

The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas

Standardized Task Instructions for Recruit Officers: Fact or Fiction?

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ABSTRACT

Standardized Task Instructions for Recruit Officers: Fact or Fiction? Is there a need for a set of written instructions for all Field Training Officers (FTOs) and recruits to dictate training? Would the promise of the complete standardization of the program outweigh the damage to the validity of the program?

Research of literature pertaining to FTO Programs discovered there is a need for standardization, use of standardized training guidelines, and that sufficient flexibility should be designed into programs so that the individual needs of the recruit and the overall needs of the Department can both be met. Additional research did not show a need for standardized task instructions.

Standardized instructions are not feasible or conducive to recruit training. The concept of written instructions for every task is unreasonable and heavy handed. The painstaking process of writing instructions for the entire task in a training manual would take thousands of man hours, stifle creativity, and have a negative impact on both the recruit and FTO.

Research indicates that the objective of any modern day field officer training program is to take police recruits and make them well rounded and trained police officers. These officers must be able to react appropriately in any situation and adapt to ever changing scenarios. The field training officer must determine if the recruit is accomplishing the task effectively and not necessarily in the same manner as the FTO, for the field training program is there to develop thinking officers, not the clones of the FTOs.

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Introduction

Standardized field training programs or the training of recruits is seldom discussed without some comment on the 1972 San Jose Police Department's Field Training and Evaluation Model Program. The initial program was nonstandardized and evaluated recruits in the five major areas of appearance, attitude, knowledge, performance, and relationships. The program was later standardized and minimum acceptable standards for over thirty police areas were developed. The modern field officer training program is still using a variation of these task areas, which are now known as, standardized training guidelines.

Innovative thinking has been a key component to developing standardized training guidelines, field training coordinators, and field training sergeants to report and monitor the progress of recruits. The Grand Prairie Police Department, in the spirit of innovative thinking, is considering the implementation of standardized task instructions for recruit officers. This concept will train recruits the same tasks in the same manner. The concept, if implemented, will not allow any deviation by the FTO while training recruits and may stifle his/her creativity. It will demand a set of written instructions for all training tasks. The expected benefit of standardized task instructions is the complete standardization of the field officer training program.

The purpose of this research project is to examine the feasibility and/or possibility of standardized task instructions for recruit officers and the overall benefit it may have over the Department's current FTO program and FTO programs of other state and municipal law enforcement agencies. The Department's current FTO program consists of a field training coordinator and three assistant field training coordinators. Each assistant coordinator is assigned

to a shift and is responsible for the FTOs on that shift. The FTOs are required to evaluate recruits under standardized guidelines and are encouraged to use creative training to enhance learning. This project will answer the question: Are standardized instructions of all tasks possible?

This research project will examine information in various publications, law enforcement journals, and other written texts. This research will include interviews with various field training officer coordinators from other state and municipal law enforcement agencies. In addition, a survey will be conducted.

It is hypothesized that standardized task instructions will not be feasible. The concept of one training method for every task is unreasonable, may cause increased liability, and stifles creativity. The objective of any field training officer program is to produce officers who are well trained. These officers must be able to react in an appropriate manner in any given situation. They must be able to adapt to ever changing situations.

The effect of this research is limitless. This project will review historical information pertaining to the establishment of the modern day FTO program. It will examine the use of standardized guidelines, standardized training, and illustrate the Grand Prairie Police Department Field Training Program, which can be implemented in other law enforcement agencies. This project will also show the benefits of FTO creativity in training environments and provide statistical data on FTO programs. In conclusion, this research will save thousands of man-hours in the quest for standardized task instructions.

Review of Literature

Standardized task instructions are a concept whereby all tasks are written and implemented in the same manner. The driving force behind this concept is that it will ensure standardized training for all that enter the field training program. All recruits within the department will be trained the same task in the same manner.

A review of literature pertaining to standardized task instructions is non-existent; it is only a concept. Therefore, classic and modern literature pertaining to field training programs and standardized training guidelines to illustrate the historical progression towards standardized task instructions will be utilized.

