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Police Officer Retention: An Analysis of Central Arizona Police Departments' Police Officer Retention Rates and Recommendations for Improvement

David Ross

GOLDEN GATE UNIVERSITY

POLICE OFFICER RETENTION:

AN ANALYSIS OF CENTRAL ARIZONA POLICE DEPARTMENTS' POLICE
OFFICER RETENTION RATES AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR IMPROVEMENT

By David Ross

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INSTRUCTOR: DR. GONZALEZ

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INTRODUCTION

Many municipalities are facing tough budget restrictions; finding ways to reduce expenditures, while at the same time improving a communities' overall well being, can be difficult. When a city loses a qualified police officer to another municipality, the losing agency is faced with replacing the lost officer—often at a cost of approximately $25,000 per officer.[1] Police officer retention is a very important issue—an issue that deserves attention. Understanding why a police officer would voluntarily leave employment with one city to go to work for another city is the first step in reducing police officer turnover rates. Pay is a major issue that affects police officer retention; however, there are many other important issues that every supervisor within a police organization can address in order to improve sworn police officer retention rates within one's own organization.

Research Questions

There are three questions that this research attempts to answer. The breadth of the research deals with why sworn police officers leave employment with one municipality and go to work for another municipality and with what supervisors can do to improve police officer retention rates, while the depth of the research deals with whether or not (and to what extent) starting officer pay affects sworn police officer retention rates. This research answers the following questions:

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[1] This amount is based on an annual starting salary of $31,500 and it is a low estimate. See Appendix B for further details.

contrary, while employed with one of Arizona's smaller police departments (twenty-six sworn officers), I have observed a startlingly high-rate of turnover; this high-rate of turnover seemed to be universal across all of the Verde Valley, AZ police departments.

Realizing that it costs my department approximately $25,000 to replace a lost police officer (it's usually not possible to replace—at least right away—the value of the lost officer's experience, training, and familiarity with the area), I decided to contribute research in the area of sworn police officer retention. The purpose for conducting this research is to provide information for police supervisors and city leaders so that they may take positive steps toward maintaining or improving their agency's sworn police officer retention rates.

We recruit to find the best employees—why not practice retention to keep the best employees once we already have them? The results of this research are designed to give practicing law enforcement leaders (from first-line supervisors through top city leaders) some useful knowledge on the issue of police officer retention.

managers. "Job satisfaction, which is both an important organizational outcome and is interrelated with motivation, can be defined as a person's emotional response to aspects of work (such as pay, supervision, and benefits) or to the work itself".   Since people don't often leave an organization because they are completely satisfied with it, the concepts of motivation, satisfaction, and retention are all interlinked.   The book examines an Australian study of turnover. "This study determined that high turnover was part of a broader set of problems, including lowered production quality, higher costs, low satisfaction with supervisors, work anxiety, absenteeism, and accidents. The researchers concluded that long-term solutions to turnover are to be found in 'identifying and remedying specific issues producing dissatisfaction as well as more substantive programs of organization development or other forms of planned change'" (French, 1998).

Managing with Carrots: Using Recognition to Attract and Retain the Best People: "...[T]o successfully manage and retain employees we must offer competitive pay and benefits". This book details the importance of offering competitive pay, but also the importance of other essential tasks that managers and supervisors must perform in order to maximize employee retention. "Creating memorable recognition experiences can bond an employee to an organization" (Gostick & Elton, 2001).

Public Personnel Administration: Problems and Prospects: This book discusses pay and other matters as they relate to employee motivation. Even though one of the main themes of this portion of the book are the different types of pay for performance systems available to managers (which usually doesn't apply to public sector employees), it still makes specific mention to "what works" in the public sector (Hays & Kearney, 2003).

Love 'Em or Lose 'Em: Getting Good People to Stay: The concepts in this book revolve around issues other than pay as they relate to employee retention. Pay is discussed and the authors realize that it is a very important factor; however, issues such as having good supervisors, having challenging work, having the opportunity to advance one's career, and having meaningful communication between supervisors and employees are discussed (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2002).

Organizational Culture and Leadership: Edgar Shein explains the processes involved with organizational cultural change. There are three basic parts to an organizations culture: visible artifacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions. If an organization requires change at the basic underlying assumptions level, then in all probability the change process will be a multi-year endeavor (Schein, 1992).

