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Exploratory Study of Factors Associated with Police Officer Turnover in Rural Police Departments

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EXPLORATORY STUDY OF FACTORS ASSOCIATED
WITH POLICE OFFICER TURNOVER IN
RURAL POLICE DEPARTMENTS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of Criminal Justice
and the
Faculty of the Graduate College
University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
University of Nebraska at Omaha

by
Thomas B. Miller

May 1981

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Accepted for the faculty of the Graduate College,
University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts, University
of Nebraska at Omaha.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Reason for the Study

The concept for this study arose as a result of a particular observation made by the researcher during the period of time from 1966 through 1976. During this time frame, the researcher had frequent contact with numerous small, rural police departments which generally varied in size from one to ten officers. As the months and years passed, it seemed as though the researcher was frequently being introduced to new officers who had replaced other officers at the respective departments while at the same time, the size of the departments remained relatively constant. Officials involved in the employment procedures almost always gave pay as the reason an officer had left the department.

Years of the above contacts and observations therefore raised a question regarding rural police departments in western Nebraska: If Police turnover is a problem in these departments, what factors might contribute to an officer's decision to leave the department?

An inquiry into this area seemed to have some importance because of statements made in a report in 1967, referring to the Task Force Report of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice wherein 420,000 people were indicated as working

for some 40,000 separate police agencies. One of the conclusions by this commission was that "each year an average of five percent of a police department's force leaves the police service."¹ The researcher assumed that "leaves" was synonymous with turnover and therefore the five percent figure did not appear to be of any great concern. This census of turnover could even be described as healthy inasmuch as it implied the figures included retirements, deaths, dismissals and lay-offs which provided for ridding the organization of undesirables and provided for a flow of new blood and fresh ideas and approaches for the department. On the other hand, it can be argued that frequently, officers who leave are not necessarily the ones that the agency wishes would leave.

As a result, too large a percentage of personnel turnover could become a real problem to any organization. This is vividly demonstrated by the fact that in 1972, turnover costs were estimated to have cost American industry eleven billion dollars.²

A previous study of private industry conducted in 1966 reported that it cost one large Montreal manufacturing plant approximately one thousand dollars to hire and train one clerical worker. These studies, therefore, would seem to indicate that there are sufficient reasons to believe that replacement costs would cause similar fiscal problems in police agencies.³

The five percent turnover rate as reported by the President's Commission seemed inconsistent with the researcher's observation and experiences when compared to rural police departments. Therefore, it seems logical to make some inquiry into turnover rates of small departments and if these turnover rates are higher, to explore what factors might be involved which contributed to this situation.

Definition of Terms

A brief explanation of some terms used in this research will be needed before proceeding further. TURNOVER is defined as the number of workers needed to replace those who left during a given period of time. The terms LEAVER(S) and FORMER are used synonymously and are used to reflect officers who left the employment of an agency. The words STAYER(S) and CURRENTS are also used synonymously and are defined as officers still employed by the organization.

Need for the Study

Police turnover rates nationally are sketchy and in many cases only estimates. According to responses received by the researcher from 34 of the 43 members of the National Association of State Directors of Law Enforcement Training, the indications point to a more serious problem than heretofore was acknowledged. In this regard, nine

associations reported varying rates of from fifteen percent to thirty-nine percent turnover; one state reported over 8,000 officers had left; while four state associations did not have turnover figures, but recognized that turnover was a problem in their respective states. Of the remaining respondents, only five state associations indicated turnover did not appear to be a problem.⁴

In more real terms, and specifically in Nebraska, the Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Center at Grand Island, Nebraska determined some information relative to turnover in this state. In January of 1972, the Training Center ascertained that the average personnel turnover for 1966, 1967, and 1968 reflected a yearly turnover percentage of slightly more than thirty-three percent. It should be noted this particular study included only two hundred ninety-two reporting agencies out of a total of six hundred twenty-seven known agencies in Nebraska; however, the study did not include Omaha, Lincoln, Douglas and Lancaster Counties, nor the Nebraska State Patrol.⁵

In January of 1976, the Training Center also determined the turnover rate for 1975 in the State of Nebraska and reported it to be approximately twenty-three percent. There was, however, no breakdown as to the types of reporting agencies that this figure represented.⁶

On March 24, 1978, the Training Center reported the

turnover rate for 1977 in second class police departments for the State of Nebraska was approximately thirty-six percent while the figure for villages was approximately twenty-eight percent.⁷

It should further be pointed out that as of October 31, 1976, ninety-three of Nebraska's one hundred thirteen municipal police departments consisted of nine officers or less, while eight departments ranged in size of ten to nineteen officers; ten departments ranged in size from twenty to forty officers, while Omaha and Lincoln police departments constituted the balance of agencies. These figures, therefore, reflect that one hundred and one or approximately eighty-nine percent of Nebraska's police departments are nineteen officers or less.⁸

Newspaper articles in the Omaha World Herald in March and August of 1978 reported there were problems of high turnover in police departments in Gordon and Ashland, Nebraska, while the McCook, Nebraska newspaper in December of 1978 further emphasized the problem of high turnover in their particular department. On March 10, 1979, the North Platte, Nebraska newspaper had the following headline: "High Police Turnover Rate Called Sign NP Needs to Hike Pay Rates."⁹

To further emphasize this problem, an examination of a representative number of police departments in the

six to eleven person size departments, as depicted in Table 1, indicates relative data regarding turnover rates for the six year period 1972 through 1977.

TABLE 1
Average Annual Turnover Rate for Thirteen
Departments, 1972-1977

<u>Department</u>	<u>Size (a)</u>	<u>Total No. Officers Leaving (b)</u>	<u>Retire- ments (b)</u>	<u>Average Annual Turnover Rate</u>	<u>Popula- tion (a)</u>
Broken Bow	9	12	3	23%	4,228
Chadron	9	14	1	24%	6,250
Cozad	6	5	0	20%	5,955
Crete	8	13	0	28%	5,600
Fairbury	8	2	0	4%	5,459
Kimball	6	5	0	14%	3,878
Lexington	8	13	1	28%	5,000
Nebraska City	11	12	2	19%	8,229
Ogallala	9	12	1	22%	5,730
O'Neill	6	10	0	28%	4,088
Wayne	7	9	2	21%	5,090
York	11	19	2	28%	8,500
		(126)	(12)		

Nebraska State Patrol (c) 3.3%

- (a) Size of department and populations levels based on figures from the Nebraska Uniform Crime Report-1976, pp. 68-71.
- (b) Officer departure figures obtained by the author through personal correspondence with heads of these agencies.
- (c) Major Fred Whalen, Nebraska State Patrol, March 10, 1978.

An examination of Table 1 reflects that the total number of officers who left the twelve police departments during

this six year period of time totaled one hundred twenty-six; however, it should be noted that only twelve of these can be attributed to retirement reasons. This, therefore, would seem to indicate that over ninety percent of the leavers left for reasons other than retirement. The turnover enigma is further dramatized when considering the twelve departments during the period 1972-1977 collectively averaged almost a twenty-two percent annual turnover rate.

The above figures, with the exception of the Fairbury Police Department, appear to be very high when compared with the Nebraska State Patrol during the same period of time, 1972-1977, which had only a 3.3 % turnover rate.¹⁰

A closer examination of three particular departments from the above table, namely Broken Bow, Lexington and Ogallala, reflects some interesting observations as shown in Table 2.

As can be seen by Table 2, the Broken Bow Police Department was a seven person department, except for 1975 and 1976 when it was a nine officer department, and during this six year period of time, 1972-1977, twelve officers left this department for voluntary reasons. This department had an annual turnover rate during the six year period of time of twenty-three percent; however, it should be noted that the turnover rate for the three year period,

TABLE 2

Percentage of Voluntary Departures From
Broken Bow, Lexington, and Ogallala

<u>Department</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Sworn Officers</u>	<u>No. of Officers Leaving</u>	<u>% Of Annual Turnover Rate</u>	<u>No. of Voluntary Departures</u>	<u>No. of Voluntary Departures</u>
Broken Bow	1972	7	0	0	0	0
	1973	7	0	0	0	0
	1974	7	0	0	0	0
	1975	9	7 (a)	78%	4	44%
	1976	9	3	33%	3	33%
	1977	7	2	29%	2	29%
	1978	7	4	57%	4	57%
Lexington	1972	8	1	13%	1	13%
	1973	8	2 (b)	25%	0	0
	1974	7	4	57%	4	57%
	1975	8	0	0	0	0
	1976	8	6	75%	6	75%
	1977	8	0	0	0	0
	1978	8	3	38%	3	38%
Ogallala	1972	8	1	12%	1	12%
	1973	8	1	12%	1	12%
	1974	9	0	0	0	0
	1975	9	1	11%	1	11%
	1976	9	4	44%	4	44%
	1977	9	5 (c)	55%	4	44%
	1978	9	2	22%	2	22%

- (a) Three officers left for involuntary reasons
 (b) Two officers left for involuntary reasons.
 (c) One officer left for involuntary reason.

1975-1977, reflects an annual turnover rate for that three year period of time of forty-eight percent.

Table 2 also reflects that the Lexington Department was an eight officer department for five of the six years with the exception that in one year it was a seven person department. During the period of time 1972-1977, it lost thirteen officers voluntarily, which figures out to be an average annual turnover rate of twenty-eight percent. This figure is somewhat reduced for the three year period 1975-1977 to twenty-five percent.

The Ogallala Police Department was an eight officer department for two years, 1972 and 1973, while for the remainder of the years, it was a nine person department. During the 1972-1977 period of time, this department lost twelve officers for voluntary reasons. This amounts to an average annual turnover rate of twenty-three percent; however, for the three year period of time, 1975-1977, the rate is somewhat higher with a turnover rate annually averaging thirty-seven percent.

It should be noted that all three of the above departments were approximately the same size during the six year period of time, 1972-1977, and while a total of thirty-seven officers left these departments, only four of those terminations can be directly attributed to retirement.

The figures presented so far indicate that rural

departments are experiencing high turnover rates in Nebraska, and the indications also seem to be that this situation may characterize rural areas in general throughout the United States. An acceptance that an unusually high turnover rate may, in fact, exist, then demands that an attempt be made to ascertain some of the factors that may be involved which cause or influence officers to leave rural departments. Little can be done to resolve any problem in this area if governing municipal bodies are either unaware of its existence or uninformed of possible factors which may be contributing to the problem.

Turnover Costs

When any officer leaves a department, there are certain costs involved in replacing this individual. Costs for personnel replacement will depend on the job, the education and training required for the performance of that job. In determining turnover costs, consideration should be given to both direct and indirect expenditures involved. Direct expenditures can be identified as want ads in newspaper advertisement, as well as any possible agency fees. Time is further expended in interviewing various candidates and administering tests. It is not unusual for departments to purchase tests to administer to candidates even though they may have prior police experience. Medical examinations are usually required and most often, the employing agency

must pay this fee which can be a substantial amount of money. Various types of candidate investigations are usually conducted and the more extensive the investigation, the greater the cost. Training is also a substantial cost factor inasmuch as the candidate must be trained either by the state or the employing agency or a combination of both.

