonal, and problem solving skills. This educational requirement was never fulfilled because of the lack sufficient evidence (Smith and Aamodt, 1997). Police personnel were reluctant in the ideology that a college education adds value to the training of police officers due to philosophical differences of higher education in the criminal justice field (Sherman, 1978). These philosophical differences was reinforced by the National Advisory Commission of Higher Education for Police Officers in 1978 who scrutinized law enforcement related college courses were merely nothing more than technical training that was already taught in most police academies during basic training (Sherman, 1978) . That commission believed that a college education should be broader in scope rather than merely focusing on police science. It was recommended by the commission that there was a need for the study of social science education and should be applied to the policing occupation. The commission wanted a more traditional approach on college education and less of a police technical focus (Paoline & Terrill 2007). Whether it's the viewpoint of the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals or the National Advisory Commission of Higher Education for Police Officers, they both subscribe that a college education is beneficial to the role of the police officer.

During the 1980's education became a less of a requirement for police applicants. This was mainly due to an increase of the crime rate due to narcotics trafficking during those years, which caused an immediate need to increase police officer staffing numbers to offset the increased crime rates. In 1988 the Police Executive Research Forum suggested that police agencies require a college degree as a prerequisite for employment but it was surveyed in 1992 that only 14% of agencies have this requirement (Smith &



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Aamodt, 1997). Hickman and Reeves (2006) reported less than 1% of local departments require a four year degree. Information is very scarce on acquiring information on what departments require a two year or four year degree (Bruns, 2010). Percentages vary from study to study but the figures are inconsistent at best. Rational thinking dictates that those percentages of police officers with a four year degree are proportionate with the education levels of the communities they serve (Bruns, 2010). Even though a college education continues to be a focus in police research most municipal police departments don't require a two year or four year degree in the United States. (Roberg & Bonn, 2004).

In 1994 a study showed officers showed significant positive correlations between a college education and academy performance, patrol performance, and critical thinking ability (Aamodt, 2004; Champion, 1994). There were studies that contradict those police officers who have a college education affecting their performance level while working on the street but the information is inconsistent at best (Aamondt, 2004). The definite research suggested that college educated officers performance improves over time, while the less educated digress from their original levels of performance (Aamodt, 2004; Smith & Aamodt, 1997). The consistent findings are that officers who possess college degrees are better performers than ones who have high school degrees (Aamondt, 2004; Smith & Aamodt, 1997). In addition, increased communication skills, public relation skills, report writing skills, response to new training, decision making ability, and commitment are all significantly correlated with higher levels of education (Smith & Aamodt, 1997). The complementary benefit of the college education is that these officers have a higher retention level in the skill and knowledge they gain from their police academy training.

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Due to the complexity of various roles a police officer encounters in their daily tasks signifies the need of a college education. Expectations placed on police officers today are greater than ever before. We still expect them to prevent crime, solve crime, resolve disputes, and respond with care and concern to our needs. Today's society expect the police to employ sophisticated problem solving, to engage the community, and to protect us from the new threats of terrorism (White & Escobar, 2008). Low educational requirements among police officers are potentially dangerous and unfair to the community they serve (Mayo, 2006). Officers often who have no higher education are tasked to guide people through complex and potentially life threatening situations (Mayo, 2006). The police officers role as law enforcers has absorbed the roles of handling social orders and social maintenance, which involves being adjustable to each unique dynamic to problem solving (Smith & Aamodt, 1997). This is a progressive change from the past were policing was deemed reactive in nature because it was incident based (Chappel, 2008). In today's society there is a need to implement contemporary policing philosophies that are proactive in solving problems that reduce the need for police services. These philosophies emphasized the need for police officers to embrace a broader role orientation and work collaboratively with citizens as well as other local government agencies that are responsible for community problems (Paoline & Terrill, 2007). This philosophy coincides with the concept of community orientated policing. Community oriented policing (COP) is a concept of policing were police officers and private citizen's work together to help solve and prevent crimes. Police officers collaborate with law abiding citizens to improve the overall quality of life in their neighborhoods addressing social and physical disorders in their communities (Chappel,

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2008). The police officers best suited to handle those problems are the ones who possess a college education (Carter & Sapp, 1992; Paoline, Myers, Worden, & Sherwood, 2000).

It was determined by Goldstein (1997) that an effective police officer should possess five qualities: Intelligence, tolerance and understanding of cultural differences, values which support controls on police conduct, self-discipline, and the ability to control ones emotions. Research has shown that a college education facilitates enhancing and developing those five traits. If these skills are developed in college then those five qualities should increase a police officer's performance level on the street (Smith & Aamodt, 1997).

There are arguments for college educated officers that goes both directions. I will first start off with the positive implications of officers having a college education. Law enforcement is a complex vocation where the skills and knowledge are necessary to do the job successfully. This vocation can be learned in the classroom setting, not solely on the on the job training. Today's society has become more educated and it's imperative that our police keep pace with the general public. College educated police officers tend to be more mature, older, and well rounded (White & Escobar, 2008). They have already been exposed to different life experiences that may otherwise have taken additional years of street experience to gain this valuable experience (Mayo, 2006). In college people are exposed to different cultures and belief systems, therefore this exposure creates a greater tolerance and understanding among the police when they have interaction with the people who are different from them. As departments have moved to problem oriented styles of policing, critical thinking and analytic skills have become adherently important. These skills are learned and developed in a college classroom.

### **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving**

Most college educated students have been exposed to a more dynamic theory to learning called andragogy. Andragogy is the art and science of adult learning, which advocates the self-directed learning concept (Birzer & Tannehill, 2001). Due to the exposure of this type of adult learning, the student has developed problem solving skills prior to their career in law enforcement. As a college student they have learned to identify problems and facilitate the development of viable solutions by using their own creative abilities (Birzer & Tannehill, 2001). Self-directed and problem centered learning develops critical thinking skills. Critical thinking is self-guided, self-disciplined thinking enabling analyzation and assessment to improve the thought process (Paul, 1993). In addition, college student are often exposed to group activities where they work collaboratively on assignments. These assignments often include solving a problem or issue centered on a topic of interest. This approach builds teambuilding and exposes the student to consider other ideas learning multiple ways to solve problems. This type of andragogical approach builds teamwork, which is a desired quality of today's police officer (Birzer & Tannehill, 2001). Police officers will be required to work as a team with other police officers, social services, citizens, government officials, business persons, and other persons from all walks of life (Birzer & Tannehill, 2001).