Basic Organizational Behavior Second Edition: This book discusses the various theories of motivation as well as the concepts that relate to both job satisfaction and turnover. "Whenever a skilled worker is lost—temporarily or permanently, both productivity and work group morale may suffer. The costs of turnover are especially high. To replace a worker, it may be very expensive to recruit, select, and train someone else, and it may take some time for a newcomer's performance to reach the standard of the former worker" (Schermerhorn, Jr., Hunt, & Osborn, 1998).

Classics of Organizational Theory Fifth Edition: The book discusses both organizational culture and the various organizational theories. The concepts from the Human Resource Theory, and their applicability to employee motivation are explored. Douglas Murray McGregor presents an article in which he details the concepts of "Theory X" and "Theory Y", both of which have specific applicability to employee motivation and retention (Shafritz & Ott, 2001).

Internet sources

30 U.S. Security Agencies; 1 Problem; Divided Forces Face Pay, Retention Woes: This article describes the difficulties the federal government is having with retaining its police officers. The article states that the difficulty arises because of a significant pay disparity between various federal law enforcement agencies (Becker, 2001).

City Profiles: Cost-of-living data is presented for the communities of Phoenix, Sedona, Jerome, and Cottonwood (Bestplaces.net, 2003).

Police Union, Town Reach Impasse: Grafton Officers Say Pay Scale Too Low: This article examines pay for twenty communities surrounding Grafton, MA. According to the data, Grafton pays its officers approximately $10,000 less than the regional starting salary and as a consequence, "...Grafton pays for police academy training for cadets, who later leave the department" (Boynton, 2003).

The National Uniform Crime Reporting Program: Data from the F.B.I. from 1999, 2000, and 2001 shows that it is generally no less dangerous to work for a small department (under 50,000 population) than with a larger agency (F.B.I., 2003).

Decatur Police Seek Higher Salaries: The Decatur, TN police department is seeking to increase its police officer salaries. "The one thing we lack in this department is motivation—positive motivation to do a good job...Captain Ken Collier said the adjustments in pay are needed because Decatur is behind in pay of cities with comparable populations" (Fleischauer, 2002).

Public Safety Salary Trends: Fox Lawson & Associates LLC (2002) examined public safety salary trends both prior to and after September 11, 2001. According to the data, firefighters' average pay increased twenty-four percent while police officers' average pay increased one-and-a-half percent.

Salary Calculator: Data from homefair.com (2003) shows that living in Camp Verde costs essentially the same as living in Phoenix, while living in Sedona costs substantially more than living in Phoenix.

Where Are We Going and How Are We Getting There: This article presents information from the Vermillion, SD police department's chief of police. "An area that requires immediate attention is officer retention". The chief explains that it costs his agency approximately $20,000 to hire and train a new officer and many of those new officers are leaving for higher paying departments (Mabry, 2003).

Salaries for Vital Occupations Fall Short of Income Needed For Housing: "According to the new national data from the National Housing Conference, entitled Paycheck to Paycheck: Wages and the Cost of Housing in America, none of America's...police officers...would qualify to purchase a median-priced home based on median income". This article looks at police salaries in general and the importance of raising those salaries (Mortgage Banking, 2003).

Yahoo Real Estate: Yahoo Real Estate provides cost-of-living data for Clarkdale, Sedona, Jerome, Camp Verde, Cottonwood, and Phoenix (Neighborhood Profiles, 2003).

Municipal Police Salaries as a Function of Community Home Values, Household Incomes and Physical Housing Characteristics: This article explains an analysis of municipal police officer salaries (from 1,423 agencies) and their relationship between the median value of a communities' housing units. "Evidence suggests that police salaries are positively correlated with increased housing values, incomes, and physical characteristics, controlling for regional economic differentials" (Pascarella, 1999).

Low Salaries Plague Rye Police Department: The Rye, NH police department is having a difficult time retaining its police officers. The data from this article suggests the retention issues are caused from lower-than-average salaries for the police officers. "The cost of living has skyrocketed and salaries have not kept up" and "It's important for us to be competitive so that our employees will not be lured away" are just some of the comments from one city council member from that community (Wallace, 2000).

Pay as it Relates to Officer Retention: This is a study conducted by a University of Michigan student. The study analyzes police officer salary and retention rates for Detroit, Chicago, Baltimore, and two of each city's local suburbs (Yost, 2000).

