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WHY POLICE OFFICERS RESIGN:

A Look at the Turnover of Police Officers in Vermont

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INTRODUCTION

From the point of view of an organization, employee turnover can be either positive or negative. Staw (1980) maintains that turnover has positive organizational implications. Mobley (1982:33) agrees with this assessment, suggesting that organizations can benefit from turnover by replacing poor performers, hiring more knowledgeable people, stimulating change, providing increased opportunities of mobility for present employees, increasing the flexibility of the organization, reducing costs, consolidating jobs, and reducing employee conflict.

Any organization must be conscious of the environment in which turnover occurs. Demographic projections and economic guesses would suggest that, as the baby boom ages, the years ahead will be characterized by a shrinking supply of workers and low unemployment. Whether or not organizations are inclined to care about their employees they will be forced to take seriously employee needs and demands in order to retain quality people.

We maintain that even if these demographic and economic constraints did not exist, the interests of employers and employees are fundamentally the same. An organization does not really benefit from an employee who is unhappy or wants to leave. We suggest, therefore, that what is really needed is a way of understanding turnover which encourages employees to leave when appropriate but provides the conditions necessary to encourage the right employees to stay.

Managing turnover is the last piece of the total human resources effort of an organization. This is an effort directed toward maximizing the effectiveness of an organization--a goal not inconsistent with maximizing opportunities and benefits for its employees. Such an effort requires recruitment and selection strategies, along with socialization, training and development programs. Wanous (1980) summarizes evidence that recruitment and selection procedures can increase employees satisfaction and reduce voluntary turnover. Bartol (1990) analyzes the results of the MMPI evaluations of prospective municipal officers in Vermont and demonstrates the usefulness of a combination of the Pa, Ma, and L scales in predicting turnover.

In spite of all of the caveats about the possible positive effects of turnover, it is generally viewed as a detriment to an organization. Price (1977:19) concludes that although the effect of turnover will be different in different types of organizations, it is probably right to say that turnover has a basically negative effect on organizational effectiveness.

The most obvious reason for the negative effect of turnover is the cost involved in replacing and training new employees and coping with the productivity losses while this training occurs (see e.g. Gardner, 1986; Mobley, 1982). Hall (1981:1-2) estimates that replacing an employee costs $4,596. Although we cannot supply a precise cost of replacing a municipal police officer in Vermont, one must consider that replacing an officer typically involves the department paying a salary while the officer is sent to a 14-week course at the

police academy. These costs are augmented by the expense of running the academy.

Another cost of turnover is lost experience. Effective achievement of an organization's goals depends partly on the experience of its members. To the extent that turnover robs an organization of essential experience, the organization suffers in effectiveness. From this point of view, the loss of people with years of experience is more costly than the loss of less experienced employees. Mobley (1982:32) suggests that turnover has additional negative consequences: disruption of primary group structures, decreased satisfaction among stayers, and stimulation of counter-productive turnover control strategies.

Our focus in this study is on the organizational consequences of turnover, not consequences for the individual who leaves. It is, however, impossible to work on the organizational level without regard for the individual's experience. Generally we may assume that a change of jobs will be for the benefit of the employee. Many people leave not because they are dissatisfied, but because there are better jobs elsewhere. Others, however, are unhappy for a variety of reasons and leave to find less stressful or more satisfying jobs. In interpreting the cost of turnover for the organization, it will be necessary to understand the meaning of that turnover for the officers involved.

There are relatively few benchmarks for municipal police turnover. Iowa municipal departments, over the years 1980-1985, have experienced rates of about 5% in the large departments and as high as 20% in the small departments (See Statistical Analysis Center, Iowa: 1980-1988). Delay (1984:66), reporting 1978 data, shows rates of 6.76% in large U.S. cities and rates of 11.17% in small California cities. In Vermont during 1986-1989 we find an overall municipal police turnover rate of 14%--11% in towns of 6,000 or more, and 19.9% in towns of less than 6,000 (Vermont Criminal Justice Center, 1989). These rates suggest that the turnover problem in Vermont is more serious than elsewhere. The purpose of this study is to discover some of the reasons for what is at least perceived to be an unacceptably high rate of turnover in Vermont municipal departments.

METHODOLOGY

This report is the second phase of a two-part effort. The first phase of the project involved surveying Vermont's municipal police agencies on a variety of management issues, including salaries, benefits, resources, and departmental policies. Included in the first phase was an examination of police attrition between fiscal years 1986 and 1988 and the collection of information which might later make it possible to contact departing officers. This research is reported in the Center's publication, A Profile of Municipal Police Departments in Vermont (March, 1989).[1] The rate of response in the first phase was gratifying, with 45 of the 46 municipal departments with full-time staff completing the survey questionnaire. All but one of these provided the names of departing officers and information which would facilitate their participation in the second phase of the project. In this second phase, information was collected directly from the officers who left to determine the reasons why they resigned from their positions in municipal law enforcement. The response rate for questionnaires distributed by the Center was 87%. For details of these procedures see Appendix E.

In a third phase in the research, data were provided to us by Dr. Curt Bartol of Castleton State College. Dr. Bartol has followed the careers of police officers in Vermont by evaluating of MMPI profiles at the inception of employment, receiving periodic evaluations by supervisors and recording all changes of employment along with a supervisor's assessment of the conditions under which the officer left. In cooperation with the Vermont Police Chiefs' Association and the Vermont Police Academy, Dr. Bartol was able to identify, for the officers in our study, the reason for leaving and whether the officer left voluntarily or was asked to resign.

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[1] A follow-up study, based on data gathered in the summer, 1989, is reported in the Center's publication, A Profile of Municipal Police Departments in Vermont (November, 1989).

A THEORY OF TURNOVER

An adequate study of turnover requires clarity about the meaning of the term. An examination of the reports by municipal departments to the Vermont Criminal Justice Center (VCJC, 1989) reveals the following distribution of reasons for leaving for officers who left in 1989:

Table 1
REASONS FOR LEAVING IN 1989

Reasons for Leaving	# of Officers Leaving	%
Uncontrollable Reasons		
Death	0	0.0
Disability	3	5.4
Retirement	2	3.6
Controlled by the Department		
Dismissal	4	7.1
Controlled by the Officer		
Resignation	47	83.9
Total	**56**	**100.0**

Our work will ignore the uncontrollable leaves (death, disability and retirement) even though retirement can be controlled by either the officer (by taking early or late retirement) or by the department (by pushing the officer out or encouraging him to stay). Our questionnaire was distributed to officers who were reported to us by their departments as having resigned. Thus our primary interest is in analyzing why officers voluntarily quit their jobs.

Supervisor's evaluations of the conditions under which these officers had resigned, available on 106 of the 134 respondents, made it clear that 22 officers (16%) had resigned under pressure--they resigned rather than be dismissed. Our data represent very adequately those who left voluntarily (N=84) and somewhat less adequately those who can be regarded as being dismissed (N=22). In referring to turnover, we will speak of **voluntary turnover**, initiated by the officer, or **involuntary turnover**, initiated by the department.

Our primary aim is to understand the dynamics of voluntary turnover. This is the task for which our data are the most adequate. It is also the task for which there is the most public policy need. Unless otherwise stated, the following analysis will refer to voluntary turnover.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF OFFICERS

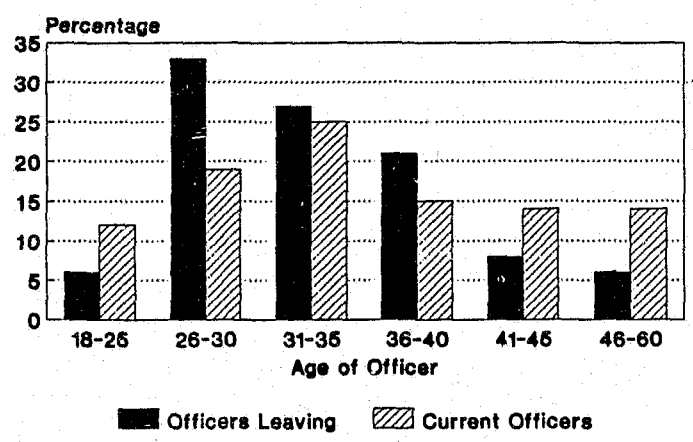
Personal characteristics of officers are what some authors label internal causes of turnover (see O'Connell, 1973). Our interest is in what personal characteristics are related to an officer's decision to quit.