Degreed officers have developed critical thinking skills and an ability to communicate with people from all walks of life (Mayo, 2006). Development of these skills improves community orientation and local accountability (Paterson, 2011; Paoline, & Terrill, 2007). This simply means that community policing entails police officers to problem solve while making decisions rather than just merely responding to incidents

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after the fact. College educated police officers often have educational backgrounds in psychology, government, sociology, public management, communications, business and natural sciences would serve to benefit a police officer in all aspects of their duties (White & Escobar, 2008). Two extremely important aspects of police work involve communication and writing, both of which can be enhanced in college.

The contrast to andragogy is the pedagogical model. This concept is the more traditional model to learning that was teacher centered rather than learner centered (Birzer & Tannehill, 2001). This approach is a more lecture centered and structured. Examples of pedagogical approaches are rules, regulation, chain of command, policy, and procedures (Birzer & Tannehill, 2001). This approach fosters a disciplined environment, which is also important in behavioral learning and in the world of policing.

### **Professionalism**

A further reason to require a college education is that enhances the status of the profession (Mayo, 2006). It has been a struggle for the field of law enforcement to garner the respect that it deserves when compared to other professions. The U.S. Census Bureau still doesn't categorize police officers as professionals (Baro & Burlingame, 1999). Educationally law enforcement is currently behind the other professions that provides help as a service. The professions of nursing/health, social work/ psychology, and teaching/education all require various types of college degrees as an entry requirement (Mayo, 2006). There are few professions that require the diversity needed as a part of the everyday service required. However, a police officer's duties often require them to be psychologist, sociologist, counselors, teachers, lawyers, medical technicians, and traffic engineers on a daily basis depending on the situation (Mayo, 2006). The law enforcement

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profession carries the possibility of having to use deadly force to take someone's life or deprive someone of their freedom, which is one the most unique actions of government (Mayo, 2006). Police officers have to acquire general knowledge of all the mentioned professions and carry out those tasks because it's a functional requirement in the world of policing. Very few professions require these demands and most other professions are highly specific (Mayo, 2006). As a result of having no educational requirement, the profession of law enforcement suffers in reputation.

Unlike the majority of most police agencies, federal law enforcement agencies typically require a bachelor's degree as a standard for their educational minimum requirement of employment (Law Enforcement Careers, 2014). These federal agencies includes but not limited too; The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Drug Enforcement Administration, (DEA), Alcohol Tobacco Firearms and Explosives, (ATFE), and the United States Secret Service. Due to the prestige of these agencies in the professional world and the higher educational requirements it's hard to dispute that these agencies attract the best candidates.

There are performance related differences between police officers that have a college education as opposed to ones that don't. For example, it was found that college educated officers received higher levels of citizen satisfaction, as well as fewer citizen complaints in comparison to their less educated peers (Paoline & Terrill, 2007). It was found that college educated officers were higher rated by superiors as opposed to ones that are not (Paoline & Terrill, 2007). Officers with a college education had fewer reported injuries, and fewer sick days used. College educated officers tend to be less

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authoritarian and place a higher value on ethical behavior (Mayo, 2006; Paoline & Terrill, 2007).

There have been previous court cases that have supported the requirement of a police officer's having minimum standards in various degrees of education. Most of them involve having a minimum requirement of a high school degree or equivalent. These court cases include the *League of United Latin American Citizens v. Santa Ana* (1976), *United States v. Buffalo*, *Morrow v. Diolard*, and *Castro v. Beecher* (1972) the courts supported the validity of the minimum requirement of a high school diploma (Hickman & Reaves, 2003).

In *Davis v. Dallas* (1985), the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit upheld the Dallas Police Department's requirement that applicants have are required to have at least 45 hours of college credit (Hickman & Reaves, 2003).

There were other notable court cases but they either support college educated officers as a requirement for promotion or the approval of pay incentives for officers with a college education (Hickman & Reaves, 2003).

If police agencies make a college education a requirement for employment they must be able to prove that level of education is required for that job.

Research also suggests that there is a connection between academy performance and street performance in regards to officers who have a college education (Smith & Aamodt, 1997). Higher educated officers perform better in the academy, earn higher supervisor evaluations of field performance, have lower levels of using force, and are assaulted less often (Aamodt, 2004). It was believed the correlation exists due to the reading level that is required for college education requirements (White, 2008). White's

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(2008) research suggest that the connection between college education (knowledge) and street performance is better captured by focusing on the reading level rather than predictors of race and gender.

Research has been conducted studying the relationship between disciplinary problems and the education level of police officers (Aamodt, 2004; Mayo, 2006). In the state of Florida from the years 1997- 2002 a study was conducted concerning disciplinary cases that were brought before the state commission (Mayo, 2006). The study revealed the following; police officers who had a high school diploma only, which accounted for 58% of the officers, were the subject of 75% of the discipline, officers who had associate degrees, which accounted for 16% of the discipline, were the subject of 12% of the discipline, and officers that had bachelor's degrees, which accounted for 24% of the officers, were the subject of 11% of the discipline (Mayo, 2006). The result of this study doesn't necessarily indicate a direct relationship between education levels and disciplinary actions but it does indicate that the college educated officers had fewer reported disciplinary incidents. Also, it was determined that college educated officers are more flexible in their belief systems. The importance of this flexibility is that officers were more ethical and displayed more professional behaviors (Roberg & Bonn, 2004).

### **Military Experience**

Whites (2008) research in predicting recruit performance in a police academy included recruits that had military backgrounds. In some agencies preferential treatment has been given to potential candidates for employment that had military experience. The conventional rationalization for this was that policing and military share many commonalities, which makes them more marketable as potential police officers.



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There are two law enforcement agencies within the state of Kentucky that do have an higher educational requirement for employment (KSP, LMPD) that will substitute military experience or prior police experience for that educational standard on a year by year basis.

Louisville Metro Police Departments (LMPD) minimum employment requirements are as follows:

High school graduation or equivalent and one of the following:

- Completion of 60 semester hours (90 quarter hours) of college from an accredited college or university OR
- Completion of active military tour of duty with an honorable discharge or a discharge under honorable conditions or currently assigned to a reserve or a National Guard unit for a period of not less than four years OR
- Employment as a full-time sworn police officer in the United States within the last twelve months with a minimum of one continuous year sworn police officer experience. (LMPD, para. 1)

Kentucky State Polices (KSP) minimum requirement are as follows:

KRS 16.040 (2) requires that all persons appointed as officers shall, at the time of their appointment, be:

- A citizen of the United States.
- Of good moral character and in good health.
- Not less than twenty-one (21) years of age.