FINDINGS

One of the control variables used in this research is geographic region. The geographic region in this study is the Verde Valley and the Phoenix Metro area. The municipalities in the Verde Valley are Camp Verde, Clarkdale, Cottonwood, Jerome, and Sedona. The municipalities in the Phoenix Metro area, for purposes of this study, are Avondale, Chandler, El Mirage, Gilbert, Glendale, Goodyear, Mesa, Paradise Valley, Peoria, Phoenix, Scottsdale, Surprise, Tempe, Tolleson, and Youngtown. Two possible issues exist with examining a broad range of agencies within this geographic region: cost-of-living differences and the danger level for officers between small and large departments.

An important consideration, with regard to this research, is the perceived danger level that officers (or city leaders) have about police officers that work for small or large agencies. The assumption is made that many officers and city leaders believe that smaller agencies are generally safer to work for than are larger police departments. This is one possible explanation for the phenomena of lower salaries being paid to officers from smaller police departments—city leaders possibly believe that it is safer to work in the smaller department, so the community pays its officers lower salaries. In order to determine whether or not this belief is true, data from the F.B.I. was analyzed.

Federal Bureau of Investigation statistics for 1999, 2000, and 2001 were examined. These data provide information not only about the number of police

officers killed in the line of duty during these years but also the size of municipality the officers worked for.

For the year 2001 there were 7,425 municipal (including university) police departments who reported data to the F.B.I. and the total number of police officers working for those agencies was 307,949. Of that total, 173,595 officers worked for agencies whose resident population was 50,000 or above and 134,354 officers worked for agencies with a resident population less than 50,000. The following table shows the number of officers, from cities of varying sizes, who were feloniously killed during the years 1999-2001.

Table 1   **Number of officer feloniously killed during the following years**

Population	1999	2000	2001	Total
Cities of 250,000 or more residents	8	8	36	52
100,000-249,999 residents	1	4	7	12
50,000-99,999 residents	0	1	1	2
25,000-49,999 residents	4	0	2	6
10,000-24,999 residents	2	3	6	11
Under 10,000 residents	8	9	44	61

- Data for the years 1999-2001, which include detectives, officers on special assignment, and undercover officers (F.B.I., 2003)

According to the data, cities with a resident population of 50,000 or more experienced the felonious death of a police officer sixty-six times during the years 1999, 2000, and 2001. Comparatively, cities with a resident population under 50,000 experienced seventy-eight police officer felonious deaths during that same time period. The data reveals that it is 18% more likely that a police officer

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will be feloniously killed in the line of duty while working for a smaller police agency (under 50,000 resident population) than with a larger department. During the three-year period from 1999-2001, for each 2,630 police officers working for agencies that serviced resident populations of at least 50,000, one police officer was feloniously killed in the line of duty. That number changes to one in every 1,722 police officers feloniously killed for agencies that service resident populations under 50,000. There are several theories for why it is more dangerous to work for a smaller agency; however, this research isn't designed to explore them. The fact remains that it is no less dangerous to work for a smaller police department than a large one, thus allowing for a comparison of the agencies (of varying sizes) in the sample study.

Another control variable for the study is cost-of-living between the different municipalities in the survey. If the cost-of-living for Phoenix is similar to that found in the Verde Valley, then the argument can be made that cost-of-living isn't a factor with regard to officers transferring from one department to another within the Verde Valley/Phoenix area.

Data from three different sources provided information on the cost-of-living for both the Phoenix and Verde Valley areas.

Table 2

City	Cost of Living Index
Phoenix	101.8
Jerome	109.7
Sedona	127.3
Cottonwood	104.0
Overall U.S. Average	100.0

- Based on city profiles, as of 8/9/03, listed on www.bestplaces.net (2003) with data updated on 3/31/03.

City	Cost of Living Index
Phoenix	113.1
Jerome	107.9
Sedona	126.7
Cottonwood	99.4
Camp Verde	99.7
Clarkdale	107.9
Overall U.S. Average	102.76

- Based on neighborhood profiles, as of 8/9/03, listed on www.list.realestate.yahoo.com (Neighborhood Profiles, 2003).

According to homefair.com (2003), as of 8/9/03, if a person makes $100,000 per year living in Phoenix, that person would have to make $138,344 per year living in Sedona just to maintain the same standard of living; that same person would have to make $99,103 per year living in Camp Verde. The data from homefair.com shows that it either costs about the same, or it costs more, to in the Verde Valley than to live in Phoenix.

