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Factors That Contribute To Success In Policing Based On Prior Military Experience

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POLICING BASED ON PRIOR MILITARY EXPERIENCE

By

Thomas Fagan

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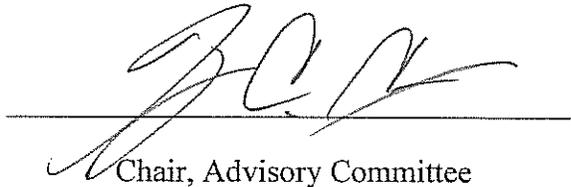
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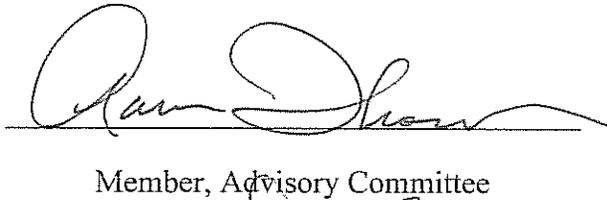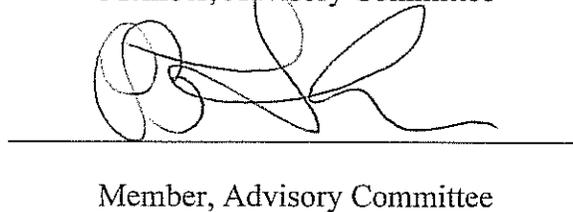
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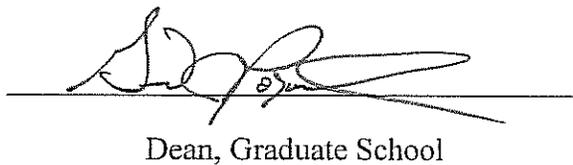
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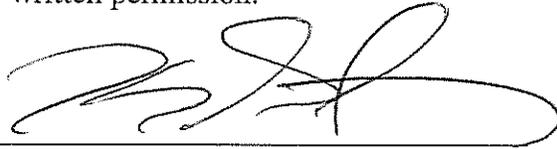
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FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESS IN

POLICING BASED ON PRIOR MILITARY EXPERIENCE

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Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Dr. Aaron Thompson

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABSTRACT

This research attempted to determine whether current law enforcement officers with military experience felt that they were more prepared for their jobs in the agency than officers without military experience. Law enforcement officers from two police departments were selected to take a survey based on their military backgrounds. This survey was completed and the results were reviewed.

It was concluded that law enforcement officers with military experience felt that they were more prepared for the job and had an edge over other officers with no background in the military. In addition, officers with combat experience also felt that they had an edge over other officers and viewed their jobs as life vs. death as a result of these experiences.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

It is often believed that military experience provides the perfect background for a future in law enforcement. The Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program in the U.S. Department of Justice offers a program titled Vets to Cops. The purpose of the program is to support military veterans in their entrance into law enforcement. Discoverpolicing.org, the official job board of the International Association of Police Chiefs, states "Military service can be a perfect entrance into a law enforcement career" (discoverpolicing.org, 2013). Further, Discoverpolicing.org identifies specific characteristics that result in military veterans making good police officers. These include: firearm experience, discipline, responsibility, integrity, effectively working in teams or alone, sense of service and commitment, problem solving skills, attention to detail, and experience in dealing with difficult situations (discoverpolicing.org, 2013). In order to assist veterans in deciding whether to pursue a career in law enforcement, COPS offers advice such as viewing entrance into law enforcement as further service to the community, suggesting that like the military, law enforcement will challenge the potential of the veteran, and that the opportunity for advancement in a career that is ever evolving is a selling point (COPS, 2012). In preparing and conducting research about a future career in law enforcement, COPS notes that a high school diploma or GED is the minimum educational requirement with many law enforcement agencies requiring a college degree; however, they point out that many agencies may offer credit for military experience and that the potential candidate should be prepared to provide a copy and explain their military transcript (COPS, 2012). In 2012, the COPS Hiring Program made

$111 million available to law enforcement agencies that hire or rehire career law

enforcement officers in order to enhance public safety through community policing.

Agencies who receive grant funding from the 2012 CHP are required to hire a new

officer who is a post 9/11 military veteran (COPS, 2012). Thus, the hiring of a veteran

could be considered a win-win situation for both the vet and the hiring agency.

Hypothesis

The researcher worked from the hypothesis that law enforcement officers with

military experience believe they are better prepared for their work and job duties.