The beginnings of standardized police training can be found as early as 1829. Sir Robert Peel was calling for reform measures, which he presented to the British Parliament calling for greater professionalism of police by proclaiming that, "The securing and training of proper persons is at the root of efficiency" (Boop and Schultz, 1977). Peel's declaration created the first police academy in England.

The first step towards standardized police training in the United States occurred over eighty years later. The New York City Police Department began its academy in 1909. (MacKenna, 1985). This process is still used today. The original academy has seen many changes, but created a foundation for modern day training programs.

The San Jose Police Department's Field Training and Evaluation (FTO) Program is the most often viewed guide for all subsequent police training programs. Developed in 1972, by Captain Robert L. Allen and Dr. Michael D. Roberts, the program attempted to address the lack of training and documentation of police recruits. The need to establish the program was dictated by two highly publicized incidents involving San Jose police officers that were responsible for

the death of two citizens (Johnson, 1995). The first incident involved a rookie police officer who was traveling at an excessive speed, ran a light at an intersection, and collided with a vehicle, taking the life of the other driver (Rivera, 1990). The second incident occurred about eighteen months later and was the result of a traffic stop. The driver of the vehicle fled the scene on foot and was subsequently shot in the back by the officer, killing the suspect. These two incidents caused the police chief of San Jose to direct the training staff to explore and identify ways to overcome apparent training deficiencies within the agency. The outcome of the research was the development of today's San Jose Field Training Program. This program is the model for many agencies within the United States and around the world (Johnson, 1995).

In 1973 the National Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, Task Force on Police, published a volume of policy recommendations titled *Police*. One of the recommendations was a minimum of 400 hours of basic police training (Thibault, Lynch, & McBride, 1990). The Commission also recommended that every police agency require one year of college as a condition of employment. By the year 1982, four years of college would be required (Garmire, 1977). This has not yet happened.

In 1979, the most important support given to the concept of field training came from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement (C.A.L.E.A.). This agency was formed with the guidance of the Police Executive Research Forum, International Chiefs of Police, National Sheriff's Association and National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives. These four associations represented 90% of all law enforcement agencies in the United States (McC Campbell, 1989).

In order to receive accreditation from C.A.L.E.A., police agencies must comply with Accreditation Standard 33.4.6: A written directive that establishes a field training program for recruits with provisions for the following:

- Field training of at least four weeks for trainees, in addition to the required classroom training
- Supervision of field training officers
- Liaison with the academy staff
- Training of field training officers
- Rotation of recruit field assignments
- Guidelines for the evaluation of recruits by field training officers
- Reporting responsibilities of field training officers (Kaminsky, 2002, 5).

C.A.L.E.A. has had a very powerful effect on law enforcement and police recruits. However, it does not advocate task instructions in its accreditation standard.

As of January 1, 2002, newly hired police recruits in the state of Texas are required to attend a 576-hour basic police academy (TCLEOSE, 2002). Socialization of the recruit begins in the police academy. Rules govern virtually everything in traditional police academies. Neither rules nor the codes of the criminal procedures prepare recruits for what they want, and most need to know: What is it going to be like on the streets? How do I arrest someone who doesn't want to be arrested? Exactly when do I use my nightstick and how do I do it? What do other patrol officers think of me (Samaha, 1991)?

Many of the formal FTO programs today break the activities of the recruit officer down into five major areas for evaluation: Appearance, Attitude, Knowledge, Performance, and Relationships. These have come to be known as Standardized Guidelines (Haider, 1990).

Standardized guidelines are used in many departments to insure accuracy in grading a recruit's performance. They are also used to standardize the type, method, and amount of training in specified areas. Standardized guidelines can reduce litigation for wrongful termination

suits, because of the documentation of the recruit's daily progress. This observation is known as a Daily Observation Report (DOR) or Daily Evaluation Report (DER) (Haider, 1990). These reports are of the utmost importance to FTO programs. The most apparent reason is that FTO programs provide recruits an opportunity to bridge the protected environment of the academy and the isolated, dangerous environment of the streets, while still under the protective arm of the veteran officer. Recruits are on probationary status, usually from six months to one year. They understand that they may be terminated immediately if their performance during that period is not satisfactory (Peak, 1993).