The data from yahoo.com (Neighborhood Profiles, 2003) shows that four of the five municipalities in the Verde Valley have a lower cost-of-living index than Phoenix;

however, the total cost-of-living index for the Verde Valley (108.32) is just slightly lower than that found in Phoenix (113.1).

The data from bestplaces.net (2003) shows that Phoenix has a lower cost-of-living index than that of Jerome, Sedona, or Cottonwood (Camp Verde and Clarkdale data aren't available on this website).

Based on data from these three different sources, there doesn't appear to be any strict uniformity to cost-of-living information available for comparison. What is clear from all of the available data is that it generally costs the same to live either in Phoenix or in the Verde Valley (with the only universal exception being Sedona—it definitely costs more to live in Sedona).

Since the cost-of-living estimates for Phoenix and the Verde Valley are similar, using municipalities from these areas will be adequate for purposes of this research.

Why Police Officers Voluntarily Leave Employment

In order to begin to understand the techniques for improving police officer retention, it is important to understand why a police officer would want to leave employment with one municipality and go to work for another municipality. The following areas are presumed to affect police officer retention:

Training opportunities, benefits (health insurance, vacation, flex leave, uniform allowance, etc.), pay, amount of required work (wanting to stay busier), amount of

required work (feeling overworked), recognition (feeling like management doesn't appreciate the value one brings to an agency), equipment (wanting better equipment—computers in patrol cars, newer patrol cars, tasers, rifles, etc.), micromanagement (wanting less of it), management isn't fair in the way it hands out discipline, overall management philosophy (management ethics and values), scheduling (4-10's, 5-8's, days off issues, etc.), and personal growth issues (opportunities for both horizontal and vertical growth—more specialty assignments or opportunities for promotion).

There are other areas that affect police officer retention, but only the issues listed above, which management can presumably affect, will be explored.

A total of forty-seven surveys were distributed to all sworn, non-supervisory, police officers from the Verde Valley. Officers were asked questions about twelve retention related issues; once the retention issue is listed, the survey is broken down into four parts:

1. Would this issue alone cause you to leave an employer?
2. This issue is very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not important at all.
3. Does this issue rank in the top three (is it the first, second, or third most important issue amongst all twelve issues)?

4. While employed as a police officer, have you applied for any other police job within the past five years (based in part on any of the reasons stated in this survey)?

A total of thirty-four surveys were returned, representing a seventy-two percent response rate. Of the returned surveys, all thirty-four respondents answered question number one, twenty-three answered question number two, twenty-four answered question number three, and thirty answered question number four.

The following chart shows which of the twelve retention-related issues would be most likely to cause respondents to leave an employer:
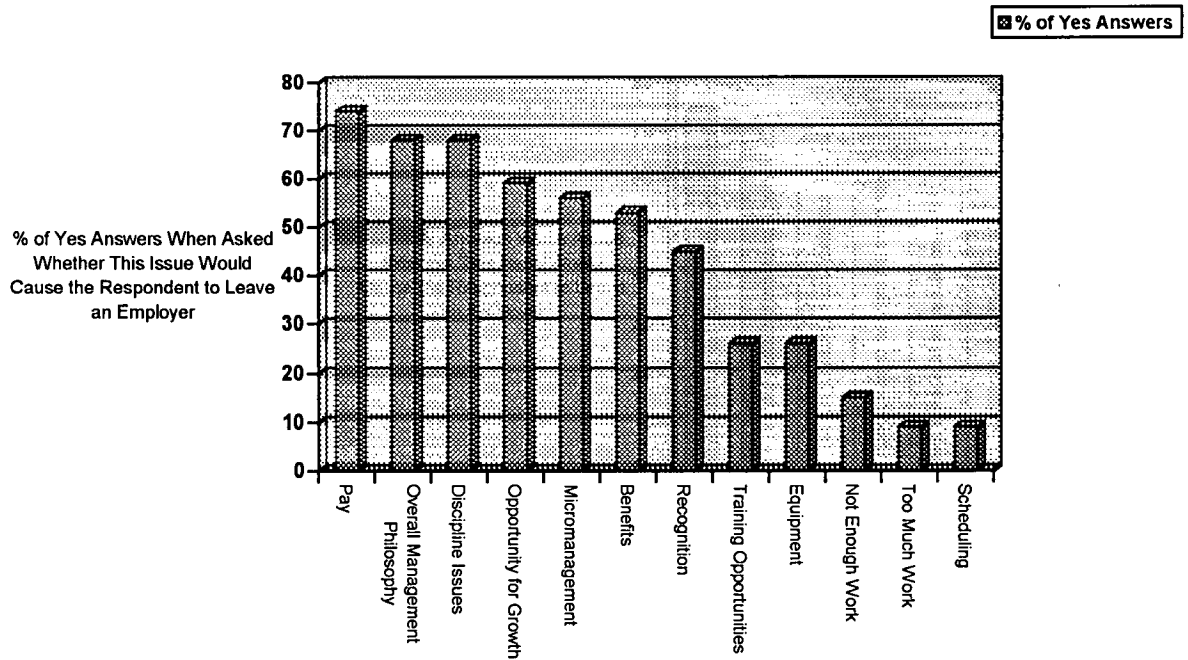
Issues–Ranked in Order of Importance (Based on an August 2003 survey of sworn, non-supervisory police officers from all five Verde Valley [Central Arizona] Police Departments