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- Possess a valid driver's license against which no more than six (6) driver demerit points have been assessed. You must submit a copy of a valid driver's license at time of application.
- At the time of application, possess a minimum of sixty (60) semester hours of credit from an accredited college or university, or be a high school graduate with at least two (2) years of active military duty or two (2) years' experience as a full-time, sworn law enforcement officer. (KSP, para. 2)

It has been widely accepted that individuals with military experience will make good future police officers due to the nature of military work and the organizational structure of law enforcement agencies (Fagan, 2013). Due to those similarities, law enforcement agencies have gravitated towards the recruitment of military service members to fill vacancies within their agencies. This strategy was largely based on the assumption that military experience enhances the police officer's ability to function within a law enforcement setting and perform police duties (Tsimekles, 2006). Police agencies have a paramilitary structure and those veterans would be more adaptable to that structure. That disciplinary structure has prepared that potential recruit for basic training. Potential recruits that have served in the military have been previously exposed to areas needed to complete basic training such as handling weapons, defensive tactics, self-discipline, chain of command, and a structured training regimen (Tsimekles, 2006). In a research study conducted by Fagan (2013), concluded that law enforcement officers felt they were more prepared for the job and had a distinct advantage over police officers with no military experience.

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Despite, a long standing tradition of law enforcement preference for hiring military veterans, studies have yet to prove that former military personnel make better police officers (Tsimekles, 2006). Over the last two decades some scholars and academics criticized the militarization of American policing citing that it's not compatible with the prevailing philosophies of policing (White, 2008). Citing that cops are not soldiers and that mentality could strain community relations. According to Whites' (2008) research there was no empirical evidence that supports military personnel make better police officers as opposed to ones that did not. It is believed that military experience may actually impede the development of police strategies in the center of the community policing philosophy (Chappell, 2008). A study conducted by Scarfo (2002) revealed that prior military experience was not an indicator of increased performance while in police basic training.

### **Negative Implications**

These are the negative implications by restricting your agency to hire officers who have a college education. Many agencies are having difficult time filling available positions even though they are qualified applicants available (White & Escobar, 2008). A higher education requirement could limit or restrict the candidate pool for the hiring process. It could have a proportional effect on minority recruiting due to amount of minorities who have a college education (White & Escobar, 2008). The assumption that higher education was essential to a police officer was questioned by the experience factor that a police officer gains by skills that are developed by handling various situational aspects (Paoline & Terrill, 2007). A college education does not provide the skills needed to perform the job because those skills come from experience of the job (White, 2008;

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Paoline & Terrill, 2007). This goes back to the adage when a rookie officer first gets out of the academy and a senior officer tells the rookie officer to forget everything you learned in the academy because it's not applicable to the street. This is making reference to academy training is irrelevant to real police work (White & Escobar, 2008).

The reform strategies to professionalize the police resulted in the development of paramilitary organizations in which training enhancing discipline and technical skills was more important than higher education (Baro & Burlington 1999).

### Validation Studies

This was an educational validation study (Table 2.1) from a regional law enforcement academy in Virginia that serve 50 small to moderate law enforcement agencies within the state.

Table 2.1 Educational Validation Study in Virginia

Education Level	Number	Raw GPA	Standardized GPA
GED	0	91.61	-.37
High School Diploma	105	91.61	-.37
Some College	88	92.22	-.07
Associate Degree	24	92.78	.38
Associate Degree +	5	93.67	.58
Bachelor's Degree	74	93.06	.38
Master's Degree	5	94.26	.78

Source; Aamodt, M.G. & Flink, W. (2001). *Relationship between education level and cadet performance in a police academy*. *HRM Research*, 6(1), 75-76. Retrieved from <http://maamodt.asp.radford.edu/Research - IO/MS 6 1 Aamodt.pdf>

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This table indicates that cadets with college degrees outperformed ones that did not have college degrees according to overall GPA. Cadets with bachelor's degrees did not outperform ones with associate's degrees. This study noted that there was no difference in academic performance between genders. The year of the study is unknown but was published in 2001 (Aamondt & Flink, 2001).

Another similar educational validation study conducted by Scarfo (2002) revealed similar results. A sample of 152 graduates of a 24- week police academy in Texas yielded that the higher levels of education was associated with increased performance (Scarfo, 2002). Also, neither military experience nor having a criminal justice degree related to academy performance (Scarfo, 2002).

In the history of law enforcement there has been relatively little study done on the relationship between higher education and policing. Although the evidence linking college education to improved police performance is mixed and limited at best. It is abundantly clear that new and emerging skills are required to be an effective police officer in the twenty first century are developed and enhanced through a college education (White & Escobar, 2008).

Police agencies have been reluctant to embrace the idea that higher education at the college level adds value to a police officer. However, most police agencies do report that they prefer officers who have college degrees but the majority of police agencies don't not require anything more than a high school diploma or equivalent as a minimum hiring requirement (Bruns, 2010). Research is consistent that the increased amounts of education enhanced the officers' problem solving abilities, dispute resolution, and communication skills (Mayo, 2006). That philosophy carries over to the basic training

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academy setting as a recruit officer. The traditional viewpoint has questioned the added value of higher education and its significance in police training, due to police academy training being vocational in nature (Paoline & Terrill, 2007). Basic academy training provides the formative knowledge and experience for the recruits representing the first step in fielding professionally skilled officers (White, 2008). Formalized academy training a recruit receives ranges from but not limited to skills areas including; vehicle operations, physical training, defensive tactics, firearms, to knowledge based curriculum including state and constitutional law.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Andragogy:** Is the art and science of adult learning, which advocates the self-directed learning concept (Birzer & Tannehill, 2001).

**CALEA:** Commission of Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies was established in 1979 and grants accreditation to law enforcement agencies that demonstrate compliance with hundreds of standards, including those for detailed recruitment, career development, and training (Baro & Burlingame, 1999).

**COP:** Is the philosophy of policing based on the concept that police officers and private citizens work together in creative ways to solve contemporary community problems related to crime, social and physical disorder, and neighborhood decay (Birzer & Tannehill, 2001).

**Critical thinking:** Is the art of analyzing and evaluating thinking with a view to improve it (Paul, 1993.)

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**Pedagogy:** Is the more traditional model of learning that is teacher centered rather than learner centered. This approach is more lecture centered and structured (Birzer & Tannehill, 2001).