FTO programs help compensate for selection errors. They provide role models for recruits. They "produce productive new police personnel in a period of time far shorter than what was historically necessary," and they do so in a way "consistent with current state-of-the-art professional training practices and legal mandates." These types of FTO programs also provide a system of job-related criteria necessary for the validation of selection or screening standards and requirements (Bennett and Hess, 1996, 381). It allows field training to be successful.

Field training may take several forms. It might consist of shift or FTO rotation, which provides opportunities for additional knowledge and increased competency. Shift rotation will allow the recruit to see different aspects of deployment and calls for service. FTO rotation would allow the recruit to see different ways to accomplish the same task (Bennett & Hess, 1996). However, standardized task instructions would not allow for FTO rotation to be meaningful or effective. Coaching and counseling could only be used when dictated.

Coaching or counseling, both forms of one on one field training should take place as the need arises. Coaching is excellent for practical task development. Counseling on a wide variety of job and personal problems instills trust between the FTO and recruit (Bennett and Hess,

1996). Can there be a written set of instructions of when to coach or counsel? The Dallas Police Department has answered that question.

The Dallas Police Department believes that sufficient flexibility should be designed into the FTO Program so the individual needs of the recruit and the overall needs of the Department can both be met. It is expected that the new recruits have the necessary qualities to succeed. It is incumbent upon supervisors and the FTO to work within acceptable limits and apply an individual approach to each recruit so that he can fully develop during training (Field Training Officer Manual, Dallas Police Department, 1-4).

Research has shown having an effective FTO Program will reduce civil liability complaints. A study done by Micheal S. McCampbell showed that 29.5 percent of agencies studied reported less complaints because of having field training programs. The same study also reported that law enforcement agencies are being more successful in EEO judgements against them (McCampbell, 1989). How would standardized task instruction affect these statistics? Should a 5'1" officer be taught to handcuff a 6'3" suspect the same way as a 6'3" officer? If the 5'1" officer can not accomplish this task to the standard should he/she be terminated?

According to Del Carmen (1990, [1]), it is a common belief that suing police in the United States has become a popular sport. This would come to pass under task instructions. Termination under these conditions would likely be a tort attorney's fantasy case.

Methodology

Can a law enforcement agency create a set of task instructions, which would dictate how a recruit officer is trained and functions? Will the Field Training Officer follow the task instructions even if monitored? Can standardized task instructions be written for every situation and circumstance?

It is hypothesized that standardized task instructions can not be fully implemented into a Field Training Program. The complete standardization would be detrimental to the learning process of the recruit and the creativity of the FTO. The Grand Prairie Police Department has three hundred and eighty major tasks, which must be instructed. This is not inclusive of the sub-tasks for each major task. It would take thousands of man-hours to develop task instructions for a complete training manual.

After a review of literature, there was some indication that there was a need for standardized field training programs, but it did not advocate standardized task instructions or any similar method of training. The methodology of this research will rely on the personal knowledge of the author (former FTO and FTO Coordinator) and personal conversations with FTO Coordinators and FTOs from the Grand Prairie Police Department and other Texas law enforcement agencies.

The measurement instrument is a questionnaire. The initial questionnaire was distributed in the 50th LEMIT Class, which represented over twenty agencies. The geographical representation was a cross section of Texas. The demographics of this questionnaire sample ranged between 3,000 and 1.8 million. The response rate was one hundred percent.