The top six issues, that would cause a respondent to leave employment with a police department, are in order of importance: pay, overall management philosophy, discipline issues, opportunity for growth, micromanagement, and benefits. Seventy-four percent of respondents said that pay issues would cause them to seek employment elsewhere, while only nine percent of respondents said scheduling issues or too much work would cause them to leave an employer.

All three of the management-related questions posed to respondents are listed in the top six reasons for leaving an employer. Both pay and benefits are items that senior management and city council personnel have the most control over; however, management philosophy (ethics and values), discipline practices, and micromanagement are all issues that each supervisor within an organization can influence.

By placing quantitative values on qualitative issues, statistical comparisons can be made. One of the questions posed to respondents was this:

This issue is very important—somewhat important—not too important—not important at all.

An answer of "very important" received a score of "3", an answer of "somewhat important" received a score of "2", an answer of "not too important" received a score of "1", and an answer of "not important at all" received a score of "0".

Each of the twelve issues received a "total" score for this question and each received a Likert score. The Likert score is the total score divided by the number of respondents for the question. The total possible Likert score is 3.0 and the lowest possible is 0.0. The closer the Likert score is to 3.0, the more important the issue is.

As an example, the question that deals with training opportunities received a total score of 53. There were a total of twenty-three respondents to this question, so the Likert index is 2.30. The question that deals with scheduling received a total score of 38 and its Likert index is 1.65. Clearly, respondents ranked training opportunities as more important than equipment issues.

The following table details the results from this question.

Table 3

Retention Issue	Total Score	Likert Score
Pay	65	2.83
Benefits	62	2.70
Management Philosophy	61	2.65
Fairness with Discipline	59	2.57
Micromanagement	56	2.43
Equipment	55	2.39
Recognition	53	2.30
Training Opportunities	53	2.30
Opportunities for Growth	52	2.26
Scheduling	38	1.65
Want to Stay Busier	36	1.57
Feeling Overworked	30	1.30

Using data from the first two questions, pay, benefits, overall management philosophy (ethics and values), fairness in handing out discipline, and micromanagement all rank in the top fifty percent for both survey questions. This means that not only are these issues generally very important, but they might also be the specific cause of employees leaving one police department to go and work for another agency. On both questions, pay ranked as the most important issue while scheduling and the amount of required work ranked at the bottom.

The third question involved respondents ranking, in order of importance, the top three most important issues (a #1 means this is the most important of all the issues, a #2 means this is the next most important issue, and a #3 means this is the next most important issue).

Any issue that received a ranking of "1" received a weight of 3, any issue that received a ranking of "2" received a weight of 2, and any issue that received a ranking of "3" received a weight of 1.

Using "training opportunities" as an example, the total number of #1 answers was "0", the total number of #2 answers was "2", and the total number of #3 answers was "2". The index occurs as follows:

(0 x 3 = 0) (2 x 2 = 4) (2 x 1 = 2) Total score = 6

Using "Overall Management Philosophy" as an example, the total number of #1 answers was "4", the total number of #2 answers was "1", and the total number of #3 answers was "2". The index occurs as follows:

(4 x 3 = 12) (1 x 2 = 2) (2 x 1 = 2) Total score = 16

The maximum possible score (24 respondents x maximum score of "3") = 72

The higher the total score, the more important the issue is to respondents.