In December, 1978, the McCook Police Department reported in a news article

the high turnover is very costly with an entire eight months of training estimated to cost about \$10,000. Included in this cost is some \$3,000 which the city must pay for the new officer to attend the Law Enforcement Center at Grand Island. Although the tuition is paid by the state, the city must pay the officer's salary and his traveling expenses.¹¹

In addition to the direct expenditures, indirect expenditures would likely include reduced efficiency; overtime pay for other employees in order to carry on their duties; and likely work disruption to some degree. It has been estimated by one authority that the minimum direct cost replacing a competent worker ranges from three hundred to seven hundred times the hourly pay rate for that position in private enterprise.¹²

Another variable should be mentioned here in addition to financial costs. An employee leaving any agency with an unfavorable attitude could influence the attitudes of others towards the employer unfavorably and this could result in additional turnover and related problems in

recruiting good employees. Police agencies, to be effective, need stability and without this factor, it is difficult to develop objectives, achieve goals, and obtain adequate budgets and implement and carry on necessary programs.

Nebraska Law LB 1346, which was passed by the Nebraska Legislature in 1969, required mandatory training for all law enforcement officers commencing January 1, 1972. The Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Center located at Grand Island, Nebraska, currently provides a mandatory seven week basic course to meet certification for officers. Presently, the average cost for the seven week basic course amounts to \$787.50 for each student which state government is obligated to pay. Each sending agency continues the salary of each officer who is sent to this basic school and, therefore, in order to determine the true cost for each officer sent to the Center for the seven week school, the cost must include the basic salary for each officer, which would then be added to the figure of \$787.50.¹³

It was difficult to specifically identify officer replacement cost with a small department without a personal interview of a departmental official. The difficulty arises as frequently, small departments have not been well organized, nor have they been required to report such cost-analysis data. In order to gain some insight into officer replacement cost, an interview was conducted with the Chiefs

of Police of Ogallala, Lexington, and Broken Bow, Nebraska, in 1979, which did reflect some basic, identifiable figures.

The Ogallala Chief conservatively estimated his department's direct minimum cost for a new uncertified officer on the department at slightly over \$3,500.¹⁴ The Chief noted that his department had lost two men in 1978, which represented a twenty-two percent turnover of officers that year. He estimated the replacement cost for two new officers at \$7,000, which he had not budgeted for in his current budget.

Lexington reported that it had a thirty-eight percent turnover rate in 1978 as it had lost three of its officers from its eight person department and these officers would have to be replaced. This department head calculated its direct officer replacement cost at approximately \$3,200 per officer.¹⁵

Broken Bow reported a fifty-seven percent turnover for 1978, which represented that four officers had left their seven person staff. Direct replacement cost for each new officer was estimated at approximately \$2,800 per person.¹⁶ The agency head pointed out this unexpectedly high turnover rate had cut into his budget severely.

Research at the three departments indicated by the above figures was pointed out as being only the very minimum costs and direct expenses. Each agency head stated that undoubtedly, the real cost of officer replacement

would probably be substantially higher if they were able to identify certain indirect expenses.

There are certain other considerations that should be mentioned in any discussion of turnover expenses. It would be difficult to measure the effects of high turnover rates on a department's morale, as well as the probability of a lower quality of work performance by those remaining, but these areas could be and probably are affected to some degree. Lower morale and poorer quality of work could lead possibly to internal control problems, which in turn could cause a strain among the remaining personnel and this possibly could lead to other problems in community service and contacts with citizens.

City governing boards may view low salary as a money savings, but it should be pointed out that repeated costs of advertising, testing, interviewing, equipping, and training new personnel due to constant turnover may, in fact, negate any such money savings.

Dissatisfied officers may look for positions which they perceive will permit them to act effectively while providing them with a feeling of belonging to a department and which acknowledges their efforts with some degree of recognition.

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CHAPTER II

RELATED LITERATURE

Influencing Factors

It has been previously mentioned that the President's Task Force Report in 1967 referred to a five percent turnover rate. It should be pointed out, however, that this report offered no real insight into the voluntary reasons that officers terminate with a department other than to mention retirement or death.

Extensive research for the present study failed to identify any known studies that had been conducted as to "why" officers terminate their employment with their respective departments which result in a high turnover rate. Therefore, it seemed incumbent, necessary, and prudent to initiate research in order to ascertain and identify possible factors or reasons which may influence officers who voluntarily terminate with their respective departments, especially in rural areas.

The Study of Turnover

The most complete book regarding the turnover problem in general has been written by Dr. James L. Price of the Department of Sociology at the University of Iowa.¹ His efforts represent the codifications of literature about organizational turnover. Dr. Price's study of the codification of turnover is extensive in nature of the

subject, however, his codification failed to identify any studies that had taken place on why police officers terminate their positions. On the other hand, his research does indicate the direction which might be taken for a study of police turnover.

University Professors

An inquiry was made of possible persons who might have knowledge of known studies as to why police officers leave their respective departments. No known studies were familiar to the following professors:

Rolland L. Soule, University of Louisville²;
Lawrence W. Sherman, State University of New York at Albany³; George L. Kirkham, Florida State University⁴;
Kenneth E. Christensen, Michigan State University⁵; James Q. Wilson, Harvard University⁶; Jack M. Weller, University of Kansas⁷; and John P. Kenney, California State University at Long Beach, California⁸.

On the other hand, research did reflect some previous studies which seem to be related to the present study.

In a 1967 article, Dr. Ruth J. Levy conducted a study on police failures. She stated there were over 1,760 cities in the United States with populations over 100,000 each and she estimated it costs \$10,000 to train a police officer in his first year of employment.⁹

Levy's study was concerned with an examination of

records and files of officers wherein she classified them as failures, non-failures, and currentts. The study sought to identify a set of traits and life history events which could be incorporated into a screening device for the selection of police officers. She defined her non-failure group as those officers who separated voluntarily from their departments and she identified the characteristics of these officers as follows:

1. The youngest at the time of employment;
2. Greater number of years of formal education
(13-3/4 years);
3. Non-failures had less prior police employment;
4. Non-failures had shortest period of residence
in the city of application; and
5. Non-failures had the lowest percentage of
applicants born in the city of application.

It should be pointed out that her study did not include any contact with the officers involved in her research.

Dr. Raymond H. C. Teske, Jr. did a study regarding factors related to police turnover in twenty-four Texas Police Departments having populations of 50,000 and over for the year 1973.¹⁰ He found the average turnover rate to be 10.45 percent. His research reported that eighty-three percent of those terminating left voluntarily or had been asked to resign. Nineteen of the twenty-four police

departments indicated that police turnover was a problem and twenty-one of the twenty-four reporting agencies stated that an officer was more likely to leave within the first five years.

Teske's study concluded that the higher the base pay, the lower the rate of turnover; and that the greater the population size of the city, the lower the turnover rate.

A study by Frank Mulholland of the New Mexico Law Enforcement Academy was conducted by him in order to ascertain the retention rate of academy graduates by the original sponsoring agency.¹¹ His study included 424 police academy graduates who had attended the academy from March of 1974 through December of 1975. He found a thirty-eight percent turnover rate of municipal police departments and he concluded two things:

1. Salary levels do have an effect on turnover;
2. The larger the size of the city population, the smaller the turnover rate (the implication being that a larger department has more advancement opportunities).

Reiss made a study of three large departments and found that fifty percent of the officers believed their promotional opportunities were good or excellent, while only twenty-four percent of those officers described their

opportunities as poor.¹² His study appears to strongly indicate there is a difference in promotional opportunity between large and small departments. It should be pointed out that Mulholland's study in 1976 reached the same conclusion regarding promotional opportunities.

Reiss's study also reflected considerable dissatisfaction by officers regarding their perception of their capacity to influence their superiors by suggestions about policies and procedures.¹³

A study reported by Marrow, which was conducted at the Goddard Space Flight Center, one of NASA's bases, suggests that consideration should be given regarding the importance of participation by employees. This study found that the characteristics of persons with high participation in decision making had high job satisfaction; good working relations with others; positive attitude towards their work; greater utilization of skills and abilities; high production; and low turnover.¹⁴ Marrow also reported other studies reflecting similar conclusions.

Research by Frenkle regarding job stress in twenty-three occupations wherein a sample of 2,010 men was taken, reflected findings which included some police officers. This study concluded that police officers were somewhat lower than the other twenty-two occupations in participation in decisions which affected them. This low participation

led to affective strains such as job dissatisfaction. In contrast, persons in this study who reported high participation in decision making also displayed high productivity, good working relations with others, good health, a positive attitude about work, high use of skills and abilities, and low turnover.¹⁵

Price concluded that successfully higher amounts of communication will probably produce successfully lower amounts of turnover.¹⁶

Summary

As described above, the available literature, as well as the previous studies conducted in police turnover, appear to be somewhat limited. There is, however, indication of some factors which may be related to turnover which may be applicable to the current study. The literature suggests some possible relationships such as: age, education, prior employment, residence, size of agency, population, pay, promotional opportunities, decision making opportunities, and the degree of inter-personal communication.

The known police turnover research conducted to date has been very limited and restricted to the extent of examining official departmental records; or eliciting responses from administrative officials of those departments through the use of questionnaires. No research was

found that attempted to obtain information from the officers themselves reflecting their point of view.

The present study has taken the approach of soliciting information from current as well as former police officers.

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CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Administrators in law enforcement have offered various reasons as to the causes of police personnel turnover. Death and retirement are self-explanatory factors just as departmental requests for resignations would be. On the other hand, ten years of frequent contact with police agency departmental heads has reflected that the most frequent and overwhelming reason cited for voluntary departures from a department has been pay or salary. There can be no doubt that pay is a serious consideration taken into consideration by any employee when taking a position. At the same time, however, it should be recognized that there may be other factors which influence a police officer's decision to leave a department. Undoubtedly, it would be difficult to clearly identify any one factor as being more important than another factor, but it seems important to recognize that police administrators may have placed too much emphasis on pay as the primary reason for officer termination.

Those who take the attitude that pay is the primary factor in a decision to leave an agency may have failed to recognize a number of other possible influencing factors.

Demographic characteristics may be related to this problem. It has been the researcher's experience that administrators have avoided the possibility that departmental supervision and management have any role to play in turnover. Officer perception of community attitude is another area which might be explored. The degree of promotional opportunity for officers should also be examined to ascertain if it has a possible role as it may relate to this problem.