The author also e-mailed questionnaires to the thirty most populated Texas cities and ten most populated counties. The geographical sample for cities and counties was a cross section of

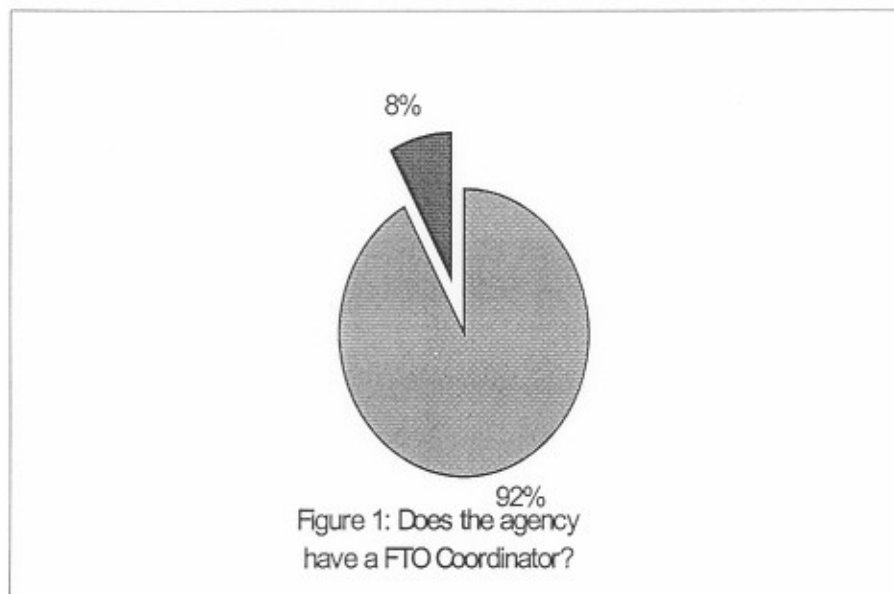
Texas. The demographics for cities ranged between 80,000 and 1million. The response rate was thirty seven percent. The demographics for counties ranged between 241,000 and 3.2 million. The response rate was fifty percent. Questionnaires were also emailed to selected metroplex agencies. The demographics ranged between 25,000 and 85,000. The selection was based on previous contacts with the FTO Coordinators. The response rate was one hundred percent.

The information obtained will analyze the following:

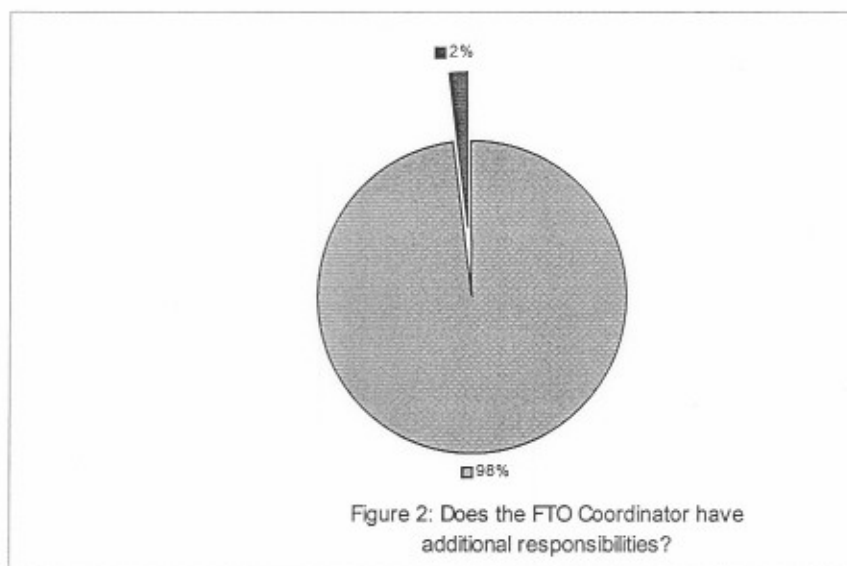
1. Does the agency provide the minimum amount of Training for FTOs to be “certified” (40 hours)?
2. Does the agency have an FTO coordinator?
3. Does the FTO Coordinator have additional responsibilities?
4. Is the agency’s FTO Program based on the San Jose Model?
5. Has the agency had any problems using standardized training guidelines?
6. Are Standardized Task Instructions possible?
7. Should the main focus of a FTO program be standardized training or the overall quality of the program?
8. How long is an agency’s recruit field training?