### CHAPTER 3

#### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a relationship between formal education and academic performance of the police recruits that attended the Department of Criminal Justice Training's (DOCJT) Basic Training Academy. This study is about the academic portion of academy training only. This study will answer if higher education levels give a recruit officer an advantage academically while they are in basic training. This project is a cross sectional quantitative study examining the relationship of education and academic performance. The recruit data chosen for this study came from recruits that graduated from the training academy from the years 2008- 2014. This equated to 1593 recruits for this sample population. Only recruits that successfully completed basic training was chosen for this study.

#### **Context of the Study**

The research context for this study consisted of basic training law enforcement recruits that attended the Department Criminal Justice Training for their state mandated basic training located in Richmond, Kentucky. This eighteen week basic training program equates to 768 hours of training. These recruits are sponsored by agencies in the state of Kentucky that serve a population of 4,339,362 (US Census Bureau, 2010). Demographically the recruit officers trained at DOCJT potentially come from 409 different sponsoring agencies that spread over 120 counties. The sponsoring agencies consist of State Agencies, County Police Departments, City Police Departments, Sheriff's Departments, University Public Safety Officers, Airport Police, Public School Resource Officers, Fish and Wildlife, and County Attorney Investigators.



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The sponsoring agency reserves slots for potential trainees prior to the scheduled class date. Then the sponsoring agency completes the Kentucky Law Enforcement Councils pre-employment requirements to be a certified peace officer in the Commonwealth of Kentucky for potential recruits. A typical recruit basic training class consists of 28 maximum (full class) and 15 minimum participants. There are variations of class sizes that graduate DOCJT, which are larger or smaller depending on recruits exiting a class for various reasons (injury, dismissals, extenuating circumstances, or failures) or recruits that are recycled back into a class returning due to special circumstances.

The only exemptions in the state of Kentucky for not attending DOCJT for the state mandated basic training are officers that are employed by Lexington Fayette Urban County Government Division of Police (LFUCGPD), Kentucky State Police (KSP), and Louisville Metropolitan Police Department (LMPD). Those agencies have their own basic training academy. All agencies from the state of Kentucky who provide basic training for certification as a peace officer are governed by the Kentucky Law Enforcement Council. The Kentucky Law Enforcement Council (KLEC) mandates the certified curriculum taught by all the basic training academies.

### **Samples**

The information utilized for this study was collected exclusively from the Department of Criminal Justice Training. All of the data used came from recruits employed by agencies in the State of Kentucky attending basic training at DOCJT. The data used was completed by basic training recruits in the form of a Demographic Survey and from the Individual Trainee Grade Summary, which is the recruit's academic grade

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transcript. Those recruits are placed in a class together ranging from any of the 409 police agencies from the state of Kentucky.

The sample chosen was from the recruit classes that attended basic training between the years of 2008- 2014. This was due to the training curriculum during those years was identified by a job task analysis. The job task analysis (JTA) identifies the fundamental elements (knowledge and skills) required for that job's performance (Business Dictionary, 2014). The tested curriculum was derived off that same job task analysis, so the written testing objectives are similar and consistent in nature in regards to academic testing. DOCJT encompasses its training around the JTA in recruit basic training developing training programs, performance objectives, and evaluation tools for testing purposes.

The sample consisted of 63 basic training classes that graduated between the years of 2008- 2014 (n=1593). This was the total number of recruits who graduated during the above mentioned years. Only recruits (n=1593) that completed basic training was included in the total sample.

### **Sampling Method**

The sampling of the cross sectional population was conducted to insure validity. It was employed to give the greater assurance of those selected are a representative sample of a larger group or population (Bouma & Ling, 2004). The specific type of study design used was the cross sectional study. This type of research was chosen due to the similarities of the group sample, which were the police recruits in basic training. The populations of recruits chosen were those in basic training from 2008- 2014. This time period of training was selected due to represent the most recent training objectives under

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the current JTA. This specific type of observation study was used to measure an outcome of interest and a set of explanatory variables in regards to assessing the relationship between the outcome and the variables.

### **Data Collection**

The data utilized for this study was collected from two sources; The Basic Training Demographic Survey (see Appendix A) and The Individual Trainee Grades Summary (see Appendix B). The Basic Training Demographic Survey and Individual Trainee Grades Summary are both forms mandated by DOCJT. The data from these two sources would be considered secondary data because it was previously collected for administrative purposes from DOCJT's data base for other purposes than this study.

### **Basic Training Demographic Survey**

The Basic Training Demographic Survey was used as an instrument to access the levels of education of the recruits sampled, which was utilized to complete this study. This survey is given out on week one of the recruits first week of basic training. These surveys are administered by DOCJT staff services personnel, which verbally explain the directions to the entire recruit class. The proctors remain available for any questions raised by the recruits. Once the recruits have completed the survey the same staff services personnel retrieves each individual survey for completeness. After all of the Basic Training Demographic Surveys are completed staff services enters and maintains all the into a data base. Due to some of the personal content of the survey, all individual surveys are confidential in nature and only approved DOCJT personnel have full access to the results. This study used only a portion of this survey.

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The data specifically used from the Basic Training Demographic Survey for this study included the categories of highest education level completed and military experience. That highest educational level completed had the following choices: G.E.D., high school, some college (no degree), associate's degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree, and doctorate degree. The military experience category had the following options: Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, National Guard, Navy, Reserves, other, and no military experience.

The data omitted from the Basic Training Demographic Survey in this study includes; Sex, ethnic background, marital status, spouse employment, children, agency type, base salary, total law enforcement experience, higher education related to Eastern Kentucky University (EKU), computer skills, prior employment, and body armor.

The information on the Basic Training Demographic Survey is required by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) for DOCJT to remain compliant with their professional standards. This is a survey of 15 items. The format of this form is very simplistic in nature and 13 of 15 items involve filling in the bubble that has the appropriate response. For tracking and grouping purposes the Demographic Survey contains the following information: Recruit class number, start date (basic training), name, date of birth, age, social security number, and agency. The following fifteen items are asked: Sex, ethnic background, marital status, spouse employment, children, agency type, base salary, total law enforcement experience, military experience, current military, highest education level completed, filling in the appropriate response involving several options about higher education related to Eastern Kentucky University (EKU), computer skills, prior employment, and body armor.