Other factors which also seem feasible to take into consideration are education, age, and the number of other police employments which might be factors affecting turnover. Other areas that needed to be examined were possible family problems and pressures, as well as the possible role of any dissatisfaction with other segments of the criminal justice system which might influence an officer's decision to resign. Not to be overlooked was any possible relationship in the loss of job interest or disillusionment in law enforcement which could be related to this problem.

The researcher's experience has found that there has been a common assumption by many city and police administrators that a police officer terminates in order to take a higher paying position. Private conversation with officers who had terminated seemed to indicate that there were other reasons for the resignations than pay. It seems

logical to assume that administrators in city governments have pushed the higher pay concept over employee termination as it could logically be argued that there are only so many tax dollars to go around and there is a limits as to what the governing agencies can provide. It is also understandable that an administrator does not want to believe or possibly acknowledge that he is giving poor supervision, nor to admit that he has made a poor selection for a supervisor. It may also be possible that the local governing body does not want to admit that it has allowed unfavorable or poor working conditions to exist in the department for which they are ultimately responsible. Recognition should also be given to the fact that when a person leaves a particular department he may not want to provide the real reasons for his leaving inasmuch as the possibility exists that this person may want to return to that employment one day; or the person may perceive the need one day for the recommendation of a supervisor or administration in seeking other employment.

Famularo's research cites numerous reasons that an employee terminates his position which are exclusive of retirement and medical reasons and he has identified some of these reasons as follows: better opportunities elsewhere, continue education, unsatisfactory pay, poor working conditions, moving, interpersonal relationships, poor supervision,

unfair or unequal treatment, abilities not being challenged, and a desire for promotional opportunities.¹

Statement of the Problem

The discussion up to this point has led the researcher toward perception that turnover is a problem in a substantial number of small departments in Nebraska and quite possibly, this situation may be characteristic of numerous other rural areas in the United States. Giving support to this perception are the findings as related in 1978 by the National Manpower Survey which stated in part:

Personnel turnover rates have been much higher in small police departments and for sheriff's agencies than for large or medium sized police departments - generally reflecting the more favorable career opportunities and salary rates in the latter agencies. Voluntary resignation rates of officers in police departments with four hundred or more employees average less than four percent in Fiscal Year 1974 as compared with eight percent for all sworn officers and sixteen percent for deputy sheriffs.²

Though it seems apparent that some departments have been able to identify the number of officers terminating and have even acknowledged that turnover is a problem, it does not appear that these departments have attempted to explore possible factors associated with personnel turnover and especially in small departments. Therefore, for purposes of this study, we will be investigating possible factors associated with voluntary police turnover in rural police departments.

Research into this area would seem to be of vital concern and importance, especially taking into consideration the fact that nationally the total criminal justice direct expenditure on the local level in 1972 was \$7,287,000,000 and by 1977, this figure had increased a phenomenal seventy-eight percent to almost \$13,000,000,000.³

Significance of the Study

Identification of possible factors relating to high turnover through this exploratory study might possibly lead to the following benefits:

- Reduction in the loss of trained personnel
which represents a substantial investment;
- Reduction in turnover;
- Reduction in absenteeism;
- Increase in productivity;
- Increase in protective behavior;
- Increase in creative suggestions;
- More efficient use of the tax dollars; and
- Greater success in the fight against crime.

Only through determining potential factors which relate to police officer termination does it seem logical that high turnover rate can be reduced to an acceptable level.

Conceptual Framework

What are possible factors influencing officer's decisions to leave? The researcher attempted to identify through the use of a questionnaire what possible factors might have influenced or caused an officer to leave a

department. The proposition that pay by itself was not the dominant or primary factor that influenced an officer's decision to voluntarily terminate with a department would appear to have prime consideration. It is believed that there were other factors such as promotional opportunities, community attitude, management, supervision, interpersonal relationships, family pressure, as well as officer background, that are related to an officer's decision to leave a rural department.

It has generally been assumed that when a person takes an occupational position, they are aware of the salary and fringe benefits and such limitations. The officer, on the other hand, may not be aware of other factors which may be associated either with the department and/or the position. Therefore, for the reasons cited above, the researcher does not believe pay is the primary motivating factor in police turnover.

Population

In an attempt to identify some factors of why officers leave a particular department, three departments, Broken Bow, Lexington, and Ogallala, were selected for the purposes of this exploratory study. These particular departments were selected inasmuch as their population is approximately the same; they are located in central Nebraska; and

they are rural and agricultural in nature. In addition, each of these cities has a main industry, and also provides service for the agricultural area. Each of the departments has had about the same number of officers during the six year period of time, 1972-1977. It should further be noted that they tend to belong to a group of similar sized departments common to much of a large part of Nebraska which is rural and agricultural in nature.

More specifically, Broken Bow is fifty miles north of Lexington, Nebraska, while Lexington and Ogallala both are located adjacent to Interstate 80 and are approximately 110 miles apart. A further comparison reflects that the 1976 estimate of income per household for residents of Custer County, in which Broken Bow is located, was \$13,728, while the same figures representative for Dawson County, in which Lexington is located, was \$13,753. The figure for Keith County, in which Ogallala is located, reflects an estimated income per household of \$16,051.

Procedure

The Chiefs of Police of each of these cities cited a high turnover problem in their respective agencies and agreed to cooperate in this research. It was further noted that each department had lost almost the identical number of officers, approximately twelve each, during the six year period of time. The former officers were identified and

their last known places of residence were obtained. Letters were sent to each of them, asking for their assistance and cooperation regarding this study. (See Appendix A)

A similar letter was also sent to current officers of the respective departments, seeking similar cooperation.

Responses were received from a large number of the former, as well as current officers, from the three departments wherein they indicated their willingness to take part in the study. The officers were then requested to answer a questionnaire (See Appendix B) which consisted of twenty-five questions having multiple choice answers.

The questionnaire was designed to ascertain three major areas of information:

1. Officer background
2. Officer attitude about the officer's position
3. Possible reasons or factors for leaving

In addition to the questionnaire administered to former officers, the same questionnaire was administered to all the officers currently employed on the respective departments.

In a few instances it was found that a few of the officers had left not only the State of Nebraska, but several were in the military service and serving overseas. It was necessary to forward the questionnaire to some of the former officers who had left Nebraska, as well as those

who were in the military service, and to some officers who had moved too far to make personal contact feasible. Whenever possible, the researcher traveled to the cities where former officers resided and presented the questionnaire in person for completion by the officer at his convenience. The questionnaire was personally administered by the researcher to current officers.

Combined response from both groups of officers, which was twenty-eight of thirty-one former and eighteen of eighteen currents, totaled approximately ninety percent.

As previously noted, this study focused on voluntary turnover and did not include those officers who had left for retirement, death, dismissal, or lay-off reasons. The study was limited in this regard inasmuch as (as depicted in Tables 1 and 2), the turnover problem seems to lie with officers who voluntarily leave a department as opposed to the minuscule number who leave for involuntary reasons such as retirement, death, illness, lay-off, or dismissal. The researcher believed that a more general type inquiry appeared more appropriate at this point than a more extensive, detailed solicitation of information.

Treatment of the Data

The completed questionnaires with their responses were then placed in various tables in order to reflect the responses from each group, current and former officers.

The responses for each question were then reflected in percentages in order to indicate the respective responses of each group. The researcher then pointed out certain indications which appeared to be possible factors relating to this problem. Where similar responses from both groups appeared, this indication was noted; and, where there appeared to be differences in the responses from each group, these dissimilarities were pointed out.

TABLE 3

Questionnaire Administered to Current and
Former Officers During the Period 5/2/79 - 6/12/79

<u>Department</u>	<u>No. of Currents</u>	<u>No. of Currents Responding</u>	<u>No. of Former Officers</u>	<u>No. of Former Officers Responding</u>	<u>% of Response</u>
Broken Bow	5(a)	5	9	6	67%
Lexington	6(b)	6	11	11	100%
Ogallala	<u>7(c)</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>100%</u>
Totals	18	18(100%)	31	28	90%

- a. Understaffed by two officers
- b. Understaffed by one officer
- c. Understaffed by one officer

The Sample

As previously described, the sample on which this study was based were the responses obtained from administering a questionnaire to current, as well as former officers of the three police departments of the three cities. It should be noted that a 100 percent response was received from the

eighteen officers currently employed by the three respective departments as depicted in Table 3.

There were thirty-one officers who voluntarily left the three departments during the period of 1972 through 1977 and responses were received to the questionnaire from twenty-eight of these former officers as reflected on Table 3. This reflects a ninety percent response by this group.

The questionnaire was administered to both groups of officers during the period of May 2, 1979, through June 12, 1979. Lending some evidence to the turnover problem, the researcher points out that during the period of time that the questionnaire was administered to the two groups of officers, Broken Bow was understaffed by two officers while Lexington and Ogallala were each understaffed by one officer. All three departments were in the process of attempting to obtain replacement for officers who had voluntarily terminated their employment with these departments.

At the same time that the questionnaire was furnished to each of the officers participating in the study, an answer sheet was also furnished to each of them which had an accompanying self-addressed envelope addressed to the researcher. The officers of each group were specifically requested and instructed not to identify their answer sheet in any way which would indicate their personal identity. This was done in order to solicit as candid a

response as possible to the questionnaire and, as such, to assure them of their confidentiality.

The answer sheet did ask for the officer to check a box regarding information if he was a current or a former officer, as well as to identify which of the three departments the officer had been associated with.

The researcher felt that background information of each officer might indicate possible relationships to the problem. It also seemed officer perception of their experiences might reflect some indications relative to this study.

It seems important to note that one hundred percent of the current officers and ninety percent of the former officers participated in answering the questionnaire. Due to the fact that responses were obtained from both groups, the opportunity was then presented to note any similarities or dissimilarities of answers by each group. Such comparisons may suggest areas for further research.

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CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF OFFICER BACKGROUND DATA

Analysis

The researcher has attempted to identify some of the characteristics of officers in this chapter in order to ascertain if any of the background information would suggest some insight into the turnover problem. The characterization has been drawn from the responses selected by the former and current officers. Some comparisons of similarities as well as dissimilarities have been indicated. Tables have been set forth in order to reflect the percentage of the responses by the participants of the study.

Age

Table 4 reflects that only eighteen percent of the former officers were under thirty years of age, while eighty-two percent were over thirty years of age. A large number

TABLE 4 ***

Ages of Former and Current Officers

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
Less than 25 years old	0%	28%
25 to 29	18%	22%
30 to 35	32%	11%
36 to 40	11%	22%
Over 41	39%	17%

of former officers, thirty-nine percent, were over forty-one years of age, while a second large group, thirty-two percent, were in the thirty-thirty-five age bracket.