Each of the twelve issues and their scores are listed below:

Table 4

Category	Number of respondents who ranked this as the most important issue	Number of respondents who ranked this issue as the second most important issue	Number of respondents who ranked this as the third most important issue	Total Score
Pay	13	5	2	51
Benefits	3	9	1	28
Overall Management Philosophy	4	1	2	16
Opportunities for Growth	0	1	9	11
Unfair Discipline	2	2	0	10
Recognition	1	1	2	7
Equipment	1	1	2	7
Training Opportunities	0	2	2	6
Micromanagement	0	1	3	5
Not Enough Work	0	1	0	2
Scheduling	0	0	1	1
Feeling Overworked	0	0	0	0

The most important issue, by almost a two-to-one margin, is pay; the least most important issue is officers feeling like they are overworked (see Appendix A).

Using data available from the first three questions, there are now only four issues that consistently rank in the top fifty percent: Pay, benefits, overall management philosophy (ethics and values), and unfair discipline. Pay ranked as the most important issue on each of the survey questions. This research clearly shows that pay is a very important issue, but whether or not pay is actually a factor in the retention of police officers is still to be determined.

Does Pay Affect Police Officer Retention Rates?

In order to determine whether or not pay affects police officer retention rates, data from eighteen Verde Valley and Phoenix police departments was analyzed. View Appendix D for details about specific survey questions.

The survey response rate was 90% and of all the agencies that received the survey, only two failed to respond: Gilbert and Mesa. In addition to the four questions asked on the survey, data retrieved from the Arizona Department of Economic Security with regard to each community's estimated 2002 population is included in the following table.

Table 5

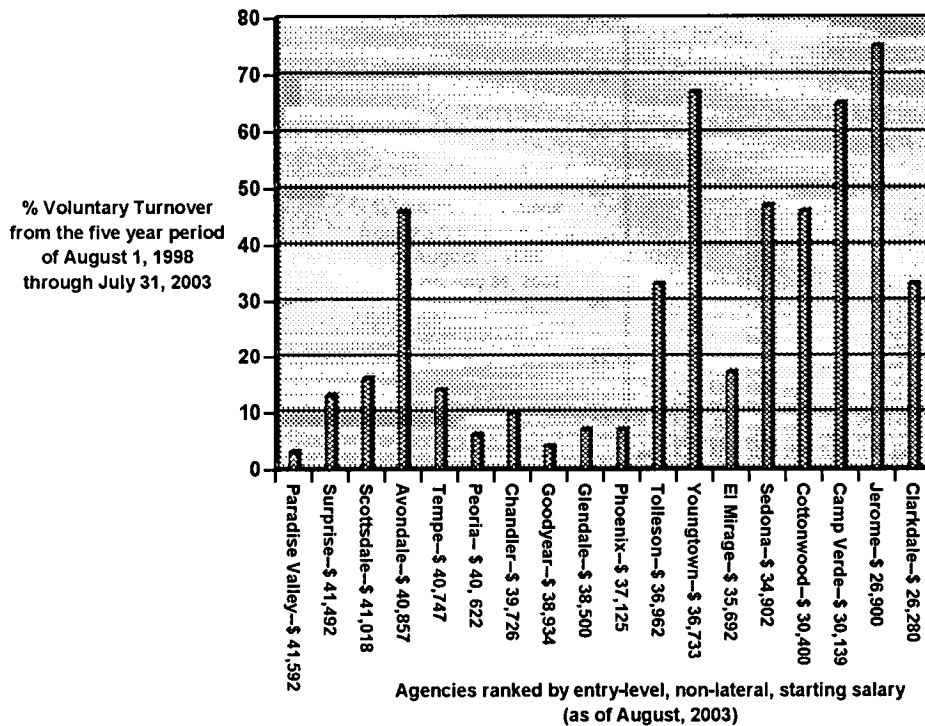| Agency	City's Population in 2002 (Based on Arizona DES Estimates)	Number of Sworn Officers	Ratio of Population to Officer	Starting Salary in July of 1998 for a New Officer (Lateral[+] Officer in Parenthesis)	Starting Salary in August of 2003 for a New Officer (Lateral[+] Officer in Parenthesis)	Percent Increase in Salary (Non-lateral officer) from August 998 to July 2003	Total Sworn Personnel Voluntarily Leaving[#] Between August 1, 1998 and July 31, 2003	Cumulative Voluntary Turnover[#] Rate Between August 1, 1998 and July 31, 2003
Avondale	47,610	72	661:1	$ 29,495	$ 40,857	39%	33	46%
Camp Verde	9,940	20	497:1	$ 24,256	$ 30,139	24%	13	65%
Chandler	194,390	300	648:1	$ 33,722	$ 39,726	18%	31*	10%
Clarkdale	3,570	9	397:1	$ 21,840	$ 26,280	20%	3	33%
Cottonwood	10,020	26	385:1	$ 27,742 ($ 28,754)	$ 30,400 ($ 31,550)	10%	12	46%
El Mirage	20,645	60	344:1	$ 20,758	$ 35,692	72%	10	17%
Glendale	227,495	351	648:1	$ 32,964 ($ 34,699)	$ 38,500	17%	25	7%
Goodyear	26,715	49	545:1	$ 28,396	$ 38,934	37%	2	4%
Jerome	330	4	83:1	$ 20,900	$ 26,900	29%	3	75%
Paradise Valley	14,090	34	414:1	$ 34,205	$ 41,592	22%	1	3%
Peoria	122,655	140	876:1	$ 32,700	$ 40,622	24%	9	6%
Phoenix	1,365,675	2800	488:1	$ 32,136 ($ 33,742)	$ 37,125 ($ 39,000)	16%	185	7%
Scottsdale	214,090	377	568:1	$ 34,341	$ 41,018 ($ 41,428)	19%	60	16%
Sedona	10,540	25.5	413:1	$ 27,248 ($ 29,973)	$ 34,902 ($ 38,397)	28%	12	47%
Surprise	45,125	75	602:1	$ 28,376	$ 41,492	46%	10	13%
Tempe	159,425	325	491:1	$ 34,813	$ 40,747	17%	44	14%
Tolleson	5,500	24	229:1	$ 26,957	$ 36,962	37%	8	33%
Youngtown	3,295	12	275:1	$ 29,224	$ 36,733	26%	8	67%