Findings

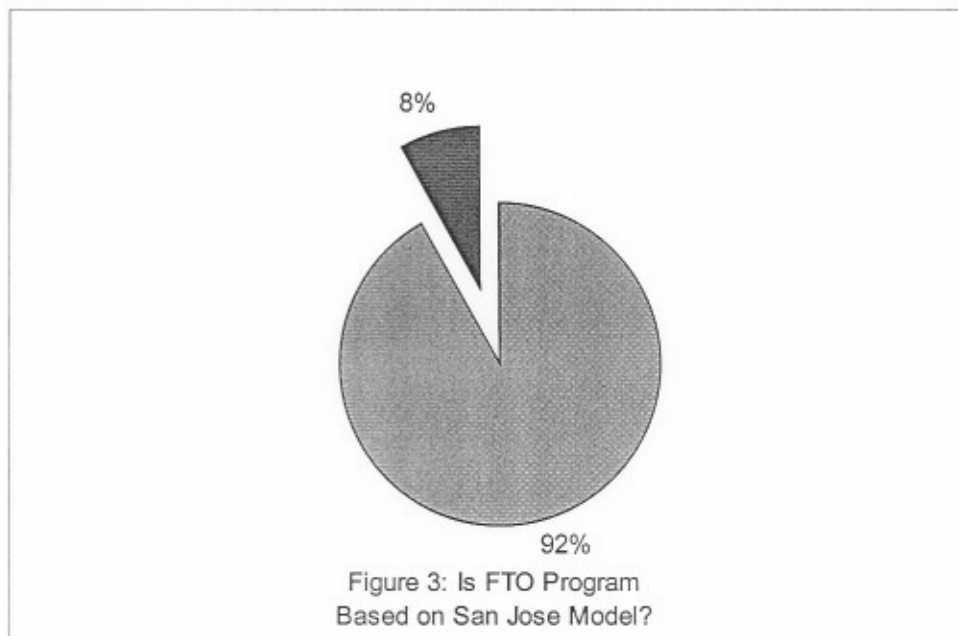
Ninety-two percent (92%) of the responding agencies have a full time FTO Coordinator. The majority of these coordinators reviews Daily Observation Reports and is responsible for the day to day operations of the FTO Program. The coordinator tries to ensure standardized guidelines are being followed, monitor grading of the guidelines by FTOs, and track the progression of the recruits (see fig 1).



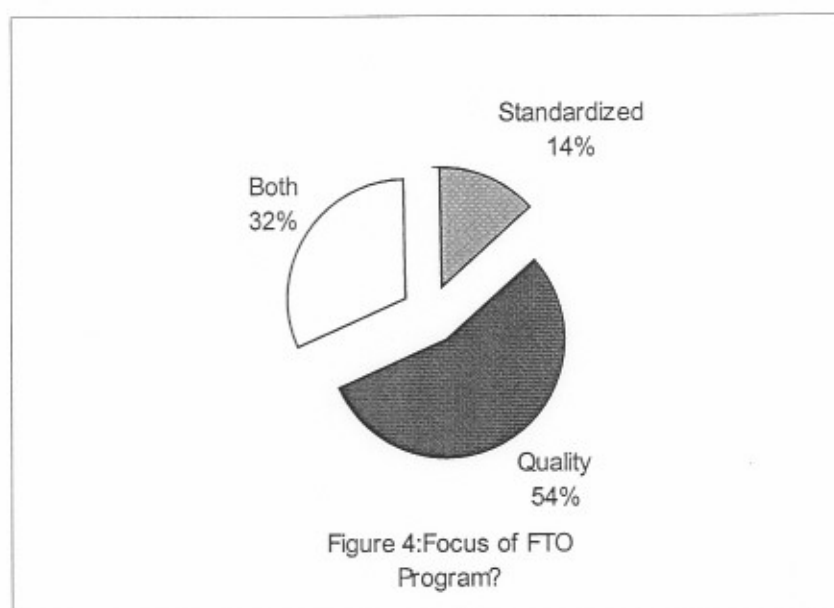
Ninety-eight percent (98%) of the surveyed Field Training Coordinators have additional responsibilities. Some were Division or Watch Commanders; others were tactical commanders, patrol sergeants, departmental in-service training officers, grant coordinators, and finally a computer system technician. In all probability, these departments have little or no chance of implementing Standardized Task Instructions, unless they allow the only focus of the FTO Coordinator to be the FTO Program (see fig. 2).