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### **Individual Trainee Grades Summary**

The second source of data used for this study was the Individual Trainee Grades Summary. This is the recruit's individual training transcript, which contain the cumulative grade point averages (GPA) analyzed for this research. Each recruit is given an individual final course grade summary, by DOCJT. All the information on that recruits individual training summary is derived from academic testing occurring during basic training.

The Individual Trainee Grades Summary contains 31 testable training areas that have to be satisfied by Kentucky Administration Regulations (KAR) upon completion of recruit basic training. These areas are listed in chronological order in conjunction with the training schedule for completion on the individual grade summary sheet. The 5 academic exams are numerically scored by percentage of correct responses. 70 percent is the minimal passing score with a maximum passing score of 100 percent. The other 26 testable training areas are pass/fail. These include many of the practical skills test areas such as firearms qualifications, vehicle operations range qualifications, defensive tactics practical exams, CPR AED/ First AID practical's, and physical training. Although some of the 26 pass/fail testable training areas include some form of a written test (Breath Test Operator, DUI Detection, CPR AED/First Aid, and Defensive Tactics) they are not factored in the recruits GPA on the individual trainee grades summary. Academic content from those pass/fail testable areas is included on the five academic examinations used in this study to determine the overall GPA.

The data used from the Individual Trainee Grades Summary consisted of the final cumulative GPA from those five academic examinations given throughout the eighteen

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weeks of training, which are titled Academic Exam 1, Academic Exam 2, Academic Exam 3, Academic Exam4, and Academic Exam 5. Academic exam 1- 4 encompasses the curriculum taught prior to that specific exam. Academic exam 5 is a comprehensive exam that includes the entire curriculum taught since week one of training.

The academic content tested on all five exams are as follows: Exam 1; Bias Crimes, Cultural Awareness (Introduction Cultural Awareness & Minority Relationships), Effective Communication, Ethics, Legal (Constitutional Considerations, Criminal Justice System, Introduction to Law & Penal Code Introduction), Note Taking, Penal Code ( Introduction, Ethics & Honesty Offenses, Theft & Related Offenses & Weapons Offenses), Preparation for Patrol, Physically Disabled , and Vehicle Operations.

Exam 2; Handling Disputes, Interviewing (Introduction), Legal (Arrests of Persons, Justifiable Use of Force Foundations, Probable Cause & Warrants, Search & Seizure, Vehicle Offenses & Warrantless Search & Seizure). Principles of Law Enforcement Tactics, Report Writing, Spanish (Arrest Commands & Vehicle Stops), and Vehicle Stops.

Exam 3; Building Search (Tactics), Collision, Crime Scene (Evidence Collection, Evidence Handling, Photography, Search, & Sketch), Critical Incident Aftermath, Handgun, Homeland Security (Introduction, Agricultural Threats, Concerns, & Coordination Legal Issues), Legal (Evidence Law), Penal Code (Burglary & Related Offenses, & Property Damage), Preliminary Investigations, Spanish Tactical Situations, and Tactical Concepts of Patrol.

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Exam 4; Child Maltreatment, Death Scene, Domestic Violence, Elder Abuse, Fingerprinting, Follow Up Investigations, Homeland Security (Cyber Crime, Biological & Public Health), Human Trafficking, Interrogation, Interviewing, Legal (Domestic Violence Law, Juvenile Law, Interrogation Law, Officer Liability & Suspect ID), Missing Persons, Penal Code: Assault & Related Offenses, Homicide, Inchoate Offenses, & Sexual Offenses), Sexual Assault, and Suspect ID.

Exam 5; American Heart Association (CPR), Bias Crimes, Breath Test Operator (Introduction, Alcohol in the Human Body, Metrics, Principles & Theories, Instrument Introduction, Initial Operation, Tester Instruction & Lab, Judicial Review, & Legal Considerations), Building Search, Collision, Controlled Substances, Criminal Organizations, Crime Scene (Evidence Collection, Evidence Handling, & Crime Scene Search), Critical Incident Aftermath, Death Scene, Domestic Violence, DUI (Detection Phases I, II & III, Drugs & Courtroom Testimony), Effective Communications, Ethics, Firearms, Handgun, Homeland Security (Cyber Crime, Explosives & IED's, & Training Consortium), Human Trafficking, Interviewing, Legal (Arrest of Person, Constitutional Considerations, Controlled Substances Law, Criminal Justice System, DUI Law, Domestic Violence Law, Evidence Law, Interrogation Law, Introduction to Law, Introduction to Search & Seizure, Justifiable Use of Force, Juvenile Law, Officer Liability, Penal Code Introduction, Suspect ID, Vehicle Offenses, & Warrantless Search & Seizures), Mental Illness, Missing Persons, Note Taking, Penal Code (Assault, Burglary, Damage to Property, Disorderly Conduct, Escape, Ethics, Firearms & Weapons Offenses, Homicide, Inchoate Offenses, Introduction, & Sexual Offenses),

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Patrol (Special Circumstances), Preliminary Investigations, Principles of Police Tactics, Preliminary Investigations, Report Writing, Suicide Attempts, and Vehicle Stops.

Each academic exam is numerically scored and recorded electronically into a secured database upon completion of their test. These numerical scores are downloaded to the recruit's individual profile to their assigned class number and stored onto a database. Each recruit's profile is password protected and only authorized personnel can access these records. Once a recruit completes the KAR requirements for completion of basic training that classes assigned administrative assistant transfers all the recruit's testable information from DOCJT's database onto the individual trainee grades summary sheet. This includes the final course grade or cumulative GPA.

### **Predictor Information**

The predictor in this study was the recruit's level of education. Education was coded in two ways. The first was by educational levels: 0=High School/GED, 1= Post High School/Some College but no degree, 2= Associate's Degree, 3= Bachelor's Degree and 4= Post Graduate Degree, which included Masters and Doctoral Degrees. The second approach coded education on the receipt of a college degree. Degree codes 0-1 was coded as 0 (No Degree) and degree codes 2-4 (Degree) was coded as 1. The criterion measure was the overall average of the five academic examinations.

### **Variables**

The dependent variable is the overall cumulative average of the five academic exams given throughout the basic training academy, including the comprehensive exam given covering all the material over all the previous weeks of the training period. The analysis does not consider the non-academic components of training, some of which was



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the 26 testable areas that are evaluated as pass/fail only on the Individual Trainee Grades Summary. The overall GPA of all five exams was used as an indicator of academic performance, because it represents a broader picture of the recruit's performance over the entire 18 weeks of training.