Research Questions

The research attempted to address the following question:

1. Do law enforcement officers with military experience feel they are more

   prepared for their job duties?

2. Does combat experience better prepare officers for work in law enforcement?

Significance of the Research

It is widely accepted that individuals with military experience will make good

future law enforcement officers due to the nature of military work and the organizational

structure of law enforcement agencies. National organizations such as COPS encourage

law enforcement agencies to recruit military veterans and offer incentives for hiring

them. IACP (2009) does express concern that training academies does not adequately

address the needs of military veterans. A survey conducted by IACP (2009) found that

law enforcement officers with military experience responded they had the ability to

respond at an appropriate level when threatened as a result of their combat experience. They also claimed they had a higher tolerance to stress and improved leadership skills as a result of their deployments (IACP, 2009). However, leaders in law enforcement agencies who responded to the survey conducted by IACP noted that returning veterans had an array of psychological issues (IACP, 2009). The current research will allow officers within a law enforcement agency to reflect on their military and combat experience and whether these have had an impact on their ability to perform their job duties.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recruitment of Veterans in Policing

Dwayne Orrick, Chief of Police in Roswell, Georgia, wrote an article title Recruiting During the Economic Downturn for The Police Chief magazine. The goal of the article was to offer advice in recruiting and retaining good police officers noting that during an economic downturn, law enforcement agencies need recruits that often have the same skills every employer desires: leadership, integrity, oral and written communication skills, and problem solving and conflict resolution skills (Orrick, 2012). Orrick (2012) suggests that a source for quality candidates is those with military experience and notes that annually more than 200,000 service members complete a tour of duty and forty five percent of them are under the age of 25. Orrick (2012) further states that people with a background in the military have been instructed in leadership skills, teamwork, are used to working in a structured environment, and that experience in high-stress combat deployments has given them the ability to prioritize and multitask. Ledford (2006), Tan (2006), Tsimekles (2006), and Watts (1981) found paramilitary organizations such as police agencies prefer recruits with military experience due to their experience in handling weapons and their exposure to the constraints of military life.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) partnered with Applied Research Associates, Inc., Klein Associates Division (ARA/KAD) to discuss the issues surrounding combat vets employment as new officers or returning to positions previously held before deployment. The IACP (2009) suggests that veterans have a unique set of

skills that make them desirable for police agencies: physical abilities/conditioning, training in firearms, leadership, experience in combat, respect for authority and discipline, and experience in working with diverse groups.

Risks Associated with Employing Combat Veterans in Policing

Although IACP and ARA/KAD note the strengths that combat veterans can offer, they also voice concern that academy or in-service training for law enforcement officers does not adequately address the needs of returning combat vets (IACP, 2009). They note that the way in which veterans respond to enemy threats based on heightened reactions developed in combat are not addressed thoroughly in training, thus new officers are not shown how to control such reactions to be at an appropriate level in the police environment (IACP, 2009). Further, IACP (2009) notes the high incidence of PTSD among combat vets other behavioral issues that are common among combat vets such as attendance and frequent use of sick leave, struggling with passing fitness-for-duty tests, inappropriate use of force, and incidents of domestic violence.

The Influence of Military Structure on Law Enforcement

It is common practice for law enforcement agencies to incorporate aspects of military structure into their organizational design and policies and procedures. Auten (1981) offered specific examples of this including centralized command structures, rank structures, roll calls, uniforms, routine inspections, and a militaristic style of basic training utilized for new recruits. As a result of these practices, it is widely regarded that individuals with military experience possess traits favorable to policing (Baker, 2008; Gershon, 1999; Miller, 2007; Puryear, 2004; Tsimekles, 2006). This favorability in

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hiring former military personnel into policing has led to the development of programs such as Vets to Cops by the COPS program.

The Effects of Military Experience on Job Performance in Policing

A study conducted by White (2008) sought to determine how to predict performance of recruits within the academy. He noted that although police departments often seek recruits with military experience based on the attributes shared by the two fields, the militarization of policing had been criticized by several scholars and was found to be incompatible with current directions in policing such as community policing (White, 2008). No empirical evidence exists that suggests military experience makes a better officer and White's (2008) findings came to the same conclusion. Military experience had no effect on performance in the academy (White, 2008).