AGE

The literature on age and industrial turnover almost invariably demonstrates that younger members of an organization have higher rates of turnover than older members (Mobley, et. al, 1979; Muchinsky and Tuttle, 1979; Porter and Steers, 1973; Price, 1977). One might suppose that younger employees more typically occupy entry-level positions, have few family commitments and may have inaccurate expectations of the job. Any of these factors might produce higher turnover among young employees. Figure 1 shows the ages of officers leaving Vermont municipal police departments during 1985-88. The average age of these officers was 34 years (with a median of 32 years). The average age of officers currently employed by Vermont municipal police departments is approximately 35.[2] In contrast with the findings in industrial literature, these officers who left appear to be no different in age from those who stayed.

Figure 1, however, shows that there are differences in the **distribution** of ages. It can be noted from the figure that most turnover occured in offiers between the ages of 26 to 40. Particularly striking is the number of officers leaving in the 26-30 age group.

Figure 1
AGE OF OFFICERS



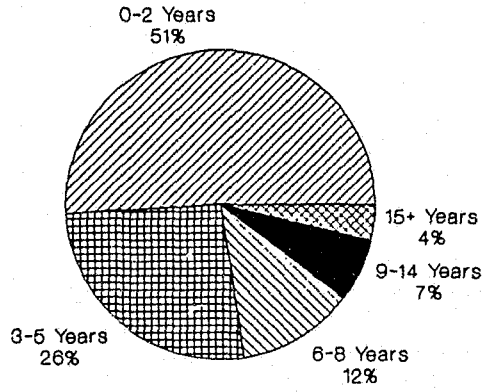
[2] The data come from A Profile of Municipal Police Departments in Vermont (November, 1989). The Profile contains age ranges, not ages of individual officers. Using the midpoints of these ranges to calculate the average age of officers results in a mean of 35.2 years, or approximately 35.

LENGTH OF SERVICE

Related to the age of an officer is his or her length of service to the department--younger officers usually have had a shorter tenure. Generally people who have been with an organization for short periods of time have higher rates of turnover than those with lengthy careers with the organization (See Mobley, Griffeth, Hand and Megline, 1979; Muchinsky and Tuttle, 1979; Price, 1977; Porter and Steers, 1973). Mangione (1973), in a national multivariate study, found that length of service was one of the best predictors of turnover. We cannot test this proposition because we have no knowledge of the length of service of officers who do not leave their positions.

We can show the experience of officers who left. Figure 2 displays this pattern: the officers had been employed by their departments what would seem to be a relatively short period of time. Seventy-seven percent of these officers were in their last positions five years or fewer, including approximately half who had been with their departments two or fewer years.

Figure 2
YEARS EMPLOYED BY DEPARTMENT



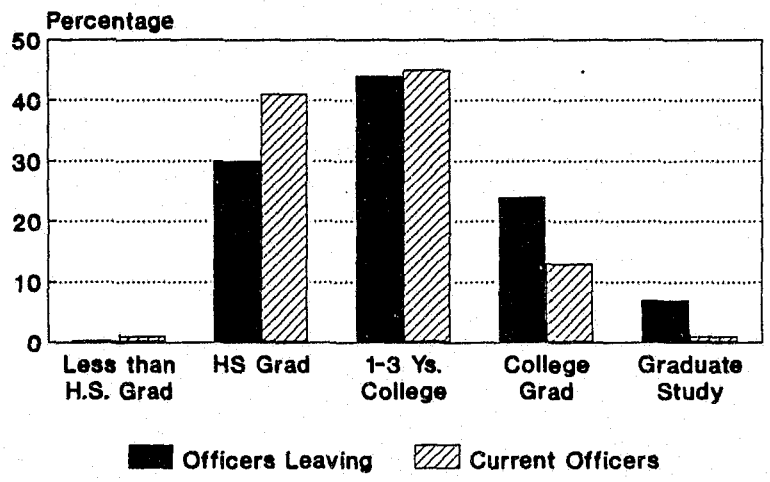
The rank of an officer is, to some extent, a proxy for length of experience with the department. Generally speaking, the longer an officer has been with a department, the higher his or her rank. Fortunately, we know the ranks of both those who left and of officers currently serving Vermont's municipal departments. Of the departing officers participating in this survey, 77% were patrol officers. Of the officers currently employed in Vermont municipal police departments, 54% are patrol officers. Clearly, patrol officers, more than officers of any other rank, are the ones leaving their jobs. If we can use patrol officer rank as a substitute for a low number of years of experience, we confirm Price's (1977:26) finding that turnover tends to occur in the early years of a career.

EDUCATION

Price (1977:35) suggests that in some studies better educated people have higher rates of turnover than those with less education. In looking at educational level among our respondents, 28% of the departing officers were high school graduates, 42% had some college, 23% held bachelor's degrees, and 7% had achieved M.A./M.S. degrees. While a high school diploma represented the most common educational attainment, if all of the officers who had at least some college education were grouped together, they would account for 71% of the

total. Currently 62% of police officers in Vermont have at least some college education, with 16% having at least a bachelor's degree. In regard to education, we thus confirm Price's findings: those who left appear to have had somewhat more education than those who stayed. Figure 3 shows that the officers who have left their positions were more likely to be college graduates or to have done graduate study than those officers who are currently serving.[3]

Figure 3
EDUCATION



MARITAL STATUS

We could argue that a married officer has established relationships, not just with a spouse and children, but often with a wider net of kin. The spouse's employment, the children's schools, and the attachment to family all may tend to keep an officer in a job which he or she would otherwise leave.

From the opposite perspective, law enforcement work has the potential to interfere with an officer's private life. The threat to a married officer is greater than for a single officer. The validity of this perspective is suggested in the following comments offered by the officers on the questionnaires:

> *When I started as a patrolman I was single. A year later I got married. Due to my work shift I was never at home. My wife wanted me to get another job so we would be able to spend more time together and start a family.*

> *I need to properly raise my children, and six-day police shifts do not permit this.*

---

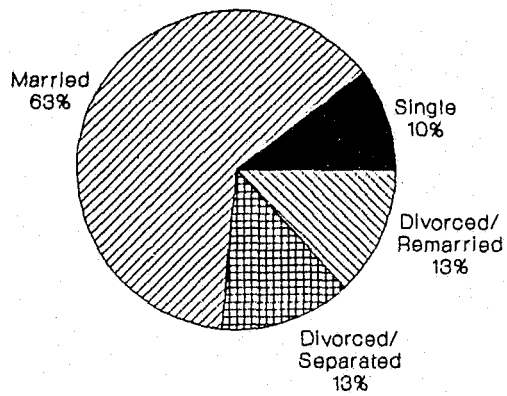
[3] The difference is statistically significant at only the .20 level.

I am married and have no holidays and must work rotating and night shifts.

For 14 years I worked the night shift and am now divorced.

Unfortunately, we have no data on the marital status of officers who stayed in their jobs and thus cannot make the comparisons necessary to know whether or not there is a relationship between police work and marital status. Our data show that among those who quit, the majority of officers who left (63%) were married and had never been divorced. An additional 13% had been divorced and remarried, producing a total of 76% who were currently married (see Figure 4). Another 13% were divorced and not remarried, with the remaining 10% being single.

Figure 4
MARITAL STATUS



SEX

As one would expect, most (88%) of those leaving were men. While the remaining 12% of those who left positions in municipal law enforcement in Vermont were women, only 7% of Vermont's municipal police officers are women. While our findings would suggest that women left their positions more frequently than men, any conclusions must be tentative due to the small number of women in the study and in Vermont law enforcement generally.

The women who left were younger (average = 30 years) than the men who left (average = 34 years) and the officers currently serving Vermont municipal departments (average = 35 years). Women who left were also better educated than men. Ninety two percent of the women had at least some college education as compared with 68% of the men. Differences in experience between men and women who left were not significant.

JOB PERFORMANCE

An extremely important part of the turnover analysis is performance on the last job. Unfortunately we have no information either on the officers in our study or on officers who remained. There is no clear evidence in the literature relating performance to turnover. Surely performance is related to other variables predicting turnover (e.g. job satisfaction), but, certainly from a management viewpoint, the relationship between performance and turnover is important. We would recommend that future efforts include some measure of the officer's job performance.

SUMMARY

In terms of personal characteristics, the typical person who left a position in Vermont municipal law enforcement was:

- Age 35
- Married
- Male
- Educated at the college level
- A patrol officer

The major difference we find between officers who left and those who stayed is that the officers who left came disproportionately from the bottom rank. They were often younger and probably had less experience than those who stayed. In terms of other personal characteristics, officers who left their jobs were similar to those who stayed.