*** All column totals in tables may not always add up to 100% due to rounding.

Further analysis of Table 4 reflects that fifty percent of the former officers were over thirty-six years of age, while only thirty-seven percent of the current officers fell into this same age bracket. Fifty percent of the current officers were under age thirty, with the largest number of them, twenty-eight percent, being under twenty-five years of age.

Taking into consideration the research time involved in the course of this study, the above age groups for former officers indicates a difference when compared with the findings of others. The large number of older aged officers, who were found to have left their departments in this study, seems to be in contrast with Levy's conclusion in her research. Levy found, as stated earlier, that officers who voluntarily separated from their department were youngest at time of appointment.¹ Levy was not the only one to reach this conclusion. Teske's study seemed to imply a similar conclusion when he reported that an officer was more likely to leave within the first five years of employment.²

These findings are further supported by Price's research wherein he concluded that younger members of an organization usually have higher rates of turnover than older members.³

The age of separation differences found in the current study as opposed to research by Levy, Teske, and Price,

would seem to suggest that further research is needed in this area. It may be a coincidence that numerous older officers separated from the three departments under study, but on the other hand, future research might reflect that this fact is more common than uncommon in rural departments.

Marital Status

While eighty-nine percent of the former officers were married, over ninety-four percent of the current officers were found to be married. Table 5 reflects that none of the current officers were divorced or widowed, and there were no single officers.

TABLE 5

Marital Status of Former and Current Officers

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
Single	4%	0
Married	89%	94%
Separated	4%	6%
Divorced	4%	0
Widowed	0	0

These figures reflect that former, as well as current, officers have approximately the same high marital status. This finding tends to contrast with increased information from much larger and metropolitan departments that divorce among their officers is much higher. This fact suggests that further research might well be directed towards

ascertaining why rural officers have substantially lower divorce rates than those officers in larger departments.

Education

Current research found that sixty-eight percent of the former and sixty-seven percent of the current officers had some college education as depicted in Table 6.

TABLE 6

Education Level of Officers

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
Less than a high school Diploma	7%	6%
High School Diploma (GED)	25%	28%
Some College	50%	61%
Two Year College Degree	18%	0
Four Year College Degree	0	6%

The above findings reflected in this table tend to correspond with the educational attainment as reported by the National Manpower Survey, which reported that the proportion of sworn personnel with some college went from twenty percent in 1960 to thirty percent in 1970 and to forty-six percent in 1974.⁴

Levy's study, which was based on personnel files of California police officers, tends to reinforce the above educational figures. Her research found that officers that stayed on the job had the least education; those who left voluntarily had the greatest amount of education; and that there was a consistent and definite trend for the

length of police service to go down with increased education.⁵

Weller's collection of information from large police departments regarding their organization in 1974, though it did not specifically emphasize the turnover rate did indicate to him and his associates that departments which were emphasizing professionalization through encouragement of training and educational attainment for their officers had somewhat higher rates of turnover.⁶

Montana made a similar observation of officers in that state, wherein it reported that officers who increased their level of education resulted in an increased turnover rate.⁷

The National Manpower Survey, which was conducted during the period of 1974-77, also reflected similar findings. This study reported that with the increase of the educational level of officers, especially in states with large, rural populations, it became more difficult for small departments to compete with larger departments in recruiting officers.⁸

On the other hand, one study by Mulholland regarding police agency retention of academy graduates from the New Mexico Law Enforcement Academy Basic Recruit Programs for the period of June, 1971, through October, 1973, revealed that police officers with some college and/or degree, as compared to high school graduates, were departing their

respective departments at almost the same rate, forty-nine percent, as opposed to forty-seven percent.⁹

The current study would seem to suggest that future research should be undertaken in order to ascertain what specific role education may or may not play in officer turnover.

Place of Origin

Responses of officers concerning their native region offer some interesting observations. Table 7 reflects that both groups tend to come overwhelmingly from rural and/or agricultural environments. Forty-three percent of the former, and fifty percent of the current officers were native to their cities of employment, while fifty percent of the former and thirty-nine percent of the current came from either another small city or a farm or ranch.

TABLE 7

Place of Origin Prior to Police Employment at Respective City

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
Broken Bow (or Lexington or Ogallala)	43%	50%
Metropolitan Area	4%	0
Another State	4%	11%
Farm or Ranch	7%	17%
Another Small City	43%	22%

The above statistics seem to indicate that small departments appear to attract officers from similar type backgrounds, namely native, small town, rural persons. This

information raises the question which suggests that research should be undertaken to ascertain if rural departments could significantly reduce turnover through employing persons from much larger communities as well as metropolitan areas.

Mulholland's study in 1976 reflected that police academy graduates from the New Mexico Law Enforcement Basic Recruit Program for the period March, 1974-December, 1975, for communities of less than 2,000 in population, had a greater turnover rate when compared to cities of 28,000 or more.¹⁰ Teske's study of twenty-four Texas police agencies drew him to a similar conclusion that the greater the population size, the lower the rate of turnover.¹¹

Mulholland's and Teske's conclusions suggest that research might be undertaken to ascertain the place of origin of officers in large departments in order to compare these statistics with those found in the present study. This type of comparison might suggest if there is a positive or negative relationship between place of origin and turnover in the different sized departments.

Recruitment into Law Enforcement

A large number of officers from both groups indicated they became officers because they had always wanted to be a police officer. Fifty-four percent of the former and fifty percent of the current officers stated this was true, which is depicted in Table 8.

TABLE 8

Describe Your Recruitment Into Law Enforcement

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
One of my Relatives was in Police Work	21%	17%
I Always Wanted to be a Police Officer	54%	50%
Most Attractive Job Available	11%	16%
It was the Only Job Available	0	0
Excitement of the Job	14%	17%

A number of officers, twenty-one percent, as well as current officers, seventeen percent, responded to having a relative in police work. The above responses, along with the other responses shown in Table 8, would seem to suggest that research should be conducted in order to ascertain what possible pre-conceived concepts an applicant has in making application for the position of a police officer. This research would tend to reflect if applicants have a realistic or unrealistic idea of the policeman's role in society.

The present findings seem to indicate that former and current officers were essentially recruited into law enforcement for similar reasons.

The Most Important Thing the Officer Does

An examination of Table 9 reflects that sixty-four percent of the former and fifty percent of the current officers believed their most important function was to provide service to the community and this response is followed by the second most important response, which is helping people.

TABLE 9

Most Important Function of the Police Officer

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
Provide Service to the Community	64%	50%
Find Job Satisfaction	4%	0
Arrest Law Violators	0	5%
Help People	18%	28%
Enforce the Laws	14%	17%

The large number of responses in these two areas seem interesting in that these responses tend to indicate that both groups of officers were very interested in providing service and helping people. On the other hand, only a small number of each group felt their most important function was to enforce the law. This would seem to raise the question for future research in order to ascertain if this attitude of service and assistance is consistent with the perception of what these officers actually are doing or have done in their role as police officers.

Perhaps some explanation of the answers given in this aspect of the study might be related to research reported by Tetan and Minderman. They wrote about stress of police officers and reported that the main reason for choosing law enforcement as a career usually fell into one or a combination of groups: help and protect the people, pursue the criminal, become "somebody," and need a job. These two researchers concluded that many new officers enter their new careers with preconceived concepts, but in a relatively short

period of time, the work-a-day world reflects something quite different than what they had anticipated. They described the situation appropriately:

In many instances he may be ill-prepared to deal with shock of a fickle public that demands law and order and then condemns enforcement; that applauds action taken one day and is outraged by a similar activity the next; that hires him to protect them and then instead of assisting him in his duties, watches him continuously for indications that he may become too efficient, that he may begin to, in some way, restrict their activities. Instead of acceptance, he receives ostracism; instead of gaining status, he may be treated as a scape-goat; instead of receiving recognition, he may only be tolerated with guarded suspicions.¹²

The above discussion suggests that research should be oriented in this area in order to ascertain if police officers are entering the profession with misconceptions of what the officer's role is in our society. It should be determined if the officer is entering the police ranks with the motives of need to gain status, recognition, and acceptance.

Unless the officer is able to reconcile the realities of the job and his preconceived notions of it, trouble may develop. The officer may become less able to cope with his or her environment and may come to realize he may not achieve his goals. Should this attitude continue, the officer may then begin to question the need for his past services and sacrifices to the community. Ultimately, if this is true, some officers may terminate their employment

as they believe the only solution to their dilemma is to get out of the department.

Inasmuch as the responses of former and current officers tend to parallel one another, as shown in Table 9, it would seem to raise the question if this information might be an indicator reflecting that current officers will terminate in similar percentages.

Relatives in Law Enforcement

Fifty percent of the current officers and thirty-nine percent of the former officers had numerous relatives in law enforcement before they entered the profession. There is insufficient data at this point whether to conclude having more officers recruited from police families will influence officers to stay. Though research is suggested in this area, it would not seem to be significant that this fact really has much influence on the ultimate decision to stay or leave, especially when taking into consideration the large percentage, thirty-nine percent, of former officers who also had relatives in the profession.

Number of Non-Law Enforcement Jobs

Another similarity of former and current officers that was found is the number of full time non-law enforcement positions both groups had before becoming officers. As Table 10 shows, eighty-nine percent of the former officers and eighty-eight percent of the current officers

had four or fewer jobs before entering the police ranks. Sixty-four percent of the former officers had only one or two jobs, but it should be noted also that a high number of current officers, forty-four percent, had only one or two jobs.

TABLE 10

Percentage of Those Holding Full Time
Non-Law Enforcement Jobs Before
Becoming a Police Officer

<u>Number of Jobs</u>	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
1-2	64%	44%
3-4	25%	44%
5-6	0	11%
7-8	11%	0
9-10	0	0

At the same time, it should be noted that eleven percent of the former officers had seven or eight full time jobs previously to the time they became a police officer, while it should be noted that none of the currents had this many positions. This would seem to suggest that further research could possibly ascertain if having substantial numbers of previous non-law enforcement positions is an indicator of greater job mobility which might possibly result in a predictable turnover in subsequent job positions.

Some indication of this can perhaps be found in one study. Levy found in her 1967 study that officers who had a history of greatest job mobility before police employment were the officers most likely to end their careers as failures.¹³ The difference in Levy's sample and the current

sample is that she studied officers in large population centers, while the current study took place in rural and sparsely populated areas.

The above discussion would seem to indicate that further research is needed in this area in order to ascertain any correlation between this type of employment and turnover.

Total Years of Law Enforcement Experience

An unusual finding regarding total years of experience of the former officers was the length of service when they terminated. As shown in Table 11, thirty-six percent of the former officers had ten years or more of service when they departed and this figure is substantially higher, sixty-eight percent, when taking into consideration the number of officers who had five years or more of service. On the other hand, only twenty-two percent of the current officers had ten years or more of service, though it should be noted that fifty percent of the current officers had five years or more of service.