Patterson (2002) conducted a study of a mid-size urban police department and concluded that officers with military experience had the same number of negative work events and the same amount of stress as officers with no military experience. Ivie and Garland (2010) conducted a study to determine if military experience affected how officers reacted to job stress and burnout. Ivie and Garland (2010) concluded that stress from demanding job duties such as using deadly force and arresting violent suspects affected police officers with a military background less significantly than those with no military experience. However, Ivie and Garland (2010) found that negative exposures had an influence on burnout for all police officers, regardless of military experience. In another hypothesis in the study, Ivie and Garland (2010) proposed that experience in policing would have a negative effect on stress and burnout for officers with no military

experience but no influence on those who did. They concluded this hypothesis was

incorrect and that police experience did not affect stress or burnout for either group (Ivie

& Garland, 2010). This result caused Ivie and Garland (2010) to suggest that training

within the academy effectively prepares future officers for the paramilitary model used in

policing.

The IACP (2009) conducted a survey of veteran officers and law enforcement

leaders. Participants in the study noted the positive traits veteran officers bring to the law

enforcement environment which included those previously mentioned: firearms, physical

conditioning, discipline, critical incident response, leadership, training, and tactical

operations (IACP, 2009). The survey found that combat experience served as a guide in

how veteran officers responded to life-threatening, stressful situations. Veteran officers

suggested their ability to react at an appropriate level when threatened was as a direct

result of the combat situations they were exposed to in theater (IACP, 2009). In this

study, veteran officers claimed a higher tolerance level to stress. IACP (2009) notes that

although these responses can be simulated in a training environment, real life incidents

are required to determine the response of officers. Of the veteran officers who responded

to the study, a full ninety-nine percent stated they saw an improvement in their leadership

skills. Factors contributing to this improvement included difficult assignments, making

critical decisions, and having an enhanced sense of military discipline (IACP, 2009).

In the survey conducted by IACP (2009), leaders within law enforcement

agencies did not note changes in behavior when veteran officers returned from

deployment with the exception of psychological issues (28 percent of leaders). Leaders

offered several positives concerning the veteran officers who returned from deployment including:

- a greater appreciation for life after being in life-threatening situations,

- an ability to respond faster without detailed explanation to calls,

- more maturity and advanced in areas listed within the survey than non-veterans, and

- a sensitivity and awareness of their surroundings, particularly people (IACP, 2009).

On the opposite side, leaders noted several behavioral changes that were negative in nature post deployment. These included:

- an emotional toll that resulted in instability in one's personal life,

- a return to the civilian world that they are not prepared for,

- exaggerated survival instincts and offer suffering from PTSD,

- less tolerance for other officers with less experience and training, especially in critical incidents,

- increased civilian complaints concerning an officer, and

- paranoia at some degree, in all likelihood related to a heightened alertness and loss of sleep during combat (IACP, 2009).

The Occurrence of PTSD in Law Enforcement

The nature of police work makes it a naturally stressful job which can often result in physical and psychological issues (e.g., cardiovascular problems, depression, anxiety,

PTSD; Berg, Hem, Lau, & Ekeberg, 2006). Police officers are often exposed to violence and threats of harm. The exposure to such threats on a reoccurring basis can establish a foundation of mental health issues, including PTSD. Previous exposure to trauma, destructive life events, and occupational stress can increase the chances of experiencing PTSD symptoms (Maguen et al., 2009). The percentage of police officers who have experienced PTSD varies between 7 percent and 19 percent (Carlier, Lamberts, & Gersons, 1997; Gersons, 1989; Maia et al., 2007; Robinson, Sigman, & Wilson, 1997). Partial PTSD, defined as having symptoms of PTSD that are harmful but fail to meet all the criteria required for a PTSD diagnosis (American Psychiatric Association, 2000), may require the same level of care as those diagnosed with PTSD (Carlier & Gersons, 1995). Up to 34 percent of police officers exposed to trauma have been diagnosed with partial PTSD (Carlier, Lamberts, & Gersons, 1997).

Impact of PTSD on Job Performance

Researchers have found that exposure to combat increases the likelihood that a veteran will report a work-related disability or be unemployed (MacLean, 2010; Martz, Bodner, & Livneh, 2010; Prigerson, Maciejewski, & Rosenheck, 2002; Savoca & Rosenheck, 2000). Specifically, MacLean (2010) found that veterans of combat had a higher probability than non-combat veterans to be disabled and unemployed in their mid-20s and continue to be so during their work life.

Substance Abuse Among Military Personnel

Illicit drug use among active-duty military members decreased dramatically between 1980 (28%) and 1998 (3%) (Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2010).