REASONS FOR LEAVING

For the purpose of making policy decisions, the most important information available here probably is the reasons given by officers for leaving their jobs in Vermont municipal law enforcement. Questions addressing this topic allowed officers to say what characteristics of the organization were significant considerations in their leaving. The officers were presented with 32 possible reasons for leaving and asked to rate each as very important, somewhat important, not very important, or unimportant in their decision to leave (see questionnaire, Appendix F). We have arranged the most significant reasons into three groups, each representing a different set of reasons for leaving. The groups, and the reasons within them, are ranked in order of importance. Table 2 displays the percentage of officers saying the reason is somewhat or very important in their decision to leave.

Table 2
REASONS FOR LEAVING THE OLD JOB

Reason	% Saying Somewhat or Very Important
Group I--Job: salary, benefits, and satisfaction	
To attain better benefits	70%
To attain better salary	69%
To attain better retirement	65%
No opportunity for advancement	65%
Wanted a more challenging position	62%
Group II--Frustration with the department	
Didn't like leadership style of the chief	58%
Didn't like administrative policies	58%
Didn't like personnel policies	51%
Wanted different schedule	30%
Department lacked sufficient regulations	26%
Group III--Frustration with the justice system	
Sentences too lenient	50%
Too much plea bargaining	41%
Too many defendant rights	38%
Frustration with the courts	37%
Frustration with State's Attorneys	29%
Court workloads were too high	26%
Recidivism was too high	25%
State's Attorneys' workloads were too high	23%
Frustration with corrections policies	20%
Group IV--Job and family stress	
Job stress	25%
Family pressures	25%
Workload too heavy	17%

To summarize these reasons we computed the mean of the percentages in each group thus producing the following percentages for the four groups:

Table 3
FOUR CENTRAL REASONS FOR LEAVING THE OLD JOB

Reason	Percent Saying Somewhat or Very Important
Group I--Salary, benefits and job satisfaction	66%
Group II--Frustration with the department	41%
Group III--Frustration with the justice system	29%
Group IV--Job and family stress	22%

A glance at these percentages shows the relative importance of issues raised by the officers: (1) lack of compensation and satisfaction associated with the job, (2) frustration with the department, (3) frustration with the justice system, and (4) job or family stress.

SALARY, BENEFITS AND JOB SATISFACTION

The following comments, provided on the questionnaires, illustrate the range of officer concerns about salary, benefits and job satisfaction:

New Hampshire's court systems, retirement program, salary, and benefits are looking better and better every day.

I think one of the main problems in small-town departments is the lack of opportunity for advancement or specialization.

Law enforcement does not pay well. You have to like what you are doing to make the difference.

I knew the pay and benefits were not great in Vermont, but I was willing to put up with that to work in the town where I grew up and all my family are.

I figured while I was taking a new job I might as well have better benefits and pay as well, so I chose New Hampshire.

The majority of us that left law enforcement in Vermont left because of the low pay, lousy benefits, and nonexistent state retirement.

Retirement systems must be brought out of the stone ages and into the twentieth century. A 20 year retirement system combined

with a good "upper middle class" salary would create a valuable pool of professionals that would want to stay in Vermont.

This was the worst retirement package I have ever encountered in my career.

When older officers have to stay on into their sixties because of poor retirement benefits, it practically freezes any hopes of advancement for younger officers (especially in smaller departments).

Get a retirement system like New Hampshire has--so an officer who leaves local for state or state for local still draws said retirement after 20 years.

By coming to Massachusetts, I will retire fifteen years earlier at more money. The cost, of course, is missing out on the quality of living in Vermont, where I visit frequently and most likely will retire.

Salary, benefits and job satisfaction issues were named by more than sixty percent of the officers as very important or somewhat important making these most important reasons for leaving. "Pay" has a strong relationship with turnover (see Blau, 1973; Fry, 1973; Price, 1977). Referring to money, fringe benefits, and anything else with financial value, Price (1977:68) states that higher amounts of pay probably will be associated with lower amounts of turnover.

The fifth item, "Wanted a more challenging position," suggests not just more money, but also a job which is more satisfying. Research suggests that the content of the job is related to turnover. Routinization (Price, 1977), repetitiveness (Porter and Steers, 1973), and lack of autonomy and responsibility all appear to lead to turnover.

FRUSTRATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT

The following comments illustrate the range of officer concerns about their departments:

It is my opinion and experience that most chiefs promise the world before employment, and their promises never materialize.

When I resigned, I specifically resigned because the chief wanted his officers to compromise their integrity. He [the chief] had no integrity, so I resigned . . . One large problem law enforcement has had for many years is uncontrolled "ego." I truly enjoyed my years associated with law enforcement. It's too bad some sick people get into the profession and poison others.

The chief continually harasses the officers in public and insists on involving himself in their private lives.

The chief was a hypocrite.

The chief was not fit for the position.

I mainly left because I was passed over twice for [position omitted] by this chief who . . . cannot do the job of a beat cop let alone chief.

These reasons for leaving (shown in Group II) consist of management issues regarding the department in which the officers last worked. While not knowing exactly what kind of complaints these officers might have about management, we do know that inconsiderate, authoritarian management is often a cause of turnover (Fleishman and Harris, 1962; Skinner, 1969; Ley, 1966; Saleh, Lee and Prien, 1965; Price, 1977:76). Of particular note is the question about the chief. There were relatively few people (25%) who were undecided about the leadership style of the chief. The officers tended to say either that the chief's leadership style was very important (45%) in their decision to leave or that it was unimportant (29%). These complaints about the chief may well be complaints about arbitrary, centralized power.

Some of these complaints appear to arise more frequently in small than in large departments. The literature suggests larger organizations may have less turnover due to more opportunities and better pay (See DeLey, 1984). On the other hand, large organizations can have more communication problems, lower group cohesion, greater impersonalization and bureaucratization. (For a mixture of research results see Mobley, 1982; Mobley et. al., 1979; Porter and Steers, 1973; Price, 1977).

The hypothesis that organizational size is related to turnover can be explored with our data.[4] Table 4 (on the following page) shows the relationship between department size and turnover.

These percentages make clear the high rate of turnover in departments of 8 or fewer officers as compared with departments with 9 to 28 officers. Very large departments (29 or more officers) appear to have a higher turnover rate. However this category represents only three departments which had rates of 0%, 10%, and 22%. The highest, 22%, was the city of Burlington. We suspect that its high turnover rate may be due to factors other than its size. Burlington, the largest department in the state, probably attracts a large number of young out-of-state officers who come to this largest Vermont department because of the anticipated opportunity to get in on the criminal action. Unrealistic expectations or changing career plans may account for the high rate of turnover in Burlington. In conclusion, it appears that turnover is higher in small departments. This suggests that small departments should explore ways of offering a variety of career opportunities not currently available. Perhaps combining with

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[4] The data come from A Profile of Municipal Police Departments in Vermont. Vermont Criminal Justice Center. (November, 1989).

Table 4
TURNOVER OF MUNICIPAL POLICE OFFICERS IN VERMONT, 1989

Number of Sworn Officers in Department	Turnover Rate 1989
4 or fewer	11% (N=5)
5 - 8	12% (N=7)
9 - 12	7% (N=5)
13 - 28	8% (N=14)
29 or more	15% (N=24)

neighboring departments to form regional departments would be one way to accomplish this.

FRUSTRATION WITH THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

The following comments illustrate the range of officer concerns about the justice system:

> *Our "prosecutors" here worry more about liberal defense lawyers than doing their job and prosecuting lawbreakers.*
>
> *One year plus to bring a defendant to trial is ridiculous.*
>
> *I was fed up with the court system in Vermont and I felt (and still feel) that persons who break the law in Vermont get away without paying for the crimes for which they were convicted.*
>
> *I found it difficult to arrest persons for felonies only to have them back out on the street with $50 bail.*
>
> *The Vermont Criminal Code is far too liberal and does not address any problem a crime victim encounters before, during, or after the victim becomes involved with the system.*
>
> *Police officers do not have any real authority . . . Our criminal justice system has completely failed. Turn the criminal justice*

system around and the turnover in police agencies will fall dramatically.

The courts (judges) are very liberal-minded and the majority of their decisions reflect a lack of support for law enforcement personnel.

One of the biggest problems I saw with Vermont law enforcement was the way police officers were treated in court. The state's attorneys made me feel as if I were on trial, instead of the defendant.

The state's attorney's office was the biggest disappointment. I have never experienced such a lack of caring, dedication, and professionalism as I found in the state's attorney's office.

New Hampshire laws and procedures [are] much easier to understand and work with.

These reasons reflect a sense of powerlessness of the officers to perform their tasks successfully in an environment which is not supportive. In contrast to the problems with salary, benefits, and job satisfaction which officers referred to in Group I, many of problems in this group have solutions which are beyond the control of the department. They are problems of the profession, not of the individual departments.