TABLE 11

Total Length of Police Service

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
Less Than Two Years	0	22%
2 to 4 years	32%	28%
5 to 7 years	18%	11%
7 to 9 years	14%	17%
Ten Years or More	36%	22%

The fact that a large number of former officers tended to have long lengths of service when terminating seems to be in contrast to research conducted by others.

Price reported strong support which reflected that employees with low lengths of service usually had higher rates of turnover than members with high lengths of service.¹⁴ Teske's research found that departments having populations of 50,000 or more reported officers were most likely to terminate within the first five years, but it should be pointed out that departments he studied were large and their turnover rate was only slightly over ten percent.¹⁵

Length of service raises several questions in the present study. What are the factors which so strongly affect officers of long years of service which may cause them to terminate? When officers reach a certain stage of their career, do they view the department's retirement plan or other aspects of the job as totally inadequate?

The above findings strongly suggest that greater research needs to be done in this area, especially when it appears that so many experienced officers terminate.

Number of Law Enforcement Jobs

A plurality of the former officers, thirty-six percent, had worked for three departments, however, forty-six percent had worked for only one or two as reflected in Table 12.

The majority of the current officers, fifty-six percent, had worked for only one agency.

TABLE 12

Number of Law Enforcement Agencies
Officers Have Worked For

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
One	21%	56%
Two	25%	17%
Three	36%	11%
Four	11%	11%
Five or More	7%	5%

In comparing the number of non-law enforcement jobs held as opposed to the number of police agencies that former officers had worked for, it appears that these officers displayed a greater job mobility when it came to police work. That is, in the private sector, only thirty-six percent of the former officers held three or more non-law enforcement jobs. Yet in their police careers, fifty-four percent of the former officers had served three or more departments. This would seem to indicate that rural officers show a greater tendency to change police departments as opposed to whether or not they had been employed in the private sector.

The fact that fifty-four percent of the former officers had worked for three or more departments also raises the question why do officers change from one department to another.

Summary

A summary of the above discussion would seem to indicate a general characterization of the participants in this study. Former officers tend to be somewhat older than current officers, while the vast majority of both groups are married; the majority of both groups appear to have about the same educational background, including some college; both groups tend to come from the same type of rural setting; most of the participants entered police work with very similar motives and concepts; and they generally held the same number of non-law enforcement jobs.

On the other hand, former officers had considerably longer lengths of service than currents and former officers tended to have been employed in almost twice as many departments as currents.

Participants responses in this chapter would seem to indicate that little is known about what factors may or may not be important in a police applicant's background; however, the available facts strongly suggest that research should be directed towards this end. It would seem evident that much more should be known about the police personnel selection process, in order to ascertain if this information would be pertinent to police turnover.

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CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON OF DATA CONCERNING POLICE EXPERIENCE

Introduction

While the previous chapter dealt with officer background information, this chapter is devoted to analyzing officer response regarding their apparent attitudes and perceptions based upon their respective experience in the various departments.

Supervision and Management

Almost one-third of the former officers described the quality of supervision and management as poor, while another twenty-one percent described it as only fair. Only twenty-eight percent described this particular characteristic as good or very good. As shown in Table 13, corresponding responses were noted by current officers.

TABLE 13

Description of the Quality of Supervision in the Department

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
Very good	7%	0
Good	21%	33%
Adequate	18%	22%
Fair	21%	39%
Poor	32%	6%

Though only six percent of the current officers rated this aspect as poor, a large number, thirty-nine percent, rated it as only fair. It further seems noteworthy to point out that only one-third of the currents rated it as good, while none rated it as very good. The different descriptions by the two groups regarding their characterization of quality of supervision, that is, fair and poor, might possibly be accounted for by the fact that current officers were younger and have had shorter lengths of police service. The fact that both groups tended to respond negatively regarding the quality of supervision seems to suggest some type of problem in this area. It would certainly raise the question of what similar experience each group might have had which resulted in the low rating of supervision and management.

Perhaps a partial explanation regarding these descriptions which seems related to the current study might be contained in the findings of the National Manpower Survey which reported that an educational gap existed between line personnel and management, that is, the former had a higher level of education.¹

This finding appears to suggest that further research is necessary in order to identify the causes of such negative attitude toward the quality of supervision and management.

Supervision and management will be discussed in more

detail later in this study.

Attitude Toward Pay and Fringe Benefits

It should not be surprising to many that forty-three percent of the former officers described pay and fringe benefits as poor and another thirty-six percent described it as only fair. Yet it does seem noteworthy that one-third of the current officers also described these aspects of the study as poor while twenty-two percent thought that they were only fair. It should also be pointed out that only ten percent of the former and seventeen percent of the current officers described this aspect of the job as good.

Table 14 describes their responses in more detail.

TABLE 14

Description of Pay and Fringe Benefits

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
Very Good	3%	6%
Good	7%	11%
Adequate	11%	28%
Fair	36%	22%
Poor	43%	33%

Though it can be said that these attitudes undoubtedly influence officers' decisions for voluntary termination, this study indicates that further research is needed in order to ascertain the degree of significance of pay as opposed to fringe benefits. Price's research reflected that successfully higher amounts of pay probably produce successfully lower amounts of turnover.²

Promotional Opportunities

Former, as well as current officers, overwhelmingly, sixty-one percent, described promotional opportunities as poor as depicted in Table 15. None of the current officers described these opportunities as good or very good, though it is noted that seven percent of the former officers did label them as good.

Officer response here should not come as a complete surprise, taking into consideration the size of the departments.

TABLE 15

Description of Promotional Opportunities

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
Very Good	0	0
Good	7%	0
Adequate	14%	28%
Fair	18%	11%
Poor	61%	61%

With the small number of officers on these rural departments, it would be unusual to have more than one or two supervisory persons besides the Chief of Police. Frequently, supervisors have been promoted primarily on the basis of tenure with the department, and therefore, have been persons who have had long lengths of service with the department. This situation undoubtedly provides little opportunity for the line officers to rise in the ranks.

Responses of both groups have seemed to suggest that officers apparently may have perceived little opportunity to advance by remaining in their departments, which implies

limited career opportunities. Consequently, this would seem to suggest some influencing factor in decisions to stay or leave, depending, of course, on the career goals an officer may have set for himself.

Participation in Decision Making Policy

Responses by officers in both groups in this regard seem to indicate a very strong consciousness of their attitudes in this area. As shown in Table 16, thirty-two percent of the former officers described their participation in decision making policy as poor. At the same time, twenty-one percent described it as only fair. Current officers felt even stronger as thirty-nine percent of this group described their participation as poor and eleven percent described it as only fair.

TABLE 16

Participation in Decision Making Policy

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
Very good	18%	0
Good	14%	28%
Adequate	14%	22%
Fair	21%	11%
Poor	32%	39%

Though approximately one-third of the former, and just under one-third of the current officers described participation as good or very good, it should be borne in mind that approximately fifty percent of each group would

appear to have indicated by their responses that they had very limited participation in this particular aspect of their job.

Officer responses as described above suggest that participation in decision making may be a factor in turnover rates. This influence has been supported by research by Frenkle, Marrow and Price as previously cited. It is possible that the importance of this aspect may be far greater than heretofore considered by police supervisors and management and strongly suggest that further research should be conducted in this area.

Relations with Other Members of the Criminal Justice System

Considerable discussion has taken place by officers and much has been attributed to them regarding their negative attitude toward prosecutors and judges. However, as shown in Table 17, this appears to be a much more moderate attitude than heretofore assumed. The table shows that fifty percent of the former and thirty-nine percent of the current officers described relations with these two segments of the criminal justice system as either good or very good. Only fourteen percent of the former and eleven percent of the current officers described these relations as poor though it is noted that twenty-one percent of the former and twenty-eight percent of the current officers described these

relations as only fair.

TABLE 17

Description of Relations With
County Attorney and Judges

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
Very good	21%	6%
Good	29%	33%
Adequate	14%	22%
Fair	21%	28%
Poor	14%	11%

These responses do not seem to reflect as large a negative attitude toward these two segments of the criminal justice system as has been generally assumed.

Frequently, when officers converse, as many know who have been around law enforcement officers, one of the first remarks made by an officer is that one of the prosecutors failed to prosecute a case or a comment that the prosecutor had reduced the charges or he or she wanted additional work done on a case. Another remark that would be made frequently by officers in these discussions will be negative comments regarding the fact that some judge dismissed the case or perhaps was too lenient in his sentencing. The researcher has been present at innumerable gatherings of officers where such criticism has frequently and vociferously taken place.

The findings in the current study would seem to indicate, however, that officers of both groups tend not to be as frustrated or as negative regarding prosecutors

and judges as they may publicly portray; and consequently, any frustration in this aspect of their job may not be as influential a determinant in job termination as one might have assumed.

Family Pressure on Police Officers

Family pressure, as a result of being a police officers, may play a more important role in police tenure, especially in rural areas, than previously considered. Forty-three percent of the former officers described this pressure as either high or very high, but on the other hand, as shown in Table 18, only seventeen percent of the current officers described it in similar terms.

TABLE 18

Family Pressure as a Result of Being a Police Officer

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
None	21%	22%
Some	14%	11%
Normal	21%	50%
High	32%	11%
Very High	11%	6%

This finding strongly suggests that research should be conducted to identify the type of pressure police families are exposed to and just what effect such things as shift changes, hours worked, attitude of children, friends, and neighbors may have on the police family.

One possible explanation for the differences in responses of former officers as compared to currents might be

attributed to the fact that former officers had longer lengths of service, had worked for more police departments, and consequently had exposed their respective families over a longer period of time to the roles and attitudes they exhibited as a police officer. It seems feasible that longer lengths of police service may have contributed to increased job stress and tension which resulted in increased physical and mental anxiety. Research by Marrow suggests anxiety in workers is transferred to the home which results in negative family attitudes toward the person.³

Further evidence of the effects of being a police officer has been reported by researchers for the National Institute for Occupational Health:

...police work becomes one of the few jobs which has a potent, adverse effect on the total life of the worker. That is the policeman's job affects his own personal social life, his family's social life, his children's perception of him as a father, etc. 4

Dr. Edward Shev, a police psychiatrist, who has studied and worked with California police agencies, has stated that sixty percent of today's police need some degree of guidance in order to overcome the adverse effects of job pressure.⁵

Tetan and Minderman has also stated in their research regarding police stress that as the stress builds in the officer and his outlook changes, it influences his home

life. They go on to say that members of the family frequently are not prepared for the changes they see going on with their family member, friends are frequently lost, and the officer begins to spend more and more time at work or with fellow officers.⁶

Other studies by Ellison and Genz report similar effects on the officer subjected to stress and that police stress can lead to a deterioration of family life as well as suicide and divorce.⁷

Hurrell and Kroes report the effects briefly when they state:

In addition to coping with the stress brought home by an officer, the police family must cope with a host of other serious pressures. Their pressures include a negative image in the community and meeting the exaggerated expectations of community members. Thus, it may well be that the effects of policing on home life are more severe in comparison to other occupations. 8

Based on the findings of the current study, which tend to be supported by the findings of others as described above, the evidence suggests that family pressure may be a factor in police turnover and that it may play a far greater role than previously considered. Just how much this factor may influence an officer's decision to leave is, of course, unknown, but the study strongly suggests that further research should be undertaken in this area.