Although rates for illicit drug use remain low overall drug use has increased substantially within the last few years and is attributed to the misuse of prescription drugs, specifically pain medications (Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2010). In a survey conducted by the Department of Defense in 2008, they found that one in eight active-duty service members (11.9%) reported using drugs within the last 30 days (Department of Defense, 2009). The National Institute of Drug Abuse states exposure to combat is strongly related to substance abuse (Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2010). In one study, twenty-five percent of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans reported symptoms of a mental health disorder and one in six reported symptoms of PTSD. Each of these is associated with substance abuse and dependence among veterans (Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2010). The Department of Defense Survey of Health Related Behaviors among Active Duty Military Personnel (HRBS) conducted in 2008 surveyed respondents on their usage of alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes (Bray et al., 2010). The HRBS survey found the following trends in heavy alcohol usage (defined as having five or more drinks on the same occasion at least once a week within the past 30 days): it remained relatively stable between 1988 and 1998 but increased significantly between 1998 (15%) and 2008 (20%) (Bray et al., 2010). The HRBS survey found that illicit drug use declined significantly between 1980 (28%) to 2002 (3%) and remained at low levels (Bray et al., 2010). The HRBS survey found that prescription drug misuse was on the rise (4% in 2005; 11% in 2008); however due to changes in wording within the questionnaire it was not determinable whether there were true increases in prescription drug misuse and how much was related to variations within the surveys conducted in 2005 and 2008 (Bray et al., 2010).

Tobacco Use Among Military Personnel

A survey conducted in 2007 found that 36.2 percent of individuals aged 18 – 25 years in the United States had smoked cigarettes within the past 30 days. In addition to this percentage, 11.8 percent of individuals smoked cigars, 5.3 percent used smokeless tobacco, and 1.2 percent smoked pipe tobacco (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2008). Cigarette smoking among military personnel has decreased sharply in the last twenty years, however 31 percent of active duty personnel reported having smoked within the past 30 days in 2008 (Bray et al., 2010). As with the general population, smoking among military personnel is more prevalent among younger individuals, those who have less education, and those who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Bondurant & Wedge, 2009; Bray & Hourani, 2007). Olmsted et al. (2011) confirmed the frequency of tobacco usage and the previously stated demographic trends in a study conducted in 2008 of all active duty personnel. Individuals who participated in the survey aged 17 – 20 had smoked within the past 30 days at a rate of 40.6 percent; those aged 21 – 25 responded positively to cigarette use at a rate of 40.4 percent; those aged 26 – 34 used cigarettes at a rate of 31.9 percent; those aged 35 and older responded they had used cigarettes within the past 30 days at a rate of 17.5 percent (Olmsted et al., 2011). The same study found that educational attainment had a significant impact on cigarette smoking: those with a high school education or less responded as smoking within the past 30 days at a rate of 45.5 percent while those with a college degree responded positively to cigarette use at a rate of 12 percent (Olmsted et al., 2011). Olmsted et al. (2011) also found that pay grade affected the usage of cigarettes with those in the E1 – E3 pay range smoking within the past 30 days at a rate

of 43 percent while those in the O4 – O10 pay range responded positively to cigarette

smoking at a rate of 5.7 percent. Although cigarette smoking was the most common form

of tobacco use among active duty personnel, Olmsted et al. (2011) also questioned

respondents about smokeless tobacco and cigar usage. Usages of these types of tobacco

followed the same patterns, those younger and with less education were more likely to

use (Olmsted et al., 2011). Historically, the culture of the military has not only accepted

tobacco use but encouraged its use (Bray et al., 2010). In the study conducted by

Olmsted et al. (2011), they found that Marine Corps personnel were the most likely to

have smoked cigarettes within the past 30 days while Air Force personnel were the least

likely to do so.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine if officers with military experience and/or combat experience felt that these experiences better prepared them for the job of a law enforcement officer. To accomplish this, a survey (see Appendix A) was distributed to officers that consisted of demographic questions and ten questions utilizing a scaled response and open-ended questions.

Research Questions

The research attempted to address the following question:

1. Do law enforcement officers with military experience feel they are more prepared for their job duties?
2. Does combat experience better prepare officers for work in law enforcement?

Research Design

This research employed mainly a quantitative research design. However participants could add specific comments that would enhance their numerical answer. Quantitative research, unlike qualitative research, tends to study phenomena from a distance rather than becoming acutely involved and studying the problem through observations and interviews (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Rather, quantitative research takes a distant approach to the research and utilizes tools such as survey questionnaires (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005) which is the instrument used in this current study. Quantitative researchers typically simplify the phenomena being studied into several variables with

the assumption that other variables are constant (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The research design, according to Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1996) is "a description of the procedures to be followed" (p.116) for answering research questions.