JOB AND FAMILY STRESS

The following comments illustrate the range of officer concerns about job and family stress:

Most departments are undermanned, and therefore officers have to take unnecessary risks, making the job more stressful.

I basically got sick of the B.S. and burned out.

I've been told in the past that I had to be flexible enough to change the way I did my job depending on who was on the select board from year to year. Many of the elected officials telling chiefs what to do don't qualify for patrolman's positions themselves. This kind of treatment by select boards is a big reason people who carry badges and "protect and serve" feel like fourth-class citizens, and see greener grass all around. I'm sure I'm not the only cop who stepped on some elected officials's toes and got squeezed because of it.

The complaints about stress (found in Group IV) suggest that the officers are personally suffering from aspects of their jobs. Cedoline (1982) suggests that stress can result from lack of control over one's destiny, lack of communication about job performance, ambiguity in one's job responsibilities, or a workload which is too light or too heavy.

Stress characterizes not the majority of officers who leave, but certainly a significant minority. Twenty-three percent of the officers who left voluntarily reported stress as an important or very important reason for leaving. In addition to that measurement, we have information, furnished by supervisors, on the reasons why officers left.[5] While admittedly impressionistic, these evaluations add important information to the opinions given by the officers. We believe that the best way to use these data is to regard an officer as leaving because of stress if either the officer said stress was important in his decision or the supervisor indicated that he believed that the officer left because of stress.

Table 5 shows that in small departments over half of the officers cite stress as a significant component in their decision to leave.

Table 5
PERCENT SAYING STRESS IS IMPORTANT OR VERY IMPORTANT BY NUMBER OF SWORN OFFICERS IN DEPARTMENT

Number of Sworn Officers	Percent Saying Stress is Important or Very Important
4 or fewer	54% (N=13)
5-8	24% N=(38)
9-12	19% (N=27)
13-28	17% (N=30)
29 or more	50% (N=20)

Until we get to the very large departments, the larger the size of the department the lower the stress reported by the officers. The largest size category (29 or more officers) is again heavily influenced by the City of Burlington. All but two of the ten officers who left from departments of this size were Burlington officers. With Burlington excluded, the percentage of officers in the 29 or more category saying stress was an important reason for leaving

[5] If the supervisor reported that the officer left because of job dissatisfaction or problems with stress or was unsuited for the job, we regarded the officer as having left because of stress.

would be 17%. Our data appear to support the conclusion that stress is highest in small departments.

JOB SATISFICATION

Running through an officer's rating of money, department problems, the justice system and stress is not only some objective assessment of the adequacy of these environments. There is also, and more importantly, the officer's ***perception*** of those environments. Salary levels, for example, can be measured objectively, but often it is the officer's satisfaction with pay that is crucial to his decision to leave (see Porter and Steers, 1973). The same argument can be made for promotional opportunities vs. perceived promotional opportunities (Porter and Steers, 1973), adequacy of supervision vs. perceived adequacy of supervision (Dansereau, Cashman and Graen, 1974; Graen, 1976, Graen and Ginsburgh, 1977).

An overall measure of an officer's perceptions of the adequacy of his job is what can be called job satisfaction. Prior research (Brayfield and Crockett, 1955; Price, 1977; Vroom, 1964; Porter and Steers, 1973; Locke, 1975; Mobley et. al., 1979; Muchinsky and Tuttle, 1979) suggests that lower job satisfaction is associated with higher levels of turnover. There is, admittedly, much ambiguity in the concept and in its definition. However, given its potential as a predictor of turnover, we include it here. Our information comes from supervisors evaluating whether or not, in their opinion, an officer was happy in his job. Our data show that of those officers who left voluntarily, 82% were happy and the remaining 18% were dissatisfied. Unfortunately, we do not have similar measurements for officers who did not resign and therefore cannot directly assess its causative role in turnover.

We can, however, examine the relationship between the conditions of leaving and the officers' reasons for leaving. Although our purpose in this study is to examine voluntary turnover, it is useful to contrast the attitudes of officers who left voluntarily with those who were forced to resign. Our conclusions must be tentative since we have no data on officers who were fired, and the distinction between a voluntary resignation and a forced resignation is not always clear. Nevertheless the differences appear in Table 6 (next page).

Probably the most important distinction is in regard to the officers' attitudes towards salary, benefits, and job satisfaction. Almost three quarters of the officers who left voluntarily and were happy in their old positions were looking for another job which had superior compensation. In contrast, officers unhappy with their jobs and those who were forced out were relatively less concerned.

It appears that officers who were unhappy and those who were forced out had greater concerns about the justice system and were more troubled by stress. The differences are not large, so any conclusions must be tentative.

PLACE OF BIRTH OF OFFICERS

We are not aware of any turnover literature which treats the question of geographic mobility of organization members. However, in Vermont several observations suggest that the question should be taken seriously. First, extend-

Table 6
REASONS FOR LEAVING BY TYPE OF RESIGNATION
PERCENT OF OFFICERS SAYING EACH REASON IS IMPORTANT

	Type of Resignation		
	Voluntary		Involuntary
Reason for Leaving	Happy Job Experience	Unhappy Job Experience	
Money and Job	72%	53%	46%
Frustration with Department	44%	32%	46%
Frustration with Justice System	27%	39%	32%
Job and Family Stress	18%	42%	19%
	N = 87	N = 19	N = 22

ing the argument concerning size of department, there is a lack of opportunity for advancement in a rural state like Vermont. Officers may want to move elsewhere to find a better law enforcement job. Second, Vermont is a state in which many people feel strong ties to family and place of birth. It may be that many officers could be characterized as "locals" rather than "cosmopolitans" (Gouldner, 1957 and 1958).

Table 7 reveals the pattern of movement of these officers:

Table 7
STATE OF BIRTH BY STATE OF CURRENT RESIDENCE

Current Residence	Place of Birth Vermont	Elsewhere
Vermont	81%	66%
Elsewhere	19%	34%
Total	100%	100%
	N = 52	N = 82

Several observations are appropriate: 61% (82 out of 134) of the officers who left were born out of state. Since we have no information on the percentage of out-of-state officers hired in Vermont, we cannot comment on whether or not this is a high rate of turnover of officers born out of state. What is perhaps

surprising is that 66% of those out-of-state officers chose to stay in Vermont. We might have expected the out-of-state officers to return to their homes. However, in contrast, 81% of the Vermont-born officers stayed in Vermont.[6] We conclude that there is some localism--Vermont born officers are more likely to stay in Vermont than are those born out of state. It is also true that the loss of officers is less than might be expected under the theory that opportunity does not exist here--a majority of officers, regardless of place of birth, stayed in Vermont.

SUMMARY

The following observations can be made from an examination of the reasons for leaving:

- Officers who left did so first, to advance their own careers in terms of both compensation and responsibilities; and second, to escape from a frustrating department.
- Smaller departments experienced higher rates of turnover, and officers from these departments often reported stress as a reason for leaving.
- Higher compensation and better jobs were sought primarily by officers who left voluntarily and were happy in their old positions.
- Although it is a minority of officers who left Vermont, officers born out of state were more likely to leave than were native Vermonters.

[6] The relationship is reasonable but not strong. Phi = .16.

THE NEXT JOB: LEAVING VS. STAYING IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

A second way of studying turnover is to examine whether or not officers take another job in law enforcement.

From one point of view, this is exactly the analysis that we want. A major problem in Vermont municipal law enforcement is the expense involved in sending uncertified officers to the Training Academy. If officers who leave their positions take other positions in Vermont municipal law enforcement, training expenses are reduced. It is therefore quite important to see what distinguishes officers who continue in law enforcement from those who go into other careers.[7]

To invesitgate these issues it is useful to ask the questions:

- Did the officer stay in law enforcement?
- Was the officer happy with his former position?

For this study the following numbers result from those divisions:

Table 8
TURNOVER TYPE BY CONDITIONS OF LEAVING

	Conditions of Leaving		
	Voluntary		Involuntary
Next Job	**Happy Job Experience**	**Unhappy Job Experience**	
Law Enforcement	72	0	3
Outside Law Enforcement	13	19	18
Totals	**85**	**19**	**21**

Officers who were forced out as well as those who left voluntarily but were unhappy in their former position took jobs outside of law enforcement. In contrast, officers who left voluntarily and were happy in their former positions typically stayed in law enforcement.