It is apparent the San Jose Model has had a major impact on recruit field training. Ninety-two percent (92%) of the agencies surveyed still use San Jose as the model for their FTO Program. The eight-percent (8%) of agencies surveyed that did not use the San Jose Model did not have an established FTO Program (see fig. 3).

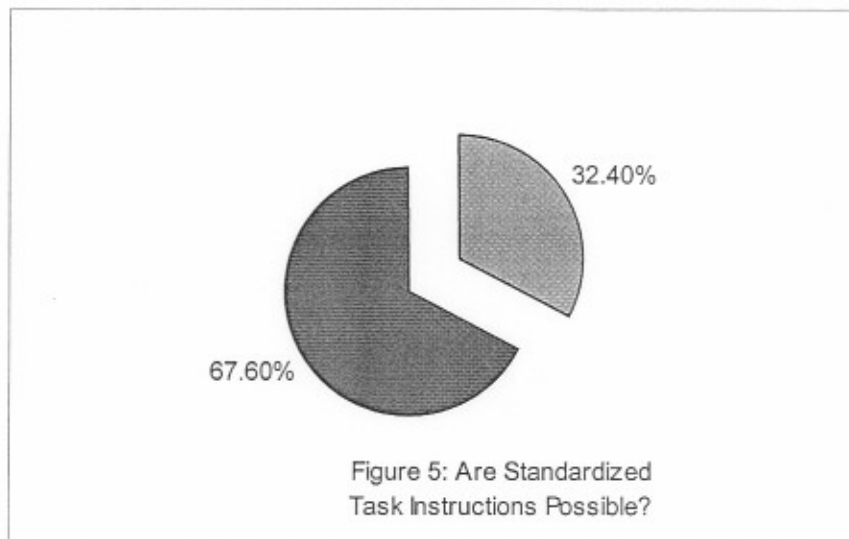


Agencies are using standardized training guidelines and are finding them to be effective. These agencies also believe in flexibility and innovation to be used in training. Only fourteen-percent (14%) of the respondents placed standardization as the main focus of their FTO program. Fifty-four percent (54%) believed that the overall quality of the program was most important. Quality allows for innovation and meaningful training. However, quality is not measurable. Survey response indicates that a program should be a combination of standardized guidelines and quality. The standardized guidelines would ensure that all recruits receive are receiving the same type of training. Quality would ensure the best possible FTOs are conducting the training. Standardized task instructions would ensure neither. These instructions would mandate how to train and provide FTOs dictating instructions (see fig. 4).



A little over-thirty four percent (32.4%) of the respondents reported that standardized task instructions were possible. However, all (100%) of these respondents reported either the quality of the program was more important than complete standardization, the concept is unrealistic, not all FTOs will train the same way, or some tasks can be trained the same way but

not all. The respondents seemed to take into account the “human factor”. Most in law enforcement have a tendency to be pragmatic and resistant to change. Standardized Task Instructions would create massive changes in FTO Programs and may cause dissention among FTOs and management (see fig. 5).



Discussion/Conclusions

Innovative thinking has been a key component to developing standardized training guidelines, field training coordinators, and field training sergeants to report and monitor the progress of recruits. The Grand Prairie Police Department, in the spirit of innovative thinking, is considering the implementation of standardized task instructions for recruit officers. This concept will train recruits the same tasks in the same manner. The concept, if implemented, will not allow any deviation by the FTO while training recruits and may stifle his/her creativity. It will demand a set of written instructions for all training tasks. The expected benefit of standardized task instructions is the complete standardization of the field officer training program.