Community Attitude Toward Law Enforcement

Only four percent of the former officers believed community attitude was poor, however, forty-three percent of them did describe it as only fair, which is shown in Table 19. At the same time, only twenty-eight percent of the former officers described the community's attitude toward them as high or good.

A much higher percentage, twenty-eight percent of the current officers, described the community's attitude as poor, with a second high figure which reflected that twenty-two percent of the currents described it as only fair. Only thirty-three percent of the current officers described this attitude as good.

TABLE 19

Community's Attitude Toward Law Enforcement

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
Very good	0	0
Good	28%	33%
Adequate	25%	17%
Fair	43%	22%
Poor	4%	28%

Examining the figures from Table 19, it can be seen that as a whole, forty-seven percent of the former and fifty percent of the current officers described the above attitude as only fair to poor.

Since almost half of both groups perceived the community's attitude toward them in low terms, this would seem

to strongly suggest that research should be conducted to identify the reasons for such a low response. One might have expected that small, rural communities would have given a more positive impression to officers who served their communities.

On the other hand, Hurrell and Kroes have identified as one of the specific stressors, which is unique to police, unfavorable attitudes held by citizens toward police.⁹

Another example of the status in which police are held is reported in research conducted by UCLA Professor, Donald Triman, who spent ten years developing an occupational prestige rating. This scale is based on eighty-five studies of occupational ratings with the ratings ranging from zero to one-hundred (one-hundred being the highest). In his prestige rating, police officers were ranked fortieth.¹⁰

One other related research study was found regarding community attitude. A 1977 Police Technical Assistance Report of the Rolla, Missouri Police Department, which incidentally had experienced very high turnover in a relatively small department, reached the conclusion that the high turnover rate had been a causative factor in the unfavorable perception the community had toward the police department.¹¹

Though it is obvious that further research is necessary in this area, responses by the two groups and supported by the findings of other researchers would seem to

indicate that community attitude may be related to turnover.

Support Given Law Enforcement by the City Government

Perhaps one of the most important responses given by officers of this study is reflected in Table 20, where it can be observed that one-fourth of the former officers described support given them by city government as poor while another twenty-one percent described it as only fair. Only fifteen percent of the former officers described this support as good or very good. Responses by current officers indicate that this situation apparently has deteriorated as fifty percent of the current officers described such support as poor and another six percent reported it as only fair. Only eleven percent described it as good. Taken as a whole, we observed that forty-six percent of the former and fifty-six percent of the currents tend to give a negative rating to the support they perceived the local government body had given them.

TABLE 20

Description of Support Given
Law Enforcement by the City Government

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
Very good	4%	0
Good	11%	11%
Adequate	39%	33%
Fair	21%	6%
Poor	25%	50%

With this apparent perception of recognition for their efforts, at least as officers perceived it, it would seem to

appear that this feeling might tend to have some degree of impact on decisions to stay or leave. Perhaps it can best be dramatized by the comments made by a representative of the Wisconsin Training and Standards Board who said:

The power structure has been responsible for turnover (referring to small communities) in officers because the wrong people were arrested or because an officer insists on enforcing parking regulations, tavern closing hours, etc.¹²

The above indications appear relevant and it would seem evident that research should be undertaken in this regard in order to identify and establish how officers define support and if there is a relationship to turnover. One of the questions that needs to be answered is, do these officers consider support to be in the form of better pay, fringe benefits, hours, equipment, etc., or have they referred to policies, public statements, or other administrative matters?

Description of Monthly Salaries

Twenty-five percent of the former officers were receiving monthly salaries in excess of \$850 per month as compared to forty-four percent of the current officers. While forty-seven percent of the former officers were making \$749 or less per month, only seventeen percent of the current officers were making less than this amount. It should also be borne in mind that fifty-three percent of the

former officers were making in excess of \$750 per month, while in contrast, eighty-three percent of the current officers were making \$750 or more per month.

Table 21 sets forth in more detail the respective salary levels.

TABLE 21

Monthly Salaries

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
\$600 - \$649	18%	0
650 - 699	4%	11%
700 - 749	25%	6%
750 - 799	14%	11%
800 - 849	14%	28%
Other	25%	44%

Caution should be used in drawing too many conclusions from Table 21 inasmuch as the current officers' responses were based on 1979 salaries while former officers who responded had departed their respective departments during the period of 1972-1977. Salaries have undoubtedly risen considerably in the last four years, partially as a result of the inflation rate; therefore, they do not tell the entire story. This does not mean to imply that salaries are not an important factor in decisions of whether to stay or leave, but at the same time, it may not be as important a factor as some would like to believe. Consider the fact that seventy-eight percent of the former officers were earning \$700 or more a month, which compares somewhat favorably with the fact that eighty-nine percent of the currents

fell into this same category. Salaries will be discussed somewhat more in this study in a subsequent chapter.

Rating of Job Performance

Current as well as former officers displayed an exceptionally high opinion of their performance as officers as shown in Table 22.

TABLE 22

Officer Rating of Their Job Performance

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
Very Good	28%	33%
Good	68%	56%
Adequate	4%	6%
Fair	0	5%
Poor	0	0

Ninety-six percent of the former and eighty-nine percent of the current officers rated their performance on the job as either good or very good. The small difference between the two groups might be accounted for owing to the fact that former officers had longer lengths of service and, therefore, had a longer period of time on the job and may have believed that they had a better chance for self-evaluation.

It appears from these findings that officers have confidence in their performance and do not appear to be leaving a department because of feelings of inadequate self-perception.

Description of Training Given in the Department

Approximately one-third of the former officers felt that training given in their respective departments had been good or very good, however, as Table 23 reflects, twenty-two percent felt it was poor and another twenty-six percent described it as only fair.

TABLE 23

Description of Training Given
in the Department

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
Very Good	7%	5%
Good	26%	11%
Adequate	19%	28%
Fair	26%	39%
Poor	22%	17%

Somewhat in contrast, only sixteen percent of the current officers felt departmental training was good or very good. At the same time, seventeen percent felt it was poor and almost forty percent felt it was only fair.

The above responses strongly suggest both groups tend to have perceived departmental training as something less than their expectations. This attitude tends to be supported by a survey conducted by the South Dakota Law Enforcement Standards and Training Commission in 1977 wherein it was found eighty-seven percent of the officers surveyed felt a mandated re-training program should take place every three years. ¹³

A more significant report was issued in 1978 by the National Manpower Survey, which stated there was little evidence to suggest that structured field training is taking place; that only about thirty-six percent of all sworn officers had ever participated in an in-service training course; and that during 1977, less than four percent of officers of responding agencies had received in-service training in that year.¹⁴

The Peterson Commission further stated that each police agency should provide forty hours of in-service training annually to sworn police officers in order to maintain, update, and improve necessary skills and knowledge.¹⁵

Officers of the current study tend to reflect a similar need and desire for training which apparently is and has been lacking. This would seem to further indicate that this situation could have been influential regarding decisions to leave or stay in a department.

Perceptions of Job Opportunities With Other Departments

Officer responses in this regard clearly reflect that a large number of former, as well as current officers foresaw no real problem in obtaining a position with another police department. As can be seen in Table 24, eighty-one percent of the former officers described their chances of obtaining another police job as either easy or very easy,

while sixty-seven percent of the current officers described these chances in similar terms.

TABLE 24

Description of Chances of Getting a
Job with Another Police Department

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
Very Easy	29%	17%
Easy	52%	50%
Fair	15%	33%
Poor	0	0
Very Poor	4%	0

There may be several explanations for this attitude. Vroom states that in general employment terms, one should find higher turnover rates in times of full employment as opposed to times of considerable unemployment.¹⁶ Price's research reached a similar conclusion when he reported that a high level of economic activity produces a high amount of turnover.¹⁷

TABLE 25

Unemployment Rates (a)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Custer County Broken Bow</u>	<u>Dawson County Lexington</u>	<u>Keith County Ogallala</u>	<u>State</u>
1972	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable	
1973	1.6%	2.1%	1.6%	2.0%
1974	1.8%	2.2%	1.9%	2.6%
1975	2.8%	3.7%	3.4%	3.9%
1976	2.2%	2.6%	2.5%	3.3%
1977	2.4%	2.8%	3.0%	3.7%
1978	2.1%	2.8%	2.5%	2.9%

(a) Information received on July 19, 1979, from Les Johnston, Department of Labor, State of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska

A review of unemployment figures for the three counties in which our three departments are located reflected a low unemployment rate. Table 25 reflects those specific rates as well as the State of Nebraska unemployment figure.

Taking into consideration the above low unemployment figures, it would appear that job opportunities have been generally favorable in these respective communities. In contrast, the State of Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services reported that police turnover rates were low; and this was attributed to the depressed economic situation in that state.¹⁸

Portigal, writing for an international group, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, claimed that the state of the labor market partially determines the degree of turnover.¹⁹

In addition to the above economic reasons, officer response to this question could have been influenced by another situation. In 1970, Saunders stated that police turnover rates were expected to increase in the next few years owing to the fact that the large number of men recruited into police work following World War II could be reaching retirement age.²⁰ If this fact has materialized, job opportunities would have become available owing in part to retirements. In addition to retirements, the National

Manpower Survey predicted a two percent annual growth rate for police during the period of 1974-85.²¹

Current research indicates that not only have economic conditions been favorable for employment opportunities outside of law enforcement, but retirements and police growth in the profession have made opportunities in other departments very favorable. Therefore, it appears these factors tend to influence officer decisions to leave or stay.

Main Reason for Leaving

The previous discussion regarding officer responses by the two groups have provided some relevant and pertinent data regarding factors that may influence officer decisions to leave or stay in their departments. However, the key factor that appears more in evidence in this study is officer response regarding their attitude of management and supervision in such decisions. As Table 26 reflects, sixty-one percent

TABLE 26

Main Reason for Leaving or Would Leave

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
Inadequate Management and Supervision	61%	39%
Poor Community Attitude	7%	11%
Inadequate Pay and Fringe Benefits	21%	17%
Lack of Promotional Opportunity	7%	17%
Loss of Interest in Law Enforcement	4%	16%

of the former officers stated management and supervision was the main reason they left; and thirty-nine percent of the current officers stated this would be the main reason if they were to leave their department.