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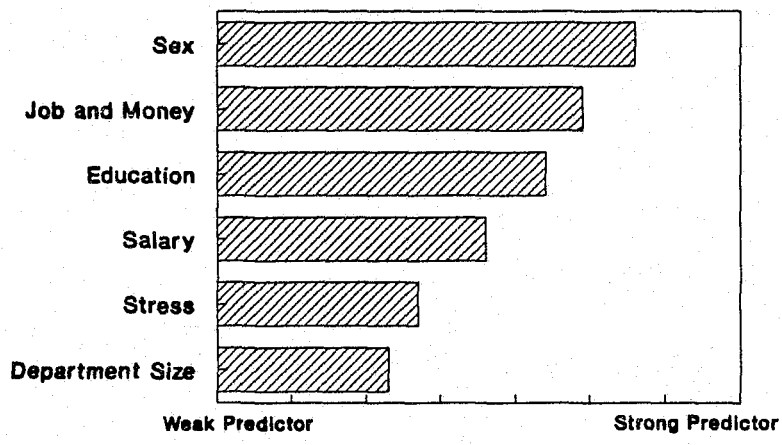
[7] Law enforcement here refers to either municipal, state, or federal law enforcement *anywhere* (not just in Vermont). While this definition does not correspond directly to the question of continuing in Vermont ***municipal*** law enforcement, our purpose is to show how the motivations of officers continuing in law enforcement differ from those changing careers.

Of those officers who left their positions voluntarily, 69% took another job in law enforcement. To investigate the reasons for staying in law enforcement we performed a discriminant analysis (for details of this procedure see Appendix A). Looking at the characteristics of the officers and their departments helps us to predict whether or not each officer will continue in law enforcement. This prediction is based on the variables that were identified to be the significant components of the prediction by the discriminant analysis (see Figure 5).

Figure 5
FACTORS THAT PREDICT WHETHER OR NOT OFFICERS STAY IN LAW ENFORCEMENT



THE PREDICTORS

Sex: Males stayed in law enforcement (72%) more than females (46%). While policing, traditionally a male-dominated profession, appears to continue to pose problems for women, we suggest that: (1) The prediction is based on only twelve women and is statistically significant at only the .35 level. (Further study is needed to confirm the reliability of this finding.) (2) We have no information on why women left the profession more often than did men.

Job: salary, benefits and satisifaction: Officers said they were leaving in search of better salary, benefits and retirement; a more challenging position; and opportunity for advancement. Seventy-five percent of the officers who said these reasons were important in the decision to leave stayed in law enforcement.

Education: Officers who continued in law enforcement had mean educations of 1.9 years beyond high school as compared with a mean of 2.4 years for those who took other positions.[8] Officers with more education presumably have career options unavailable to those with limited education. It is therefore not surprising to see that more of the better educated officers left the profession.

Officer's Salary: While we do not know the salary of each officer in his last position, we do know the department he came from and his rank. Based on this information we assigned to each officer the lowest salary that his former department paid to a person of his rank.[9] Officers continuing in law enforcement were earning mean salaries of $21,448 while those taking other careers had mean salaries of $20,518.[10] We know that salary, benefits, and retirement issues were the issues most often mentioned in regard to an officer's decision to leave his position--attitudinal evidence suggesting the need for better compensation. Here we have evidence grounded in the facts of the situation--namely that **officers who earned less money tended to leave law enforcement.**

Job and Family Stress: This is a complex of reasons for leaving consisting of some combination of wanting a different schedule, claiming the workload was too heavy, there was job stress or there were family pressures. Officers who continued in law enforcement were less likely (19% saying it was important) to say that stress was a reason for leaving than were those who chose another profession (31% of them said stress was an important reason for leaving). We might conclude that officers who left jobs in law enforcement and changed careers were suffering from "burn-out."

Size of Department: The size of the department appeared to have an effect on whether or not an officer stayed in law enforcement. While 68% of those who left took another job in law enforcement, Table 9 shows that this percentage ranges from 58% in the smallest departments to 77% in departments with 9 to 12 or more officers.

It appears that small departments suffered more than large ones from losing officers to other careers. The problem of small departments may be in recruiting officers who are not committed to law enforcement as a profession and, as a result, are more likely to leave their jobs and take a position outside of law enforcement.

Alternatively, the problem of small departments may be that they ***produce*** officers who are unhappy with aspects of the department. These officers are

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[8] This difference of means is significant at the .17 level. Usually a researcher would not report a difference at this level of significance. We report it because in the multivariate discriminate analysis, education was significant; also, in a study like this with a small sample size we feel that this level of significance is acceptable.

[9] While these numbers undoubtedly underestimate the incomes of most officers, it is a method which can be applied consistently and preserves the appropriate ranking of officers relative to each other.

[10] Significance = .11. The previous arguments about significance level apply here as well.

Table 9
PERCENTAGE OF OFFICERS STAYING IN LAW ENFORCEMENT BY DEPARTMENT SIZE

Department Size	Percent Staying in Law Enforcement
8 or fewer sworn officers	58% (N = 38)
9-12 sworn officers	77% (N = 22)
13 or more sworn officers	75% (N = 44)

often older than the average and more concerned with stresses of the job than with better compensation. These officers, particularly those **not** concerned about better salary, benefits, and job satisfaction, were much less likely to remain in law enforcement.

THE MOST IMPORTANT PREDICTOR: THE SALARY/BENEFITS/JOB SATISFACTION FACTOR

The most important predictor of staying in law enforcement over which the department has any control is the salary/benefits/job satisfaction cluster. Given the importance of this, it is useful to examine separately the components of this complex to gauge their relative importance. Table 10 shows the differences in these concerns for officers who stay in law enforcement as compared with those who take jobs outside of law enforcement.

In interpreting this table pay close attention to the column headed Percentage Difference. The bigger the percentage difference, the larger was the difference in attitude between officers who took another position in law enforcement and those who changed careers. It is clear that the most important reasons in differentiating these two groups are the desire for better benefits, the desire for better retirement, and the hope for a more challenging position. These percentage differences indicate that the desire for better benefits, the

Table 10
PERCENTAGE OF OFFICERS WHO SAY REASONS ARE IMPORTANT BY NEXT JOB TYPE

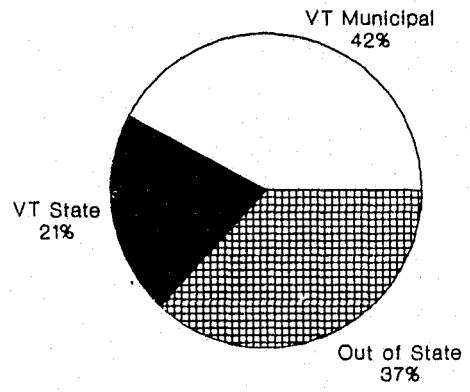
	Next Job Type		
Reasons	Law Enf.	Outside L.E.	Percentage Difference
To attain better salary	74%	62%	12%
To attain better benefits	79%	53%	26%
To attain better retirement	74%	50%	24%
No opportunity for advancement in department	68%	59%	9%
Wanted a more challenging position	71%	41%	30%

desire for better retirement, and the hope for a more challenging position are about equal in importance in differentiating the two groups.

The desire for a more challenging position, while a commendable motive, probably arises out of a variety of situations and calls for a variety of solutions. Understanding the nature of this problem and its potential solutions goes beyond our data. We can, however, examine the behavior of officers who left out of a desire for better benefits and better retirement. Specifically, we can examine what jobs they took so as to assess to what extent turnover might be lowered by improving benefits and retirement.

Although these officers stayed in law enforcement, their next position was not necessarily with a ***Vermont municipal*** agency. Figure 6, below, shows the distribution of those who considered benefits an important reason for leaving by the location of the next law enforcement job. Thirty-seven percent of the officers took jobs out of state. An additional 21% took jobs in Vermont state law enforcement. This leaves only 42% remaining in Vermont municipal law enforcement.[11]

Figure 6
NEXT LAW ENFORCEMENT POSITION FOR THOSE SAYING THEY WANT BETTER BENEFITS



N = 57 Remaining in Law Enforcement

Benefits and retirement appear to be two of the most important reasons, both for leaving a job and for determining who takes another job in law enforcement. Furthermore, it is clear that municipal departments are losing many of these officers to other law enforcement agencies.

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[11]The analysis of officers' desire for better retirement is comparable. Forty-four percent took jobs out of state. An additional 21% took jobs in Vermont state law enforcement, leaving the remaining 35% in Vermont municipal law enforcement.