* 36 officers voluntarily resigned during this time period; however, 5 came back and all of them are still employed

+ Starting salary for laterals can be higher (if a lateral officer starts out higher than the base entry rate, this is the minimum salary the lateral officer will be paid)

For reasons other than retirement

Data from the survey of all agencies reveals very informative information. An examination of starting non-lateral salaries versus an agency's voluntary turnover rate reveals that the top ten paying agencies in the survey have an average voluntary turnover rate of 13.6%, while the bottom eight paying agencies have an average voluntary turnover rate of 47.9%.

% Voluntary Turnover from the five year period of August 1, 1998 through July 31, 2003

Chart axis: 80, 70, 60, 50, 40, 30, 20, 10, 0

Agencies (ranked by entry-level, non-lateral, starting salary, as of August, 2003):
- Paradise Valley—$ 41,592
- Surprise—$ 41,492
- Scottsdale—$ 41,018
- Avondale—$ 40,857
- Tempe—$ 40,747
- Peoria—$ 40,622
- Chandler—$ 39,726
- Goodyear—$ 38,934
- Glendale—$ 38,500
- Phoenix—$ 37,125
- Tolleson—$ 36,962
- Youngtown—$ 36,733
- El Mirage—$ 35,692
- Sedona—$ 34,902
- Cottonwood—$ 30,400
- Camp Verde—$ 30,139
- Jerome—$ 26,900
- Clarkdale—$ 26,280