The purpose of this research project is to examine the feasibility and/or possibility of standardized task instructions for recruit officers and the overall benefit it may have over the Department's current FTO program and FTO programs of other state and municipal law enforcement agencies. This project will answer the question: Are standardized instructions of all tasks possible?

It is hypothesized that standardized task instructions will not be feasible. The concept of one training method for every task is unreasonable, may cause increased liability, and stifles creativity. The objective of any field training officer program is to produce officers who are well trained. These officers must be able to react in an appropriate manner in any given situation. They must be able to adapt to ever changing situations.

The findings of this research project, and subsequent conclusions did support the hypothesis concerning Standardized Task Instructions. They are not feasible for FTO Programs.

The complete standardization may be detrimental to the learning process of the recruit and the creativity of the FTO.

The FTO must have the combined skills of an experienced police officer and a patient teacher/coach. He must be a leader and a "role model" not only for the recruit but his peers as well. The FTO's job is particularly difficult because he will be required to supervise the recruit, but temper his supervisory role with empathy for the new employee. Motivation and innovation are two other character traits that the FTO should possess and pass on to the recruit (Field Training Officer Manual, Dallas Police Department, 2-6).

The lack of research materials supporting standardized task instructions hindered the balance of the research project. It was also discovered that many respondents mistook standardized task instructions for standardized guidelines. Those responding in the questionnaire that asked for clarification quickly changed their answers. It is believed the data concerning implementation of standardized task instructions may be flawed.

In conclusion, this research project can be summed up in the following: Standardized task instructions would not work in patrol tasks. How do you write instructions for a family disturbance, traffic stop, shoplifter, juvenile disturbance, or operating a patrol vehicle on a code 3 run? It is not possible. Every situation is different and every recruit is different. Some excel in some areas but need work in others. Why spend needless time trying to make a robot? I will follow the guidelines but let me train my recruit to be flexible and able to think on his feet, he got enough training at the academy on how to do, now it is time for show (conversation with FTO, does not want name published).

This project has reviewed historical information pertaining to the establishment of the modern day FTO program. It has examined the use of standardized guidelines, standardized

training, and illustrated the Grand Prairie Police Department Field Training Program, which can be implemented in other law enforcement agencies. This project will also show the benefits of FTO creativity in training environments and provide statistical data on FTO programs. In conclusion, this research will save thousands of man-hours in the quest for standardized task instructions.

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Appendix 1

To Field Training Officer Coordinator:

I am conducting a survey on Standardized Field Training Officer Programs. This information will be used for an Administrative Research Paper for the Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas. Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. I will share the results with your agency upon request.

INSTRUCTIONS: The survey starts on the next page. When you go to the next page the cursor will automatically be in the proper place for you to type your response. After you type your response to a question use the tab key to move to the next response. Once you have finished the survey please e-mail it back to me.

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Respectfully,

Lieutenant Larry D. Simmons
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801 Conover Drive
Grand Prairie, Texas 75051
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1. What is the name and population of your jurisdiction?
2. How many Field Training Officers do you have at your agency?
3. Do Field Training Officers attend FTO training prior to training recruits?
4. If yes, what is the length of their training in hours?
5. Does your agency have a FTO Coordinator?
6. If yes, does he/she have additional duties other than FTO Coordinator?
7. Does your agency have a written FTO Policy?
8. Does your agency use written standardized guidelines to grade police recruits?
9. Has your agency documented any problems with using standardized guidelines?
10. If you answer to number 9 was yes, please explain.
11. Do you believe that standardized task instructions can occur within a FTO Program i.e., written instructions for FTOs to train all tasks the same way?

12. If yes to number 11, please explain.

13. Should the main focus of a FTO Program be standardized training or the overall quality of the training?

14. Please explain your answer to number 13.

15. How many officers are employed at your agency?

16. How long is your recruit field-training program in weeks?

Thank you for taking time out of your schedule to complete this survey.