SUMMARY

On one level it is easy to answer the question "Who stays in law enforcement?" Our data show that officers who were happy in law enforcement usually took another position in the field. However, what makes an officer happy in his or her job is a more difficult question. Among many possible factors, we find that compensation is the most important factor, followed by characteristics of the department which provide a low-stress, challenging job.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

We began this report by describing the concern about the high rate of turnover among Vermont municipal police officers. One is reluctant to make broad recommendations based upon a study such as this, which, while it involved a follow-up of virtually all officers leaving municipal law enforcement in Vermont during a three-year period, nonetheless involved data from only 136 respondents. There are still some tentative recommendations which stem from the respondents' replies:

PROFESSIONALIZATION: IMPROVE THE IMAGE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Our analysis suggests that one of the reasons officers left law enforcement was that they did not feel law enforcement has sufficient public support. The officers comment:

> *We need to be looked upon and trusted as professionals. A great deal is expected from us; we must acquire many talents to be considered a success and a benefit to our community and department, but we do not receive adequate compensation.*
>
> *After a while the police officer realizes that very few people have respect for law enforcement and its officers. We work strange shifts, which is a burden on family life, we constantly deal with life's problems, but we must try not to take it home.*
>
> *There is the perpetual threat of being sued, shot, beat up, etc., and the problem of small town politics. But we seem to deal with this and a whole lot more and those of us who are left and still enjoy law enforcement muddle through, in the hope that someday we will be rewarded.*
>
> *The State of Vermont and municipal departments have to realize that you cannot expect a person to perform at a high level (output and quality) year after year without incentives. If our job were private industry and we showed the same level of dedication, the rewards would be both financial and promotional. The trouble is that municipal departments want their people to be the best, to work hard, and to serve the community well, but offer little money and almost no chance of promotion. That's why the grass will always look greener on the other side.*

We suspect that because these officers did not see police work highly esteemed and highly rewarded, they saw their own involvement in the profession as less desireable than it would be if the profession as a whole were more highly regarded. The evidence for these assertions is:

- The objection to stress created by the job
- The objection to the low salary scales of the department
- The objection to the officer's own low salary

MEETING THE OFFICERS' ASPIRATIONS

In spite of whatever misgivings officers may have had about the profession, those who stayed in law enforcement were considerably more motivated to search for better benefits, better retirement, and a more challenging job. The officer who stayed in law enforcement was the one who believed it was possible to find another job in law enforcement which would meet his needs.

It is much harder to describe those who left the profession. We suspect that these officers left for a variety of reasons. They did not leave in search of better salary, benefits, or retirement. Rather, they appear to have left out of frustration with their schedule, aspects of the justice system, and, especially, stress connected with their own position. These officers were typically older and may have been ready for a career change, not just a change in jobs.

There may be very little that an individual department can do to address the concerns of those officers who choose to leave their positions because of irritation with the justice system, although the availability of better data pertaining to justice system operation might help some better understand the frustrations of working in the system before they experience them first-hand. Likewise, conflicts over departmental regulations or conflicts with other departmental personnel may be unresolvable.

However, salaries, benefits, and retirement were clearly the primary reasons for departure of municipal law enforcement officers in Vermont. Currently, these are largely the province of the municipalities served by these law enforcement agencies. Increasingly, however, states have established statewide retirement systems for municipal (and state) law enforcement officers which establish standardized requirements for eligibility for retirement (e.g. retirement at a standardized percentage of pay after a set number [usually 20] of years).

Time and time again officers responding to the survey--as well as those who have been aware of this research--have referred to the attractiveness of the statewide law enforcement retirement system implemented in New Hampshire. The results of the survey do not automatically suggest that development of an attractive statewide retirement system would significantly reduce police attrition in Vermont, in part because we have no evidence at this time that the attrition rate in Vermont is any higher than is the case in New Hampshire. However, because retirement issues are clearly playing a role in the high rate of municipal police attrition in Vermont, and because there is a *perception* among officers that a statewide retirement system would be beneficial, Vermont should closely examine the relative advantages (and disadvantages) of developing a statewide system which permits retirement after a set number of years at a level which would permit former officers to continue living in Vermont (if they choose) at something above the poverty level.

While such a retirement system would not be inexpensive, it should be remembered that the data examined here suggest strongly that officer attrition (and hence training expenses) will be reduced, perhaps significantly, with the development of an acceptable retirement package. Although development of such a system will not reduce inter-agency movement, it should reduce the exodus of officers who take law enforcement positions in other states.

REVIEW HIRING PRACTICES

Our impression is that Vermont municipal departments do a commendable job of screening applicants. However, clearly one way of securing a committed force and reducing turnover is to do the best possible job with selection. One finding of our research is that males are more likely to stay in law enforcement than are females. Because of the small number of women, our conclusions must be tentative. Furthermore, ethics of hiring may renderthis finding irrelevant. While we are not arguing against hiring females, one should be aware that women have a higher probability of leaving law enforcement.

A second finding is that native-born Vermont officers who remained in law enforcement were more likely to stay in state than were officers born elsewhere. While officers coming to Vermont from out of state obviously bring with them some advantages--perhaps some different perspectives and certainly a breadth of experience that in-state officers don't have--the data suggest that, in terms of the likelihood of attrition, native Vermonters are better risks than non-natives.

RECONSIDER SMALL DEPARTMENTS

The data also suggest that smaller departments have higher attrition rates than larger ones and that officers leaving smaller departments are less likely to continue in law enforcement. A variety of reasons undoubtedly account for this difference--among them the lower financial resources of the smaller municipalities and the unique pressures associated with small-town policing--but there ought to be ways to reduce the discrepancy in attrition rates between large and small departments. Clearly the smaller departments should make attempts to reduce the disparity in salaries and benefits between themselves and larger departments; even if this were done, however, the results here suggest that turnover would remain higher in the small departments. We suggest that further study be made of the differences between officers hired in small and large departments to identify other factors potentially influencing turnover rates. Furthermore, careful attention should be given to the possibility of combining small departments into regional departments thus providing greater departmental resources and more opportunity for the officers.

CONTINUE RESEARCH

The research reported here needs to be continued. Our suggestion is that each officer who leaves a position in Vermont municipal law enforcement be given an exit interview or questionnaire administered by some neutral agency such as the Training Academy.

Our second suggestion is that all data on the careers of these officers be integrated. Records kept by the Training Academy, the individual departments,

the Center, and Dr. Bartol should be available for research in a single database. We sense that there are issues of confidentiality which may hinder this effort but are convinced that these concerns can be addressed in a way that will provide for the confidentiality of all information but allow continuing research using all the data.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS

APPENDIX B: DEPARTMENTAL DATA

APPENDIX C: WHY CHIEFS RESIGN

APPENDIX D: STATE POLICE TURNOVER

APPENDIX E: DATA COLLECTION

APPENDIX F: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX A: DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS

Our research employs a discriminant analysis to predict whether or not an officer will continue in law enforcement. This is a multivariate technique designed to investigate all linear combinations of events that make two groups (leaving vs. not leaving law enforcement) different. While this particular analysis explains less than 40% of the variation in the data regarding leaving or staying in law enforcement, the analysis allows us to isolate which, of the variables known to us, are significant in differentiating the two groups.

The analysis uses the 106 officers who left voluntarily. Ten more officers had to be eliminated because of missing data, thus leaving a total of 96 cases for analysis. The discriminant function has an eigenvalue of .18 and a canonical correlation of .39. Pooled-within-groups correlations (ordered by size of correlation) between discriminating variables and canonical discriminant functions (an indication of the importance of each variable in predicting whether or not an officer will continue in law enforcement) are:

Sex	.56
Job and Money	.49
Officer's Education	.43
Officer's Salary	.36
Stress	.27
Department size	.23

APPENDIX B: DEPARTMENTAL DATA

THE DEPARTMENTS

The departments represented and the number of people leaving from each who returned questionnaires are shown in Table A-1. In examining the figures, one must understand that officers may have left one department, taken a position in a second department and subsequently left that department before receiving our questionnaire. The result is that our records may show him leaving one department, but he reports on the questionnaire leaving a different department. Where there are discrepancies (see Bristol, Ludlow and Springfield) between number leaving (our knowledge of the number of officers leaving each department) and the number returned (the officer's designation of the department that he left), this is probably the explanation.

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLICE DEPARTMENTS

We present in Table A-2 information on departments based on the responses of officers leaving those departments. Be aware that these tabulations generally are based on relatively few officers. Our attempt is to characterize the nature of officers leaving each department. However, these figures may not adequately characterize that population. Certainly no claim is made that these figures represent the department as a whole. We display the mean age and education of officers leaving the department along with the percentage of those officers who left who were men. The mean education level refers to the average number of years of school completed by those leaving the department (i.e., high school graduate = 12 years, college graduate = 16 years).