Officer response in this area seems to be very important because in generally accepted terms, it has usually been taken for granted by many that when an officer leaves a department, it must be for better pay or a better job. Officer response here would seem to contradict some of these assumptions. Though pay and fringe benefits received the second largest response, twenty-one percent, it was far down on the scale of importance.

The fact that the single largest response of even current officers was a negative attitude toward management and supervision tends to support the responses of the former officers.

Whatever impact this factor might be, it remains to be determined exactly what the officers meant in this regard. Do they mean their immediate supervisor, or do they mean the head of the agency, or do they mean a combination of both? These unanswered questions strongly suggest a great deal of research is needed in this area.

Of further possible relevance in this area of response is the fact that seventeen percent of the current officers listed promotional opportunity as being as important as pay and fringe benefits.

In general terms, management and supervision have usually been ignored as any real concern as factors in police turnover, however, there have been some studies indicating this as a problem area. Reiss' study of three

large departments reflected that almost one-third of the officers who were surveyed were not satisfied with supervision in their departments.²²

Lending further support to this response is a report from South Dakota wherein a survey was given to a group of officers from departments of fifteen officers or less wherein forty-three percent of those responding believed that turnover in law enforcement was caused by poor top level management, while thirty-four percent were undecided and twenty-three percent disagreed.²³ At the same time, eighty-six percent of the South Dakota respondents favored additional and higher certification for supervisory and management positions.

One of the more critical statements regarding management and supervision came out of the National Manpower Survey wherein one representative of this management panel states his observations of the criminal justice management as follows:

The current criminal justice system environment--whether it be a police department, a correctional institution, or even the judiciary--appears to have not stated philosophy that clearly articulates the role of management and the performance criteria for good managers. In such a vacuum, managers tend to be reactive and crisis management becomes typical. The idea of controlling, planning, and prioritizing the primary concerns of management - is lost in running from one crisis to another. When managers do the work rather than orchestrate it, they do not understand their role. 24

Table 13 also tends to demonstrate officer perception

of their attitudes regarding management and supervision.

The above discussion of management and supervision should not be interpreted as an indictment of persons holding these positions. It should be borne in mind that these conditions are not unique to the police profession. Tetan and Minderman pointed out that the idea has persisted in our society that the business of supervision and management is not particularly complicated, but they point out that nothing is further from the truth. They go on to say that Henry Fayol, considered by many to be the father of modern management theory, maintained that it took training to be an effective manager and that management should be a separate profession.²⁵

Augustine also supported the theory that supervisors need to be trained to handle their positions; and though supervisors come up through the ranks because of outstanding performance, they lack the training of how to supervise.²⁶

Studies in the private sector of our society reflect similar findings. Marrow reported from studies he conducted that:

The harder we looked, the clearer it became that in some unknowing way, management might be responsible for the high turnover rate.²⁷

He further concluded in this regard that nothing, however, had been done to provide leadership training for supervisors.²⁸

It is of further interest to note that the National

Manpower Survey reflected that ninety percent of the law enforcement chief executives surveyed concluded that training is necessary for newly appointed supervisors, however, the same group acknowledged that only thirty-seven percent of the agencies surveyed offered such training.²⁹ This report went on to say that line officers have somewhat higher educational levels than managers which has created an "educational generation gap."³⁰

Dr. Kenneth E. Christensen of Michigan State University compared college educated and non-college educated police officers which led him to believe that organizational and managerial reasons cause college educated officers to leave police departments.³¹

The importance of management and supervisory training has shown sufficient importance to the Federal Bureau of Investigation that in 1974, that agency adopted a program for management and supervisory development.³² Briefly, their program seeks to evaluate participants regarding attributes and skills which have been identified as necessary for successfully performing in positions of supervision and management.

Supervisory training is also recommended by the National Advisory Group on Productivity in Law Enforcement, which concluded: "(in order) to encourage supervisors to take an active role in developing the personnel under their command, they must be trained, evaluated, and rewarded.

Training should include how to set objectives, establish performance criteria, create feedback, and develop learning styles."³³

The officer response by both groups in the current study supports the author's proposition that pay is not the dominant or primary reason that officers have left or would leave their respective departments voluntarily. There is no doubt that pay and fringe benefits are serious considerations. On the other hand, responses of officers indicate that supervision and management play a greater role than previously presumed by many segments of the criminal justice system.

Secondary Reason for Leaving (Or Would Leave)

Thirty-two percent of the former officers listed pay and fringe benefits as the second most important reason that they left; however, twenty-nine percent of this group

TABLE 27

Secondary Reason for Leaving (Or Would Leave)

	<u>Former</u>	<u>Current</u>
Inadequate Management and Supervision	14%	6%
Poor Community Attitude	14%	22%
Inadequate Pay and Fringe Benefits	32%	44%
Lack of Promotional Opportunity	29%	28%
Loss of Interest in Law Enforcement	11%	0

also cited the lack of promotional opportunities. Table 27 reflects that forty-four percent of the current officers listed pay and fringe benefits as their second most important reason for leaving; however, it is noteworthy that almost one-fourth of the officers listed community attitude, and over one-fourth as well, cited promotional opportunities as important factors.

Portigal reported that wages never rank as the most important attribute of a job even though pay is frequently cited as a disturbing factor in job situations.³⁴ Portigal's statement is supported by Augustine, who also concluded that more pay is seldom the real reason an employee leaves, but if it is, it is usually accompanied by other reasons as well.³⁵

In addition to the above studies, research by Reiss in 1967 regarding three large departments, Boston, Chicago, and Washington, reflected that approximately one-third of those officers surveyed were not satisfied with their wages.³⁶ It should be pointed out, however, that though these officers in these three large departments express pay satisfaction, it should also be remembered that large departments usually do not have the large turnover that small rural departments seem to have had.

Teske's study in Texas reflected that the higher the maximum base pay of officers, the lower the rate of turnover.³⁷ Mulholland's study of New Mexico Police

Academy graduates in 1974 recognized pay as a major consideration, but he did not conclude it was the primary reason officers were terminating, and he acknowledged that other variables existed.³⁸

Perhaps one of the problems facing small departments regarding pay is that such departments frequently bear the burden of training new officers. Then, after the completion of this training, they become a more marketable officer and are attractive recruits for the large departments who subsequently do not have to bear the burden and expense of giving them basic training. Small department officers may also be influenced by certain variables on the small department, which cause them to be attracted to the large departments, not so much by the greater salary, but as a method of getting away from an unfavorable job situation.

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³⁴ A. H. Portigal, op. cit., pp. 28-29.

³⁵ J. J. Famularo, op. cit., p. 62.

³⁶ P. M. Whisenand, op. cit., pp. 249-254.

³⁷ R. H. C. Teske, Ph. D., op. cit., p. 64.

³⁸ F. A. Mulholland, op. cit., 1974, p. 8.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Research as presented here has reflected that turnover appears to be a significant problem in a considerable number of rural police departments in numerous states and more specifically in the state of Nebraska. Officer replacement costs involve substantial amounts of money. During the period of 1972 through 1977 a large turnover was found to exist in a representative number of rural departments. Very little data exists as to factors relating to and influencing officers' decisions to leave departments voluntarily, though it has been assumed by many that officers tend to leave primarily because of pay and fringe benefit factors.

Research during the above period of time for three similar sized small departments produced substantial information indicating various factors other than pay and fringe benefits appear to influence officers' decision to voluntarily terminate police employment with their departments. A high percentage of former, as well as current officers of these departments that were studied, completed a questionnaire.

The results of the questionnaire reflected that former officers tended to be substantially older than current officers, but approximately ninety percent of each group was found to be married. Substantial numbers from each group were also found to have some level of college education. Both groups tended to come from either their community of employment or another small town or similar rural setting. Approximately three-fourths of each group were recruited into law enforcement either because they had always wanted to be an officer or owing to the fact that they had a relative in police work. Over two-thirds of each group felt that the most important function of a police officer was to provide service to the community or help people. Approximately eighty-eight percent of each group had had four or less full time non-law enforcement positions before becoming officers.

Ample differences were found in the two groups regarding length of police service. Thirty-six percent of the former officers had ten years or more of service, which is compared to only twenty-two percent of the current officers falling into the same category.

Fifty-four percent of the former officers were found to have worked for three or more police agencies, while only twenty-seven percent of the current officers had worked for three or more police agencies.

Fifty-three percent of the former and forty-five

percent of the current officers gave low ratings to departmental supervision and management. At the same time, seventy-nine percent of the former and fifty-five percent of the current officers gave a low description of pay and fringe benefits. Over two-thirds of each group gave low ratings to promotional opportunities in their respective departments and fifty percent or more of each group gave low ratings for the opportunity to participate in decision making policies. Interestingly enough, less than forty percent of each group gave low ratings regarding police relations with judges and county attorneys.

Forty-three percent of the former, but only seventeen percent of the current officers identified family pressure as a result of being a police officer which was described as high or very high. Approximately fifty percent of each group perceived the community's attitude toward law enforcement as only fair to poor. Forty-six percent of the former and fifty-six percent of the current officers described support given by city government to law enforcement as poor or only fair.

Seventy-eight percent of the former, but eighty-nine percent of the current officers were making monthly salaries of \$700 or more.

The overwhelming majority of each group described their performance as an officer as either good or very good.

Thirty-three percent of the former, but only sixteen percent of the current officers described training in their departments as good or very good. Two-thirds or more of each group believed police employment opportunity with other departments would be either easy or very easy to obtain.

An unexpected finding of the study was the fact that sixty-one percent of the former officers gave inadequate management and supervision as the primary reason for leaving their departments with only twenty-one percent stating inadequate pay and fringe benefits was the main reason for this separation. Thirty-nine percent of the currents said that if they were to terminate, the primary reason would be because of management and supervision.

Responses for the second most important reason for leaving reflected that thirty-two percent of the former and forty-four percent of the currents listed pay and fringe benefits in this regard. However, almost one-third of each group listed lack of promotional opportunities also as a contributing factor.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions reached by this researcher have been drawn from the data obtained from the questionnaires, review of the literature, interviews, correspondence, as well as the review of research by others.

The present study reflects that increasing age appears to be associated with increasing incidents of separation in rural departments. This would seem to be consistent with the finding that members with long lengths of police service have high rates of turnover in this study. This is in contrast to research reported by Price as previously cited. It seems obvious, however, that further research is necessary regarding the relationship of age and length of service as it may directly relate to effects on turnover.

It was discovered that this research is consistent with research by others which indicates that better educated members of a police department usually have higher rates of turnover than less educated members.

There is also some indication that employment prior to police service may be an indicator of turnover. The research conducted here also suggests that the number of police agencies an officer had worked for may be a turnover indicator, however, the data is insufficient to conclude that there is a direct correlation between these factors and their effect on turnover. It certainly seems obvious that greater research needs to be conducted in this respect.