The current study utilized a two-phase, sequential explanatory mixed methods design to collect and analyze data that will assist law enforcement officials and criminal justice professionals in hiring, preparing and have ongoing professional development for veterans who enter the profession. The mixed methods design allows the researcher to combine the strengths of quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry while simultaneously compensating for the known weaknesses of each approach (Punch, 1998).

Sample

The sample consisted of thirty-nine sworn police officers located in a mid-size Southern city and a smaller Southern city. All participants were military veterans and working for a law enforcement agency. The purposive sampling type of criterion (Patton, 2002) was utilized in this research by way of selecting specific individuals with backgrounds in the military who work in law enforcement.

Procedure and Instrumentation

An IRB proposal was approved by the university and meetings were held in advance of the survey distribution with the police chief and military liaison of the police agencies used in the study to discuss procedures. Data obtained from the survey was entered into PASW (SPSS 18) for analysis. The study looked at the relationship between military experience and perceived job preparation of law enforcement officers. A coding system was developed to enter the data into SPSS software (e.g. male = 1, female = 2).

After data was entered, the researcher ran descriptive statistics, crosstabs, and statistical tests. The qualitative responses are listed verbatim.

Data Collection

The survey and letter of consent were distributed by the Chief of Police of a suburban police department to eleven law enforcement officers within their agency. A military liaison of a second urban police department distributed the documents to twenty-eight officers within their agency. Each of these individuals distributed surveys to a specific population of law enforcement officers with military backgrounds. Thus, a response rate of 100 percent was gained by using this method. A confidential envelope was provided for survey participants to enclose the completed survey. A black box with a slit cut into the top was also provided for the envelopes to be inserted into. This procedure was followed by both police agencies.

The survey (see Appendix A) consisting of demographic items and ten questions was provided to a sample of combat veterans who are employed by two law enforcement agencies. The survey asked respondents about their level of combat engagement and whether that engagement had a positive or negative effect on their personal and professional life. In addition, the survey questioned whether military experience assisted in preparing officers for work in the field of law enforcement, if combat experience provides an edge to officers, if military experience made officers better leaders, if military experience allows officers to be better at conflict resolution, and if military experience makes officers better problem solvers. The researcher provided the Chief of Police of one law enforcement agency and the combat veteran liaison (each of whom

provided the sample population) within the law enforcement agencies with the surveys for distribution to combat vet officers. The researcher requested that each respondent place their survey within a sealed envelope to be returned to the researcher to ensure anonymity. The data provided by survey respondents was grouped into categories of age, gender, ethnicity, branch of service, and combat vs. non-combat experience. This assisted in determining whether certain groups of law enforcement officers view their military experience differently than others.

Definition of Terms

Combat: active fighting in a war (Merriam Webster Dictionary, n.d.)

Military: of or relating to soldiers, arms, or war (Merriam Webster Dictionary, n.d.)

Non-Combat: a member of the armed forces whose duties does not include fighting (Merriam Webster Dictionary, n.d.)

Non-Sworn Personnel: generally support personnel (Public Safety Career Information Center, 2012)

Sworn Personnel: generally individuals who have received academy training, carry a badge and ID identifying them as sworn peace officers, typically armed (Public Safety Career Center, 2012)

Veteran: a former member of the armed forces (Merriam Webster Dictionary, n.d.)

Limitations and Key Assumptions

The research will be limited to one police department, thus data gleaned from the survey population will be purported to the law enforcement agencies which provided the sample, and the data may not be valid for other law enforcement types or agencies. The researcher assumes that law enforcement officers who receive the survey will respond truthfully to the questions provided given that it is an anonymous survey. Another limitation was that the sample was not a simple random sample but a non-random sample. Although enough of the population was selected as a sample to warrant valid generalizations, the validity of the findings can only be purported to that particular police department.

Chapter IV

DATA ANALYSIS

The Police Organizations and Community

The suburban police agency involved in this study consists of 61 sworn police officers (including two school resource officers), one non-sworn public safety officer, three non-sworn park security officers, and one parking enforcement officer. The police department serves approximately 31,000 citizens. The urban police agency involved in this study consists of 570 sworn personnel and more than 150 civilian personnel and serves approximately 270,000 citizens.