Table A-1
DEPARTMENT RESPONSE RATES

	Number Leaving	Number Question-naires Sent	Number Returned	% returned (No. ret/ no. sent)
Barre City	2	1	1	100
Barre Town	5	5	4	80
Bellows Falls	7	7	5	71
Bennington	2	2	2	100
Brandon	5	5	4	80
Brattleboro	17	15	14	93
Bristol	1	1	3	300
Burlington	38	33	18	55
Colchester	1	1	1	100
Dover	2	2	2	100
Essex	1	1	1	100
Hardwick	6	6	5	83
Hartford	5	5	3	60
Ludlow	0	0	1	---
Milton	10	9	7	78
Montpelier	7	7	6	86
Morristown	3	3	1	33
Newport	7	7	6	86
Northfield	1	1	1	100
Norwich	2	2	1	50
Randolph	1	1	1	100
Richford	2	2	2	100
Rutland	3	3	1	33
St. Albans	3	3	3	100
South Burlington	2	2	2	100
Shelburne	7	7	5	71
Springfield	4	4	5	125
St. Johnsbury	12	11	7	64
Stowe	1	1	1	100
Swanton	1	1	1	100
Vergennes	4	4	2	50
Waterbury	2	1	1	100
Wilmington	2	2	2	100
Windsor	9	6	5	83
Winooski	3	3	4	133
Winhall	2	2	1	50
Woodstock	2	2	2	100
Totals	**182**	**167**	**134**	**80**

Appendix A-2
CHARACTERISTICS OF OFFICERS LEAVING THEIR POSITIONS BY DEPARTMENT LEFT

Department Leaving	Mean Age	Mean Education	Percent Male Offs.	Number of Officers
Barre City PD	26	14	100	1
Barre Town PD	34	14	75	4
Bellows Falls PD	33	15	100	5
Bennington PD	36	14	100	2
Brandon PD	33	14	100	4
Brattleboro PD	36	14	100	14
Bristol PD	33	16	100	3
Burlington PD	32	14	86	14
Colchester PD	32	Not Avail.	100	1
Dover PD	45	14	100	2
Essex PD	28	13	100	1
Hardwick PD	37	12	100	5
Hartford PD	30	13	67	3
Ludlow PD	42	15	100	1
Milton PD	36	13	86	7
Montpelier PD	33	14	100	6
Morristown PD	28	12	100	1
Newport PD	34	14	100	6
Northfield PD	50	14	100	1
Norwich PD	37	16	0	1
Randolph PD	38	16	100	1
Richford PD	44	12	100	2
Rutland PD	26	14	0	1
S Burlington PD	32	15	50	2
Shelburne PD	31	14	100	5
Springfield PD	37	14	100	5
St Albans PD	34	15	100	3
St Johnsbury PD	37	13	71	7
Stowe PD	26	12	100	1
Swanton PD	37	16	100	1
Vergennes PD	39	12	100	2
Waterbury PD	27	13	100	1
Wilmington PD	26	15	100	2
Windsor PD	38	13	100	5
Winhall PD	42	12	100	1
Winooski PD	36	14	75	4
Woodstock PD	38	13	100	2

APPENDIX C: WHY CHIEFS RESIGN

To talk about why chiefs leave their positions is to venture into dangerous territory since we can base this judgment on the three chiefs and three assistant chiefs in the study. However, we list here the reasons for leaving which were regarded as very important or somewhat important by more than half of the six respondents.

- Didn't like the community's politics (83%)
- Sentences too lenient (67%)
- The workload was too heavy (67%)
- Too much plea bargaining (67%)

Three themes emerge:

- Problems with the community: the chiefs did not like its politics.
- Problems with the job: the chiefs reported heavy workload.
- Problems with the justice system: the chiefs complain about plea bargaining and sentencing.

Lacking from these complaints are issues of salary, benefits or retirement – the issues that are most important for the officers as a whole. On the other hand, community pressures and heavy workload are issues of concern to the chiefs but of little concern to the officers as a whole.

APPENDIX D: STATE POLICE TURNOVER

The Criminal Justice Center invited the Vermont State Police to participate in this study of turnover. We believed that it would be desireable to have some additional data to support or complement those collected from the municipal departments. The state police welcomed the opportunity to have at least a preliminary look at attrition from its ranks.

During the three years encompassed by this study 25 troopers left their positions voluntarily for reasons other than retirement or health concerns. Of those troopers, 14 completed questionnaires--a response rate of 56%. The data reported here are based on 12 usable questionnaires.

It is necessary to remember that the questionnaire was designed for officers leaving municipal departments and so is not exactly the questionnaire that we would design for the state police. Furthermore, we have only 12 officers in the sample. These two considerations suggest that findings based on this sample should be regarded as tentative and further testing should occur.

The ten men and two women in this sample left their positions between 1985 and 1987. Of the twelve, nine were troopers, two were sergeants and one was a lieutenant. All but one moved into a new job immediately after leaving, without any intervening unemployment.

These officers have a median age of 32 years (mean = 32.9, range = 25 to 40). Six (50%) are married (and never divorced), 4 (33%) are single, and 2 (17%) are divorced or separated. They report education of a median of 3.5 years beyond high school (mean = 3.3, range = 1-8). The officers have a median of 5 years experience in law enforcement (mean = 5.4, range = 1-11).

Only one of these officers took another position in Vermont law enforcement. Four took law enforcement jobs elsewhere, and five took jobs outside of law enforcement. In their new positions 75% report receiving higher salaries, 58% better benefits and 67% better retirement.

The following are reasons for leaving the old job regarded as very or somewhat important by at least half of the officers:

To attain better salary	67%
To attain better benefits	58%
Didn't like the dept.'s administrative policies	58%
Wanted a more challenging position	58%
To attain better retirement	50%
No oppor. for advancement in the dept.	50%
Wanted a different schedule	50%

Sixty-seven percent of the officers reported that they would not have stayed in their old jobs even if the salary and benefits and retirement had been comparable to those in their next position.

APPENDIX E: DATA COLLECTION

In the design stage of this project, the Center staff contacted several other states and a number of professional law enforcement associations to learn from any previous research of this type. These contacts confirmed a previous similar search in 1985: while officer attrition is a major issue throughout the law enforcement community, virtually no research has been completed on the topic. Very small studies were found in Nebraska and New England, with the first of these involving three small departments and the second, nine. As a result, the questionnaire used here was developed from scratch. A copy of this survey appears in Appendix F.

This survey instrument was developed by the staff of the Criminal Justice Center, with assistance from a three-person committee of the Vermont Criminal Justice Council and from the criminal justice faculty of Norwich University. The instrument was pre-tested with current officers in the Montpelier Police Department who had previously left other departments. No significant modifications to the instrument were made as the result of the pre-tests. Any limitations in the instrument are solely the responsibility of the Vermont Criminal Justice Center.

The next step was to compile the list of participants from the information provided by the municipal police departments in the first phase of the project so that the survey questionnaire could be distributed. Obtaining addresses for officers involved a variety of techniques. The addresses of many officers were provided by the departments they left. In other cases, departments were able to provide some clues as to where former officers might be living or working, and further information was obtained through long distance telephone operators. There is no doubt that finding officers was made much easier by the smallness of Vermont, the state's rural nature, and the small number of police officers. The best example of this occurred in one department whose entire officer corps had left. That department had no record of where previous officers might be found, but the chief in a neighboring jurisdiction was able to provide assistance.

The Burlington Police Department--the state's largest--provided data on the number of officers leaving but was reluctant to provide officers' names. In order to permit their participation in this project, former Burlington officers received their surveys directly from the police department and responded directly to the Criminal Justice Center. Follow-up efforts with Burlington officers were done directly by the department, with the Criminal Justice Center identifying non-respondents to the department by use of an individual code. Because of the unique procedure used for Burlington officers, response rates for that department are represented separately from those of the remaining sample. However, the responses from Burlington officers are combined with the rest of the sample for purposes of analysis, since comparison of responses did not suggest that the difference in data collection methodology caused significant differences in officers' responses.

Surveys were mailed by the Criminal Justice Center to (non-Burlington) respondents on April 25, 1989, with officers guaranteed confidentiality and

provided with a stamped return envelope. On May 10 a postcard reminder was sent to officers not responding. A small number of non-respondents were contacted by telephone during the weeks of May 15 and May 22 to ensure that they had received their questionnaires. Follow-up questionnaires were distributed on May 26, and the final questionnaire was returned on August 15. Out of 135 non-Burlington questionnaires distributed, 117 were completed and returned by the respondents, a return rate of 87%.[13]

Burlington distributed 18 survey questionnaires on May 19, 1989, with another 15 being mailed on July 20, 1989. The first surveys were returned during the final week in May and continued to be returned through August, 1989. The staff of the Criminal Justice Center contacted the Burlington Department to keep it informed of the number of responses received. While precise details are unavailable, the Center's staff was informed by Burlington that telephone follow-up was conducted for at least some of the original recipients. Of the 33 questionnaires sent by the Burlington Department, 17 (55%) were returned.