There does not seem to be any real suggestion that decisions or actions of prosecutors and judges have resulted in decisions to terminate police employment.

There is, however, some indication that family pressure

may intensify officer decisions to leave their department with increasing years of police service.

Officers tend to perceive the community and city government as not being supportive of their roles as officers though they feel strongly that they are doing a good job as an officer.

The majority of officers do not believe departmental training is sufficient. They believe job opportunities with other departments are easy to obtain.

The strongest factor which appears to influence officers' decisions to separate from their department is their negative perception of management and supervision. Also contributing to separation decisions appear to be an officers' perceptions of inadequate pay and fringe benefits, lack of promotional opportunities, and poor community attitude.

This study strongly suggests that voluntary turnover in rural police departments is a problem and this study has reflected certain trends and indications of factors related to this turnover in such departments. Some factors appear to be more influential than heretofore considered. The fact that older, more experienced officers tend to leave departments at a higher rate indicates an unfavorable trend which may have as one of its results a lowering of the department's effectiveness.

This study further suggests that research is needed to identify more clearly the correlation of some factors

which seem to be related to turnover. It appears the level of education is directly related to turnover. Research is necessary here in order to ascertain what effects result from the difference in education of line officers as opposed to managers and supervisors. Research should also be directed to determine if persons from metropolitan areas would be more effective regarding tenure if they were employed in a small department. This study strongly suggests that research is necessary to ascertain the selection procedures utilized by small departments and if such current selection procedures might be altered which would result in the selection of officers who would have a greater tendency to remain in the respective departments.

The relationship of prior police employment and attitude of job mobility needs to be researched in order to ascertain its possible effects on turnover.

The study appears to strongly suggest that better departmental training of officers, as well as managers and supervisors, need to be examined and possibly updated considerably from present practices and policies. Training should include identifying the effects of being a police officer and any relationship to the family structure. Research should be undertaken and expanded regarding the effects of family pressure on the officers' decision to terminate. Inasmuch as officers tend to perceive that the community and

city government hold them in low esteem, research should be instituted to ascertain why these attitudes apparently exist. Improved perceptions by officers in these areas might well tend to help reduce turnover.

Though the study reflected pay and fringe benefits were not the primary reason for separation, greater research is necessary in this regard which should be directed toward ascertaining the type of retirement plans currently in existence and what can be done to improve them. Such research should also include other related areas such as vacation, sick days, holidays, life and health insurance, and overtime pay. Pay structures need to be analyzed and re-structured to include longevity compensation.

Though it should be recognized that small departments are very limited in promotional opportunities, research could ascertain the feasibility of different grade levels for line personnel. In other words, classifications might be created, recognizing such things as ability, effort, and longevity through such ranks as Officer 1 or Officer 2 or Officer 3.

The most critical factor which seems to be identified here is the strong suggestion of the effect that management and supervision appears to have on decisions to leave a department. Responses by both groups of officers in this study clearly seemed to indicate the apparent importance these aspects have on officers. It is also necessary to

conduct further research in order to ascertain just what officers have meant when describing their perception of management and supervision. There is some evidence to support an indication that those individuals holding management and supervisory positions may lack appropriate training to effectively handle these positions. At the same time, it appears probable that the effects of budgetary restraints by city government adversely restrict the availability of management, as well as supervisory training. Research is strongly suggested and needed in this area.

The study of why officers are voluntarily leaving small departments has presented data reflecting that pay and fringe benefits are not the primary cause of such separation. The information presented indicates the administration of departments is the primary reason. This does not imply nor suggest it is the only reason. Though management and supervision are important factors, sufficient data has also been presented to indicate there are other material factors such as pay, fringe benefits, promotional opportunities, attitudes of the city government and community. There also seem to be data that training, education, family stress, participation in decision making and possibly the selection process of officers may also be influencing determinants regarding voluntary separations.

This study would seem to make evident that greater

research is needed regarding police turnover if it is to be expected that a reduction can take place in the large turnover which seems to be occurring in small, rural departments in Nebraska as well as perhaps in many other rural states.

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APPENDIX A

I am appealing to you for help regarding a study I have undertaken. It will not require anything from you except a few minutes of your time.

During the twelve years I have been a law enforcement officer in Nebraska, I have noticed a high turnover rate of peace officers in smaller departments. Various theories have been offered as the reasons officers leave, but I have found that no research has ever been conducted in this regard in the State of Nebraska.

Therefore, in an attempt to identify the real reasons for departure of police officers from their departments, I have designed a questionnaire consisting of twenty-five questions. This questionnaire provides for checking various possible answers. With your permission, I would like to send you the questionnaire which will take no more than thirty minutes of your time to answer.

All responses to the questions are completely confidential and the findings resulting from the study will be reported statistically so that the identity of individuals will not be revealed. I will not even need your name on the questionnaire.

With your help, this could be the beginning of an effort to encourage the professional growth and stature of smaller police departments.

As an enclosure with this letter, you will find a return postcard on which you may indicate your willingness to cooperate with me by answering the questionnaire. Thank you for the courtesy of your assistance.

Very sincerely yours,

Tom B. Miller

APPENDIX B

I am a graduate student in Criminal Justice at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, Nebraska. I plan to continue my law enforcement career. Right now, I need your help. Would you please respond to the following questionnaire exactly as YOU feel. There are no right or wrong answers. You will not be identified in any way. Your answers will be held in strict confidence. No one from your department will see any of your answers and I DO NOT want to know your name.

During the twelve years that I have been in law enforcement in central Nebraska, I have witnessed a large turnover in police officers in many departments. Many reasons have been suggested, but no study has ever been conducted. The turnover rate throughout the nation in small and rural areas is high, and therefore, this phenomenon is not unique to Nebraska. However, in order to make the first known study of reasons officers are leaving their departments, I have undertaken this study with the hope that it may be used to change conditions which contribute to this high turnover.

With this in mind, would you please respond by indicating your choice to each of the following questions:

(select the answer which best describes you)

APPENDIX B

1) Age

- a. less than 25 years old
- b. 25 to 29
- c. 30 to 35
- d. 36 to 40
- e. over 41

2) Maritan Status

- a. single
- b. married
- c. separated
- d. divorced
- e. widowed

3) Education

- a. less than a high school diploma
- b. high school diploma (GED)
- c. some college
- d. two year college degree
- e. four year college degree

4) I am a native of:

- a. this community (that is, Lexington, Ogallala,
or Broken Bow)
- b. Metropolitan area
- c. another state
- d. farm or ranch
- e. another small city

5) Which best described your recruitment into law enforcement?

- a. one of my relatives was in police work
- b. I always wanted to be a police officer
- c. most attractive job available
- d. it was the only job available
- e. excitement of the job

- 6) Before becoming a police officer, did you have any relatives in law enforcement?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- 7) Before becoming a police officer, how many full-time non-law enforcement jobs did you have?
- a. 1-2
 - b. 3-4
 - c. 5-6
 - d. 7-8
 - e. 9-10
- 8) How many total years of law enforcement experience do you have?
- a. less than two years
 - b. 2 to 4 years
 - c. 5 to 7 years
 - d. 7 to 9 years
 - e. ten years of more
- 9) How many law enforcement agencies have you worked for?
- a. one
 - b. two
 - c. three
 - d. four
 - e. five or more

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE DESIGNED FOR YOU TO RATE YOUR JOB ON THE DEPARTMENT

- 10) Overall, I would describe the quality of supervision and management in the department as:
- a. very good
 - b. good
 - c. adequate
 - d. fair
 - e. poor

- 11) The pay and fringe benefits of the department are best described as:
- a. very good
 - b. good
 - c. adequate
 - d. fair
 - e. poor
- 12) Promotional opportunities in the department are best described as:
- a. very good
 - b. good
 - c. adequate
 - d. fair
 - e. poor
- 13) My participation in decision making policy in the department is (was) best described as:
- a. very good
 - b. good
 - c. adequate
 - d. fair
 - e. poor
- 14) Relations with other agencies (county attorney, Judges) in the criminal justice system are best described as:
- a. very good
 - b. good
 - c. adequate
 - d. fair
 - e. poor
- 15) Family pressure as a result of my being a police officer is (was) best described as:
- a. none
 - b. some
 - c. normal
 - d. high
 - e. very high

- 16) The community's attitude towards law enforcement is (was) best described as:
- a. very good
 - b. good
 - c. adequate
 - d. fair
 - e. poor
- 17) The support given law enforcement by the city government is (was) best described as:
- a. very good
 - b. good
 - c. adequate
 - d. fair
 - e. poor
- 18) My monthly salary on the department is (was) approximately:
- a. \$600 - \$649
 - b. \$650 - \$699
 - c. \$700 - \$749
 - d. \$750 - \$799
 - e. \$800 - \$849
 - f. Other _____ (write in)
- 19) How would you rate your job performance as a police officer?
- a. very good
 - b. good
 - c. adequate
 - d. fair
 - e. poor
- 20) As a police officer on the department, I believe the most important thing I can (could) do is:
- a. provide service to the community
 - b. find job satisfaction
 - c. arrest law violators
 - d. help people
 - e. enforce the laws

- 21) The Training given officers in the department is (was) best described as:
- a. very good
 - b. good
 - c. adequate
 - d. fair
 - e. poor
- 22) Based on your experience and knowledge of police work, how would you describe your chances of getting a job with another police department?
- a. very easy
 - b. easy
 - c. fair
 - d. poor
 - e. very poor
- 23) Have you left the department (that is, Broken Bow, Lexington, Ogallala)?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

If your answer to question 23 was "yes," skip questions 24 and 25 and please answer questions 26 and 27.

If your answer was "no" to question 23, continue and answer questions 24 and 25 and do not answer questions 26 and 27.

- 24) If you were to leave your present department, which of the following would be your main reason?
- a. inadequate management and supervision
 - b. poor community attitude
 - c. inadequate pay and fringe benefits
 - d. lack of promotional opportunity
 - e. loss of interest in law enforcement
- 25) What would you consider the secondary reason you might leave the department?
- a. inadequate management and supervision
 - b. poor community attitude
 - c. inadequate pay and fringe benefits
 - d. lack of promotional opportunity
 - e. loss of interest in law enforcement

- 26) What is the main reason you left the department?
- a. () inadequate management and supervision
 - b. () poor community attitude
 - c. () inadequate pay and fringe benefits
 - d. () lack of promotional opportunity
 - e. () lost interest in law enforcement
- 27) What do you consider the secondary reason you left the department?
- a. () inadequate management and supervision
 - b. () poor community attitude
 - c. () inadequate pay and fringe benefits
 - d. () lack of promotional opportunity
 - e. () lost interest in law enforcement