Demographic Data

Of the thirty-nine respondents (N=39) to the survey, thirty-eight of them answered all of the questions on the survey. One respondent did not answer the marital status question in the demographic section of the survey. Thirty-seven of the respondents were male; two were female. The majority of respondents were Caucasian ethnicity (31) while six were African American, one was Hispanic, and one responded as other. The age of survey respondents varied fairly evenly between the age groups of 20 – 29 years (11), 30 – 39 years (17), and 40 – 49 years (9). Two respondents were in the 50 – 59 years age group. More than half of the respondents were married (61.5%) (N=24) while 13 were single and one was separated/divorced. The respondents were a variety of ranks within their departments, however the majority (82.1%) were patrol officers (N=32). Of the remaining respondents, three were sergeants, two were lieutenants, one was a commander, and one was a chief. Nearly half of the population sample (46.2%) had a

bachelor's degree and an additional 38.4 percent had some college hours or an associates degree. Table 1 demonstrates the branches of military represented by survey respondents with the majority of participants with experience in the Army (43.6%):

Table 1

Branch of Military of Respondents

Branch	N	%
Air Force	5	12.8
Army	17	43.6
Marine Corps	14	35.9
National Guard	3	7.7

Alcohol and Tobacco Use Among Respondents

The majority of respondents (74.4%) reported that they had not used tobacco within the past 30 days. Thus, 25.6 percent of respondents stated they had used tobacco. This number is similar to the findings of Bray et al. (2010) which found that 31 percent of active duty military personnel reported having smoked within the past 30 days.

Over a third of respondents (33.3%) reported using alcohol 1 – 2 times per week. An additional 30.8 percent responded they used alcohol 3 – 4 times per week or more frequently. Table 2 represents the frequency of alcohol use by respondents:

Table 2

Alcohol Usage of Respondents

Usage Rate	N	%
5 or more times per week	6	15.4
3 – 4 times per week	6	15.4
2 – 3 times per week	7	17.9
1 – 2 times per week	13	33.3
None	7	17.9

Research Question One

The first question to be addressed through this study was "Do law enforcement officers with military experience feel they are more prepared for their job duties?" Question six of the survey stated "My military service assisted in preparing me for my work in the field of law enforcement." Respondents were asked to select a response from 1 – 10 where one equals strongly disagree and 10 equals strongly agree. The average of respondents totaled 8.25, thus they agreed fairly strongly that military experience prepared them for their job duties. Individual responses to the "How or why?" portion of this question indicated a wide range of perceived preparation in many areas including but not limited to discipline, world experience, cultural development, work ethic, initiative,

structure, time management, stress management, ability to multi-task, and teamwork. Individual responses included the following:

> I served in the military police corps during my tour of duty. The training received and the work experience proved very valuable in preparing me for civilian law enforcement. The military discipline and structure was further beneficial in working in civilian law enforcement which is a paramilitary operation.

"Both fields have some stressful environments and require critical thinking skills. My military experience provided me with the skills to be effective in these situations in my law enforcement career."

Question eight of the survey stated "Military experience has made me a better leader within my organization." Respondents were asked to select a response from 1 – 10 where one equals strongly disagree and 10 equals strongly agree. The average of respondents totaled 8.02, thus they felt that their military experience made them better leaders fairly strongly. Individual responses to the "How or why?" portion of this question tended to be the same with most stating that they were able to be leaders and practice leadership. Individual responses included the following:

"I take a lot more initiative and know how to lead due to my military experience."

> Absolutely. I've been put in charge of people and multi million dollars' worth of equipment at a young age. I've been around some of the best leadership in the world that I don't get to see now as a civilian law enforcement officer.

However, one respondent noted the following:

"Military experience doesn't necessarily make you a better leader. However, it does make you knowledgeable on the benefits of being both a leader and a follower and the significance of them both."

Question nine of the survey stated "Military experience allows me to resolve conflict in a manner that officers with no military experience cannot." Respondents were asked to select a response from 1 – 10 where one equals strongly disagree and 10 equals strongly agree. The average of respondents totaled 6.76, thus they felt that their military experience allowed them to resolve conflict better than those with no military experience but were not completely decisive as they were in the question dealing with leadership. Individual responses to the "How or why?" portion of this question included the ability to handle stressful situations and problem solve. Individual responses included the following:

"People without military experience are not exposed to the same situations and do not have to make quick, sound decisions until they get in this job."

"I don't know that it allows me to resolve conflict in a manner that those without military experience could not accomplish – that's a broad statement. But it certainly gave me some basic experience in conflict resolution to build on."