We found officers anxious to provide the information requested and eager to append comments about the problems of municipal police officers. The almost cathartic experience of participation in the study suggests that this type of research could be undertaken by others who could anticipate similar high response rates. Our experience indicates, however, that departments are not able to experience the same level of cooperation from the officers. A successful study needs to be conducted by an independent body like the Center.

Comparisons of the results of surveys returned either before or after May 15 showed no significant differences (i.e. questionnaires returned as a result of the follow-up mailing were comparable to those received earlier). Some analytical techniques were performed repeated times as more questionnaires became available. Each repetition produced similar results. Although not strictly a repetition of the study or a validation of the instrument or the results, this experience suggests that our findings are credible and not simply a function of some idiosyncrasy of the data.

Analysis of the data was done using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Most analyses involved simple frequencies and cross tabulations.

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[13]One additional questionnaire was returned in the fall, 1989, after the analysis of the data had progressed too far to include the questionnaire.

APPENDIX F: COVER LETTER AND SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

April 19, 1989

Dear :

The Vermont Criminal Justice Center, in cooperation with the Chiefs of Police Association of Vermont, recently prepared a profile of municipal police departments in the state of Vermont. One of the issues addressed in that report was the high turnover rate of police officers.

In preparing this profile we asked each of the 45 participating municipal police departments to provide a list of all sworn employees who left their departments in the past three years. Since your name was provided by one of those departments, we would like to ask your assistance in helping us understand some of the reasons behind the apparently high turnover rate of police personnel.

The attached questionnaire requests information about your reasons for leaving. It should take only a few minutes of your time and the information you provide will be held in strict confidence. (Your name will **not** be placed on the questionnaire; instead, an identification number will be used for the purposes of follow-up. No individually identified information will be released in conjunction with this research.)

Your help in completing this questionnaire will help law enforcement agencies understand the problems associated with policing in Vermont. Since police departments are committed to reducing turnover, it is hoped that the end result of this survey will be improved working conditions for police officers throughout the state.

Sincerely,

Paul Stageberg, Director

TURNOVER STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

Identification Number ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

Please circle, check or write in the appropriate response to the following questions.

1. What was the last **Vermont law enforcement agency** you worked for (prior to your current employment)?

   _____ When did you leave? Month _____ Year _____

2. How long were you employed by that agency? Years _____ Months _____

3. What was your last position title there? _____

4. How long were you in that position? Years _____ Months _____

5. How much law enforcement experience did you have at the time you left that agency? (This includes all work experience as a full- or part-time **sworn** officer in a municipal, state, or federal agency, not including military service.)

   Years_____ Months_____

6. When you left that agency, did you move immediately (within 2-3 weeks) to another job (of any type)?

   Yes_____ No _____

   If no, how long were you unemployed? _____ (If currently still unemployed, skip to question 16.)

7. What was your next employment? (Circle appropriate response.)
   (1) A municipal or county law enforcement agency **in Vermont.** (Skip to question #9)
   (2) A municipal or county law enforcement agency in **another state.** (Skip to question #9)
   (3) A **Vermont State** law enforcement or investigative agency. (Skip to question #9)
   (4) A state law enforcement/investigative agency in **another state.** (Skip to question #9)
   (5) A **federal** law enforcement agency. (Skip to question #9)
   (6) Other public (state or municipal) employment. (Continue with question #8)
   (7) A private security company. (Continue with question #8)
   (8) Other private employment. (Continue with question #8)
   (9) Self-employment. (Continue with question #8)

8. A. What occupation or profession did you choose upon leaving public law enforcement?

   _____

   B. How long did you stay in this occupation? Years _____ Months_____

   C. Are you currently working in this same occupation? Yes_____ No_____

9. For what agency or firm do you now work?_____

10. How long have you worked for this firm or agency? Years_____ Months_____

11. What is your present position title?_____

12. How long have you had this position?_____

13. Was the salary you made in your **first** position after leaving the Vermont law enforcement agency higher, about the same, or lower than you made in the department you left?

Higher_____ About the same_____ Lower_____

14. Were the benefits you had in your first position after leaving the department better, about the same, or worse than you had in the Vermont law enforcement department you left?

Better_____ About the same_____ Worse _____

15. Was the retirement package of the first position after leaving the department better, about the same, or worse than you had in the Vermont law enforcement department you left?

Better_____ About the same_____ Worse_____

16. We are interested in your reasons for leaving the last Vermont law enforcement agency. Using the following rating scale, please evaluate each of the reasons given below, circling the most appropriate rating:

1 Very important	2 Somewhat important	3 Not very important	4 Unimportant

Reasons for leaving:

(1)	To attain better salary	1	2	3	4
(2)	To attain better benefits	1	2	3	4
(3)	To attain better retirement	1	2	3	4
(4)	No opportunity for advancement in department	1	2	3	4
(5)	Didn't like the department's administrative policies	1	2	3	4
(6)	Didn't like the department's personnel policies	1	2	3	4
(7)	Didn't like the leadership style of the chief	1	2	3	4
(8)	Didn't get along with other officers	1	2	3	4
(9)	Didn't get along with supervisor/middle mgmt.	1	2	3	4
(10)	Department regulations were too stringent	1	2	3	4
(11)	Department lacked sufficient regulations	1	2	3	4
(12)	Didn't like the community's politics	1	2	3	4
(13)	Wanted a different schedule	1	2	3	4
(14)	Wanted to leave law enforcement	1	2	3	4
(15)	Wanted to move to bigger city	1	2	3	4
(16)	Wanted to move to smaller city	1	2	3	4
(17)	Didn't like the town/city	1	2	3	4
(18)	Didn't like community pressures	1	2	3	4
(19)	The workload was too heavy	1	2	3	4
(20)	The workload was too light	1	2	3	4

(Continued on following page)

Reasons for leaving (continued)

1 Very important	2 Somewhat important	3 Not very important	4 Unimportant

(21) Wanted a more challenging position ..... 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 4
(22) Frustration with State's Attorneys ..... 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 4
(23) State's Attorneys' workloads were too high ..... 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 4
(24) Frustration with the courts ..... 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 4
(25) Court workloads were too high ..... 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 4
(26) Too many defendant rights ..... 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 4
(27) Too much plea bargaining ..... 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 4
(28) Sentences too lenient ..... 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 4
(29) Frustration with Corrections policies ..... 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 4
(30) Recidivism was too high ..... 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 4
(31) Job stress ..... 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 4
(32) Family pressures ..... 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 4
(33) Other (explain) _____

17. Would you have stayed with the law enforcement agency you left if that agency had offered:

Salary comparable to that received in your next position Yes ____ No ____ Undecided ____

Salary & benefits comparable to that of your next position Yes ____ No ____ Undecided ____

Benefits & retirement comparable to that of your next position Yes ____ No ____ Undecided ____

Salary, benefits & retirement comparable to your next position Yes ____ No ____ Undecided ____

Retirement comparable to that received in your next position Yes ____ No ____ Undecided ____

Salary & retirement comparable to that of your next position. Yes ____ No ____ Undecided ____

In order to make fair comparisons, we need to collect some general biographical information about you.

18. What is your sex? Female____ Male____

19. What is your birthdate/birthplace? ___ ___/___ ___/___ ___ _____ _____
(month) (day) (year) (town) (state)

20. Where do you live? _____ _____
(city/town) (state)

21. Where do you currently work? _____ _____
(city/town) (state)

22. What is your marital status? (Please circle appropriate response.)
Single 1
Married (and never divorced) 2
Divorced/Separated, not remarried 3
Divorced, remarried 4
Widowed 5

23. Highest educational level you have completed as of this date (circle appropriate number):

High school	Undergraduate	Graduate
9 10 11 12	13 14 15 16	17 18

24. Year you attended basic training at the Vermont Police Academy: 1 9 _ _

25. If you attended basic training outside of Vermont, indicate where and when: 1 9 _ _

_____

26. Have you served in the U.S. Military on active duty? Yes ____ No ____

a. If Yes, what branch? _____ How long? _____

b. Was any of this time spent in the military police? Yes ____ No ____ How long? _____

c. Have you served in the Reserves or National Guard? Yes ____ No ____ How long? _____

WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS YOU HAVE FOR REDUCING THE TURNOVER OF MUNICIPAL POLICE OFFICERS IN VERMONT. (Continue on back if necessary.)

Please return your completed questionnaire in the enclosed stamped, addressed envelope to:

The Vermont Criminal Justice Center
120 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05602

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