### **Data Analysis**

The secondary data was collected from the Basic Training Demographic Survey (levels of education) and the Individual Trainee Grades Summary (cumulative GPA) which, was transferred onto an Excel spreadsheet. The means scores for these two groups were examined: recruits without a college degree and recruits with a degree. The outcome of each group was analyzed using an independent sample t-test. This test was run to determine if the means between the two recruit groups (No Degree and Degree) outcomes differed. Bivariate correlations were used to determine the association between the mean scores of levels of education and final grades. All data was analyzed using SPSS (V.21) The Statistical Software Package for the Social Sciences.

### **Research Questions and Null Hypotheses**

Based on the research the following research question and hypotheses was used:

Research Question: How does educational level affect overall academic performance at the Department of Criminal Justice Training for basic training?

Null Hypothesis: Education level does not affect overall academic performance at the Department of Criminal Justice Training.

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### **Limitations**

Only recruits that was successful in completing the academy was chosen. The cumulative average doesn't include academic test failures. If test failures occur and the recruit is successful in passing the retest, only the passing retest score is factored in the individual grade summary sheets overall grade point average. If the recruit did not complete basic training they were not considered in the sample. This could be due to injury, disciplinary reasons, extenuating family circumstances, sponsoring agency removals, or failures.

Another limitation of the study was its use of a sample limited to one specific geographical area in the United States. The study was limited to the state of Kentucky.

### **Assumptions**

The researcher assumes that the recruits accurately filled out their Basic Training Demographic Survey and truthfully answered the category highest education level completed.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of formal education and the effect it has on academic performance of the police recruits that attended the Department of Criminal Justice Training (DOCJT) for their basic training academy. This study answered the research question on how does educational level affect overall academic performance at the Department of Criminal Justice Training. This study focused on the academic portion of recruit training only. The overall GPA of all five exams was used as an indicator of academic performance, because it represented a broader picture of the recruit's performance over the entire 18 weeks of training. This study assessed whether education level is a valid predictor of a recruit officers academic performance and will answer if higher education levels give a recruit officer an advantage academically while they are in basic training.

#### Sample

This project was a cross sectional study of the recruit population that successfully completed academy training between 2008 and 2014. The population size of 1593 (n=1593) recruits was examined for correlation of education level and grade point average.

The data used for this study was collected from the Basic Training Demographic Survey and Individual Trainee Grades Summary. Education levels and grade point (GPA) were the variables examined.

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## Demographic Data

Recruits were 94% white male and 78% of the recruits had some higher education. Most of the recruits were employed from municipal agencies (59%) and (27%) from sheriffs' departments. Demographic data is summarized in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Recruit Demographics (n=1593)

	n (%)
Gender	
Female	89 (5.6%)
Male	1504 (94.4%)
Race	
White	1496 (93.9%)
African American	66 (4.1%)
Asian	4 (0.3%)
Hispanic	12 (0.8%)
Middle Eastern	2 (0.1%)
Native American	4 (0.3%)
Other	9 (0.6%)
Agency Type	
Municipal	946 (59.4%)
Sheriff	435 (27.3%)
State Agency	87 (5.5%)
University/College	68 (4.3%)
Airport	35 (2.2%)
County	18 (1.1%)
Constable	1 (0.1%)
Other	3 (0.2%)
Education	
High School/GED	353 (22.2%)
Post High School	600 (37.7%)

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Table 4.1 Continued

	n (%)
Associate's Degree	210 (13.1%)
Bachelor's Degree	404 (25.4%)
Master's Degree	23 (1.4%)
Doctorate Degree	3 (.2%)
Military	
Yes	375 (23.5%)
No	1218 (76.5%)

### **T-Test**

An independent samples t-test was performed to compare mean final scores between recruits with and without college degrees. Recruits with a college degree included the following educational levels; Associates, Bachelors, Masters, and Doctoral. More than half of recruits (60%) did not have a degree and (40%) had a degree. The results indicated there was a significant difference in the mean final grades (GPA) between recruits with a college degree and those with no college degree ( $t=8.72$ ),  $p<.0001$ . The mean final grade for recruits with a college degree was 87.7 (S.D. = 4.5), while the mean final grade for recruits without a college degree was 85.7 (S.D. = 4.4).

### **Correlation**

The Spearman correlation coefficient was chosen to determine the correlation between the level of education and final grades, since the levels of education are not normally distributed. Mean final scores for each level of education are summarized in Table 4.2. There was a significant positive correlation between education level and final grade ( $\rho=.3$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). As the level of education of the recruit increases, the final grade (GPA) increased.

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Table 4.2 Mean Final Scores by Education and Military (n=1593)

	Mean GPA (SD)
<b>Education</b>	
High School/GED	85.1% (4.4)
Post High School	86.0% (4.3)
Associate's Degree	86.1% (4.4)
Bachelor's Degree	88.3% (4.2)
Master's Degree	89.7% (4.6)
Doctorate Degree	93.6 % (3.1)
<b>College Degree</b>	
Yes	87.7% (4.5)
No	85.7% (4.4)
<b>Military</b>	
Yes	86.9% (4.7)
No	86.3% (4.0)

It was determined that there was a significant positive correlation between educational levels and final grade. The data analyses revealed that there were statistically significant relationships between education and academic performance of the recruits that attended DOCJT from 2008- 2014. There was a significant difference in the mean final grades between recruits with a college degree and those with no college degree. As the level of education of the recruits increased, the final grade (GPA) increased.

**CHAPTER 5**

**DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

This research study addressed whether there was a relationship between formal education and its effect on academic performance of the police recruits that attended the Department of Criminal Justice Training (DOCJT) for their basic training academy. The discussion emphasizes the findings of the population (n=1593) of police recruits that completed DOCJT's Basic Training from the years 2008- 2014.

**Null Hypothesis**

The null hypothesis that education level does not affect overall academic performance at the Department of Criminal Justice Training for their basic training was rejected.

Two tests were conducted that examined the relationship of formal education and the effect it has on academic performance at DOCJT. An independent sample t-test was performed comparing mean final scores between recruits that had college degrees (40%) and recruits without college degrees (60%). The results revealed a significant difference in the mean final grades (GPA) between those two different groups ( $t= 8.72$ ),  $p<.0001$ . The mean final grade for recruits with a college degree was 87.7 (S.D. = 4.5), and while the mean final grade for recruits with no college degree was 85.7 (S.D. = 4.4).