"I feel military experience gives me the ability to see a problem and quickly find a solution. Many different things can lead to this same outlook other than just military experience though."

Question ten of the survey stated "Military experience makes me a better problem solver." Respondents were asked to select a response from 1 – 10 where one equals strongly disagree and 10 equals strongly agree. The average of respondents totaled 7.76, thus they felt that their military experience allowed them to problem solve better than those with no military experience in a fairly decisive manner. Individual responses to the "How or why?" portion of this question included many of the same themes included in previous questions including stress management, real world experience, critical thinking, and training specific to problem solving in this instance. Individual responses included the following:

"I see and handle problems different than other officers on my shift. I think outside the box and look at the big picture instead of having tunnel vision."

> I would not say that it's solely because of the military but it does help. I think it depends on the person's ability to problem solve. I'd say the combat experience helped with quick decision making and the ability to adapt.

However, respondents also noted the following:

> The military (depending on career) trains you to be a problem solver. And this becomes beneficial in the civilian world. Nevertheless, any other life experiences could produce the same result. In the end, it's the individual that matters most and not any particular stereotypical skill set.

"I don't think military experience gives me an edge in this category unless dealing with other veterans."

Research Question Two

The second research question to be addressed through this study was "Does combat experience better prepare officers for work in law enforcement?" A demographic item in the survey asked respondents to list in which theater their combat took place. Six respondents did not answer this question. Of those who did, a large percentage of respondents did not have combat experience (43.6%); however 33.3 percent had combat experience in Afghanistan or Iraq. Question one of the survey asked respondents to rate their level of combat engagement with 1 = not at all and 10 = extensive. The average of this question by respondents was 3.69 further demonstrating a large percentage of respondents did not have any combat experience. Questions two, three, four, and five of the survey asked respondents to rate the negative and positive effects of combat on their personal and professional lives using the same ten point scale (1 = not at all, 10 = extensive). The average of respondents totaled 3.2 concerning negative effects of combat on their personal lives and 2.17 concerning negative effects of combat on their professional lives. The average of respondents totaled 3.32 concerning positive effects of combat on their personal lives and 4.03 concerning positive effects of combat on their professional lives. Question seven of the survey stated "My combat experience (if applicable) gives me an edge over other officers in performing job duties in the field of law enforcement" and directly addresses this. Respondents were asked to select a response from 1 – 10 where one equals strongly disagree and 10 equals strongly agree. The average response to this question was 5.8333, thus respondents didn't strongly disagree with this statement but also didn't strongly agree that combat experience gave them an edge. Qualitative responses to the follow up question of "How or why?"

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mentioned several factors with crisis management and stress management being specific themes. In addition, the following responses specifically addressed the training they received and how it assisted in giving them an edge:

> My military training gave me real life training and experience. Nothing you can receive from a college classroom. I'd rather work with a vet any day of the week than some liberal educated college kid who thinks they know it all.

"The training in which I endured better prepared me mentally and physically."

A cross tabulation ran on combat vs. non-combat respondents and their belief that military experience assisted in preparing them for their job in law enforcement showed that both groups strongly agreed having military experience better prepared them for their jobs. As an example, 50 percent of those with combat experience and 50 percent of those with no combat experience each selected 9 on the scale of 1 = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree. Further, 41.2 percent of those with combat experience and 58.8 percent of those with no combat experience each selected 10 on the same scale.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research study addressed whether law enforcement officers felt that military experience better prepared them for their jobs and whether combat experience better prepared them for their jobs. Based on the survey responses, it is clear that officers believe military experience gave them an edge in performing their job duties.

The first question to be addressed through this study was "Do law enforcement officers with military experience feel they are more prepared for their job duties?" Based on the responses provided by survey respondents, it is clear that they felt that prior military experience prepared them for their job duties. Several of them felt not only prepared but thought they had an edge over other officers. Specific responses included:

> Most of the other recruits and me seemed to be more mature than the other applicants. I seem to handle stressful situations better than non-military officers. I feel I have more experience dealing with different ethnic groups and have a better understanding of their needs.

"I am military police and the tactics and training put me in the right mindset. I am very well prepared ahead of others in my class."

"Since law enforcement agencies are primarily paramilitary organizations, I was more prepared to enter the field of law enforcement."

The second research question to be addressed through this study was "Does combat experience better prepare officers for work in law enforcement?" A number of these officers did not have combat experience, thus this question did not rate as decisively as the questions regarding military experience. Of those who did have combat experience, they seemed to indicate in qualitative responses that they had an edge and further explained why. Examples of these responses include:

"I was ready for the academy. The games they play are really nothing compared to what we do in the military."

"I know how I am going to act in life/death situations."

Already being in high stress live or die incidents gives me an edge. Also when we receive shots fired calls, I do not panic. If I am the one hearing the shots I know to listen, how many shots, what kind of weapons, hand guns, rifles, etc.

"I know how bad things can go from routine to very bad from experience."

Thus, those with combat experience clearly define it as life vs. death and relate the experiences in combat and law enforcement on those terms. Officers without combat experience do not have these comparisons available to them.

Although respondents did not indicate that combat had an extensive negative effect in their personal and professional lives, the average score of respondents for each (3.2 vs. 2.17) indicates that they felt it impacted their personal lives more negatively than their professional lives. In addition, respondents felt that the positive effects of combat

experience were greater in their professional lives (4.03) than in their personal lives (3.32).

Respondents who served in the military were in a variety of branches. Those who served in the Air Force felt more prepared for a job in law enforcement than other branches of service. Of the five respondents who served in the Air Force, one selected 8 and four selected 10 on the scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree. Respondents who served in the Army, Marines, and National Guard were far more split in their selections and ranged fairly equally in the number of respondents selecting one, three, five, and seven on the same scale.

Additional Findings

Concerning the use of tobacco, cross tabulation results indicated that as the level of education increased, the use of tobacco decreased. This is consistent with the findings of Rae et al. (2011) which found that those with a high school education or less responded as smoking within the past 30 days at a rate of 45.5 percent while those with a college degree responded positively to cigarette use at a rate of 12 percent. Of the respondents within each branch of service for this survey, all three of the National Guard respondents noted they had not used tobacco while 20% of Air Force respondents answered positively to tobacco use, 23.5% of Army respondents answered positively to tobacco use, and 35.7% of Marines answered positively to tobacco use.

Further Research

This study can be replicated by using this instrument to survey a larger random sample of multiple departments. Further complex explanatory analysis can also be

performed to look deeper into the correlational or causal understanding of the relationship between prior military experience and law enforcement.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY

Survey

Demographic Information

Age: _____   **Gender**:   Male   _____

                                                                                      Female   _____

Race: Caucasian   _____   **Marital Status:**   Single   _____

African American   _____   Married   _____

Asian   _____   Separated/Divorced   _____

Hispanic   _____

Other   _____

Tobacco Use (use on a daily basis):   Yes_____   **If yes**: Cigarettes   __

                                                                                                    Smokeless ___

                                                                            No _____   Other   _____

Alcohol Use (per week):   None _____   3-4   _____

                                                1-2   _____   5 or more _____

                                                2-3   _____

Highest Level of   High School   _____

Education Completed: GED   _____

                                    Some College   _____

                                    If Some College, How Many Hours: _____

                                    Associates Degree   _____

Bachelors Degree _____

Masters Degree _____

Doctorate Degree _____

Status/Rank in Department: Patrol Officer _____

Sergeant _____

Lieutenant _____

Commander _____

Asst. Chief _____

Chief _____

Branch of Military Service: Air Force _____   **Military Service:**

Army _____   Combat _____

Coast Guard _____   Non-Combat _____

Marine Corps _____

National Guard _____

Navy _____

Combat Theater: N/A _____

Gulf War _____

Iraq _____

Afghanistan _____

Other _____

Please answer the following five questions based on a scale where 1 = not at all and 10

= extensive:

1.   Level of Combat Engagement:

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

2.   Did Combat have a Negative Effect in Your Personal Life?

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

3.   Did Combat Have a Positive Effect in Your Personal Life?

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

       Which Was Stronger?   Positive _____

                                 Negative _____

4.   Did Combat Have a Negative Effect in Your Professional Life?

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

5.   Did Combat Have a Positive Effect in Your Professional Life?

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

       Which Was Stronger? Positive _____

                                 Negative _____

Please answer the following five questions based on a scale where 1 = strongly disagree

and 10 = strongly agree:

6.   My military service assisted in preparing me for my work in the field of law

       enforcement.

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

       How or why?

7. My combat experience (if applicable) gives me an edge over other officers in

   performing job duties in the field of law enforcement.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

   How or why?

8. Military experience has made me a better leader within my organization.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

   How or why?

9. Military experience allows me to resolve conflict in a manner that officers with no

   military experience cannot.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

   How or why?

10. Military experience makes me a better problem solver.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

    How or Why?

VITA

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