The second test conducted was performed to determine if there was a correlation between education levels and the recruits' final grades. As shown on table 4.2, there were six different educational levels used in this analysis: High School/GED, Post High School/Some College, Associate's Degree, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, and Doctoral. The Spearman correlation coefficient revealed a significant positive correlation

## A STUDY OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN POLICE BASIC TRAINING

between education level and final grade ( $\rho=.3$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). Thus, as the level of education of the recruit increases the final grade (GPA) increases.

### **Research Question**

The question to be addressed in this study was “how does educational level affect overall academic performance at the Department of Criminal Justice Training for basic training.” Based on statistical analysis data revealed that higher education is significant to academic performance. Academic performance measured by GPA was significantly higher for recruits with a college degree compared to recruits without a college degree. It was also shown that there was a positive correlation between educational levels and final grades. As the recruits’ educational level increased, the final grade increased.

### **Implications**

Higher education is a necessary component of the ever changing world of policing and due to the complex of the role of a police officer in today’s society. Therefore, it’s advantageous that they are equipped with a college education. There are greater expectations placed on police officers than ever before to solve a multitude of problems on a daily basis. This research demonstrates that higher education is not only important on the street level but is beneficial to academic performance in basic training. The results of this study corroborate previous research findings that college education is related to academic performance in recruit basic training (Aamodt, 2004; Aamodt & Flink 2001; Scarfo, 2002).

It was shown through descriptive analysis that recruits with some form of higher education out performed those recruits without any higher education in their final grade. The same held true when comparing recruits with degrees and recruits without degrees.



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This could be viewed as a logical assumption before analysis but examining the practical significance aspect of this study showed some interesting results.

Comparing the means of recruits with college degrees (87.7), which included the recruits with an associate's degree or higher in comparison of those without degrees (85.7) there is not a substantial difference in practical significance of academic performance. In practical terms, that is only a 2% difference and still within the same letter grade. However, it's important to point out that the mean total average of the sample studied (n=1593) was 86.5 and recruits without a degree was almost 1% below that average. The means (GPA) increased as the educational level increased, which was to be expected. However, the means average of recruits with post high school (some college) 86.0 and recruits with an associate's degree 86.1 was almost the same average. The recruits with a bachelor's degree had a total means average with an 88.3, which was the first level of higher education that had a higher average than the total means average.

Potential explanations for these educational levels having relatively little separation in means (GPA) could be that DOCJT encourages the recruit classes to study in groups within their assigned class. College educated recruits and recruits with military experience have been in similar educational environments (Fagen, 2013). Those recruits could be displaying leadership qualities and assisting the other recruits in academic study, which brings those recruits along with them in academic performance. Overall, similar studies of academic performance in police basic training showed a statistical significance difference but had similar results in practical significance (Aamodt & Flink 2001; Scarfo, 2002).

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Table 5.1 Mean Final Scores by Education (n=1593)

Education	Mean GPA (SD)
High School/GED	85.1% (4.4)
Post High School	86.0% (4.3)
Associate's Degree	86.1% (4.4)
Bachelor's Degree	88.3% (4.2)
Master's Degree	89.7% (4.6)
Doctorate Degree	93.6 % (3.1)
Total Avg. 86.5% (4.6)	
College Degree	Mean GPA (SD)
Yes	87.7% (4.5)
No	85.7% (4.4)

### **Additional Findings**

Due to the nature of the law enforcement occupation military veterans have always been considered a natural fit to the world of policing. Since law enforcement agencies are primarily paramilitary organizations it has been widely accepted that individuals with military experience will make effective future police officers (Fagan, 2013). Numerous agencies nationwide give preferential treatment to veterans by making concessions within their employment standards to attract candidates with military experience. In the state of Kentucky some agencies will substitute military experience for their required educational standard on a year by year basis. Agencies are substituting military experience for education indicates a perceived association between military experience and success in a training academy. Since this is a common standard throughout many agencies nationwide, the sample of recruits was used to compare mean final scores between recruits with military experience and those with no military experience using independent samples t-test.

## A STUDY OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN POLICE BASIC TRAINING

A majority of recruits (76%) did not have any military experience and (24%) had military experience. The results indicated there was a significant difference in the mean final grades (GPA) between recruits with military experience and those with no military experience ( $t= 2.40, p=.02$ ). The mean final grade for recruits with military experience was 87.0 (S.D. = 4.1), while the mean final grade for recruits with no military experience was 86.4 (S.D. = 4.7).

Further investigating the effect of military experience and college on academic success in the academy, the subset of the population with military experience and those without military experience were explored independently. For the recruits with military experience, there was a significant difference in mean final grade between those with college and without college ( $t=2.33, p=.02$ ); the mean final grade for military recruits with no college experience was 86.71 (SD=4.05), while the mean grade for military recruits with some college (post high school and above) was 87.83 (SD=4.10).

The analysis reveals that some college education has a statistically significant association with academic performance among military experienced recruits at DOCJT. However, military experienced recruits with some college (post high school and above) only perform 1% better on average in final grade.

There has been no empirical research that supports military personnel make better police officers as opposed to ones without military experience (White, 2008). The concepts of compatibility for militarization and policing viewpoints have been debated. Law enforcement agencies are founded on paramilitary structures and have similarities to military branches in some types of training, weapons handling, command structures, and lifestyles (Fagan, 2013; Tsimmekles, 2006). Military experience often reinforces,

## A STUDY OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN POLICE BASIC TRAINING

enhances, or instills skills such as leadership, integrity, problem solving, effective communication, and teamwork. Regardless of military experienced recruits benefiting academically in statistical analysis or practical knowledge, those potential candidates for employment will always be attractive for law enforcement agencies.

### **Recommendations**

If higher levels of education translate to an increase in the recruits' academic performance in basic training, how does that translate to field performance post basic training? More research is needed to examine if education is a valid predictor of police performance in the field. If that data held true for field performance, law enforcement agencies appear to be justified in requiring applicants to have college degrees or at least some college (Aamodt, 2004). These findings could be used to facilitate changes in prerequisites for applicants applying with law enforcement agencies. The majority of the agencies rather than the minority could go above the consistent minimum standard requirement of a high school degree or equivalent GED. Law enforcement agencies would then select and recruit potential officers that have college degrees on some level. The emphases of having college educated officers could motivate additional agencies to promote incentives for current officers to pursue some form of higher education. This educational requirement could enhance the status of policing as a profession.

Also, due to confounding factors this study was unable to measure the economic impact on the sample between the years of 2008- 2014. It was unknown if the fiscal state of the economy during those years influenced the educational levels of those recruits that attended DOCJT. Additional research may be needed to explore the effects of the economy and the impact it has on the number of people who have college degrees that

## A STUDY OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN POLICE BASIC TRAINING

enter law enforcement as a career. Knowledge gained from that study could be used as a recruitment tool for agencies to target potential applicants.

### **Summary**

In conclusion, this study served to fill a void in the research on how educational levels affect overall academic performance in police basic training. Only two studies similar in nature were found during the research process and were cited in chapter two. Those studies were published in 2001 and 2002. In addition, those studies sample size in number was relatively modest in comparison to the sample size (n=1593) of this study. The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a relationship between formal education and academic performance of the police recruits that attended the Department of Criminal Justice Training's (DOCJT) Basic Training Academy. The findings of the study revealed that recruits that had higher levels of education outperformed those recruits without degrees academically in final grade. Recruits with a college degree had an academic advantage while they were in recruit basic training.

Knowledge gained from this study can aid in the recruitment, selection, and training which are important issues for law enforcement agencies nationally. By concentrating recruitment efforts on college graduates, law enforcement agencies could select their future recruits on the academic advantage those recruits received which was proven in this study. Law enforcement agencies would have less apprehension about those recruits struggling academically while in basic training.

Management for any organization has three primary functions, recruitment of talent, development of personnel, and retention of quality personnel (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). The knowledge gained from this study can help police agencies

## A STUDY OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN POLICE BASIC TRAINING

accomplish these core management duties. This study showed a clear performance increase for those police recruits with a college degree. This suggests that recruitment efforts should primarily concentrate on college graduates.

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**APPENDIX A:**

**Basic Training Demographic Survey**

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43359

## Department of Criminal Justice Training Office of Staff Services & Planning Basic Training Demographic Survey



<b>Class Number</b>	<b>Start Date of Basic Training</b>	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/>	
<b>First Name and Middle Initial</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	
<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Social Security Number</b>
<input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/>
<b>Agency (do not use abbreviations)</b>		
<input type="text"/>		

### 1. Sex

- Male  
 Female

### 2. Ethnic Background

- African-American  
 Asian  
 Hispanic  
 Middle Eastern  
 Native American  
 White  
 Other

### 3. Marital Status

- Never married  
 Married  
 Divorced  
 Widowed

### 4. Spouse Employment

- Full-time  
 Part-time  
 Not employed  
 Not applicable (not married)

### 5. Children

- Yes  
 No

### 6. Agency Type

- Airport  
 Constable  
 County  
 Municipal  
 Public School  
 Sheriff  
 State Agency  
 University / College  
 Other

### 7. Base Salary (not including pay incentives)

,

### 8. Total law enforcement experience

- Less than 1 month  
 1-3 months  
 4-6 months  
 7-9 months  
 10-12 months  
 More than 12 months

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## 9. Military Experience

- Air Force
- Army
- Coast Guard
- Marines
- National Guard
- Navy
- Reserves
- Other
- No military experience

## 10. Current Military

- Active Duty
- National Guard
- Reserves
- No current military duty

## 11. Highest Education Level Completed

- G.E.D.
- High School
- Some College (no degree)
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctorate Degree

## 12. Please mark the most appropriate response

- I have an associate's degree in Police Studies from ECU
- I have a bachelor's degree in Loss Prevention & Safety from ECU
- I have a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice/Police Studies from ECU
- I have a bachelor's degree in the law enforcement field from another institution
- I have a master's degree in Criminal Justice from ECU
- None of the above situations describes my educational status

## 13. Estimate the number of instructional hours you have taken in computer skills

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## 14. Please describe your employment immediately prior to current employment

- Service Occupations
- Professional and Related Occupations
- Sales and Related Occupations
- Armed Forces Occupations
- Management, Business and Financial Occupations
- Office and Administrative Occupations
- Installation, Maintenance and Repair Occupations
- Production Occupations
- Construction and Related Occupations
- Transportation and Materials Moving Occupations
- Farming, Fishing and Forestry Occupations
- Other

## 15. Does your agency provide body armor?

- Yes
- No

Revised 04/2003

**APPENDIX B:**

**Individual Trainee Grades Summary**

# A STUDY OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN POLICE BASIC TRAINING

KENTUCKY JUSTICE CABINET  
 DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE TRAINING  
**INDIVIDUAL TRAINEE GRADES SUMMARY**  
 LAW ENFORCEMENT BASIC TRAINING

TOTAL HOURS: 768

SSN:

CLASS NO:

NAME:

START DATE: .

AGENCY:

END DATE:

	TRAINING AREA TITLE/HOURS	GRADE
1	POPS ENTRY	<input type="text"/>
2	ACADEMIC EXAM 1	<input type="text"/>
3	VEHICLE OPERATION DAY	<input type="text"/>
4	WORKZONE SAFETY	<input type="text"/>
5	CJIS:MDT	<input type="text"/>
6	ACADEMIC EXAM 2	<input type="text"/>
7	BREATH TEST OPERATOR 5000/8000 PRACTICAL	<input type="text"/>
8	BREATH TEST OPERATOR 5000/8000 WRITTEN	<input type="text"/>
9	DUI DETECTION PRACTICAL	<input type="text"/>
10	DUI DETECTION WRITTEN	<input type="text"/>
11	CPR AED PRACTICAL	<input type="text"/>
12	FIRST AID PRACTICAL	<input type="text"/>
13	CPRAED/FIRST AID WRITTEN	<input type="text"/>
14	PRACTICAL EXAM 1	<input type="text"/>
15	ACADEMIC EXAM 3	<input type="text"/>
16	HANDGUN: DAY	<input type="text"/>
17	HANDGUN: LOW LEVEL LIGHT	<input type="text"/>
18	ACADEMIC EXAM 4	<input type="text"/>
19	LONG GUN: DAY SHOTGUN	<input type="text"/>
20	LONG GUN: DAY RIFLE	<input type="text"/>
21	LONG GUN: LOW LEVEL LIGHT SHOTGUN	<input type="text"/>
22	LONG GUN: LOW LEVEL LIGHT RIFLE	<input type="text"/>
23	DEFENSIVE TACTICS WRITTEN	<input type="text"/>
24	DEFENSIVE TACTICS PRACTICAL	<input type="text"/>
25	LEPDTA	<input type="text"/>
26	ACADEMIC EXAM 5	<input type="text"/>

**SIGNATURES**

CLASS COORDINATOR : \_\_\_\_\_

SECTION SUPERVISOR: \_\_\_\_\_