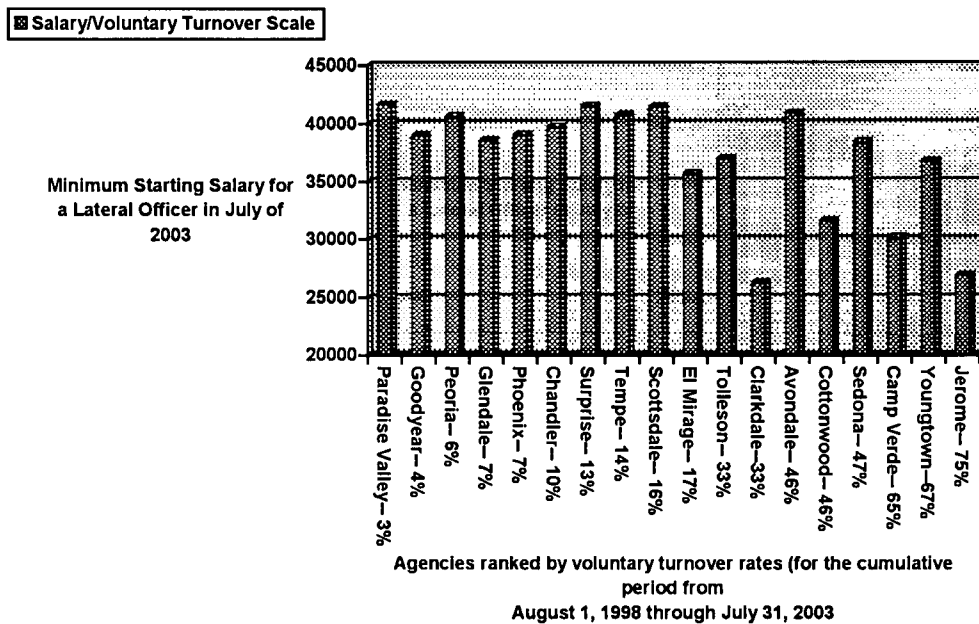**Agencies ranked by entry-level, non-lateral, starting salary (as of August, 2003)**

- The average salary (non-lateral, entry-level) for the top ten paying agencies is $40,061.
- The average turnover rate for the top ten agencies is 13.6%.
- The average salary (non-lateral, entry-level) for the bottom eight paying agencies is $32,251.
- The average turnover rate for the bottom eight agencies is 47.9%.

Looking at the pay versus turnover chart, one can't help but notice the differences between the left half and the right half of the graph. Cottonwood, Phoenix, Scottsdale, and Sedona are the only agencies that potentially pay a different starting salary for lateral officers. Cottonwood's, Phoenix's, and Scottsdale's rate of pay for either lateral or for a brand new officer doesn't change whether or not that agency pays above or below the average salary. Phoenix and Scottsdale pay above the average no matter what and Cottonwood

pays below the average no matter how salary is calculated; however, Sedona's lateral pay pushes that agency above the average.

The chart above reflects non-lateral starting salaries while the chart below reflects starting salaries for lateral officers.

☒ Salary/Voluntary Turnover Scale

Minimum Starting Salary for a Lateral Officer in July of 2003

Agencies ranked by voluntary turnover rates (for the cumulative period from August 1, 1998 through July 31, 2003

Comparing the five Verde Valley agencies with the thirteen Phoenix-area agencies shows remarkable differences:

- The average non-lateral officer starting salary for all five Verde Valley police departments is $27,760 (as of August 2003)

- The average lateral officer starting salary for all five Verde Valley police departments is $30,761 (as of August 2003)

- The average cumulative five-year turnover rate for all Verde Valley agencies is 53.2%

- The average Phoenix area starting salary (as of August 2003) is $39,231 [and $39,375 for lateral officers]

- The average Phoenix area voluntary turnover rate is 18.7%

This means that for the five-year period from August 1, 1998 through July 31, 2003, the Verde Valley lost 53.2% of its sworn police officers and the Phoenix area agencies (in the survey) lost 18.7% of their sworn police officers, because the officers voluntarily left employment.

Since the municipal agencies in the Verde Valley lost an average of 53.2% of their officers (voluntarily) over the past five years, comparing that figure with the number of officers who applied for another police job (while employed as a police officer) during that time period might prove informative. The last question on the officer survey asks officers if they applied for another police job, while currently employed as a police officer, during the past five years (for any of the twelve reasons listed on the survey). Of the thirty responses to this question, seventeen officers answered "yes". This means that fifty-seven percent of respondents actively sought employment elsewhere during the past five years. This number coincides with the actual turnover rate of 53.2%.

The table below lists each agency in the survey and how far (and by what percentage) that agency's pay and police officer retention rates are from the average. As an example, Camp Verde's pay is $6,836 below the average and their voluntary turnover rate is 132% above the average, while Chandler's pay is $2,751 above the average and their voluntary turnover rate is 64% below the average.

The average starting lateral-salary for all eighteen agencies is $36,975 and the average turnover rate for all eighteen agencies is 28%.[2]

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[2] Lateral pay is calculated as the minimum pay above entry level that a lateral officer will receive with an agency (some agencies pay lateral officers within a specific range, + 1 to +10% as an example). If this is the case, the lateral officer salary listed will be plus one percent.
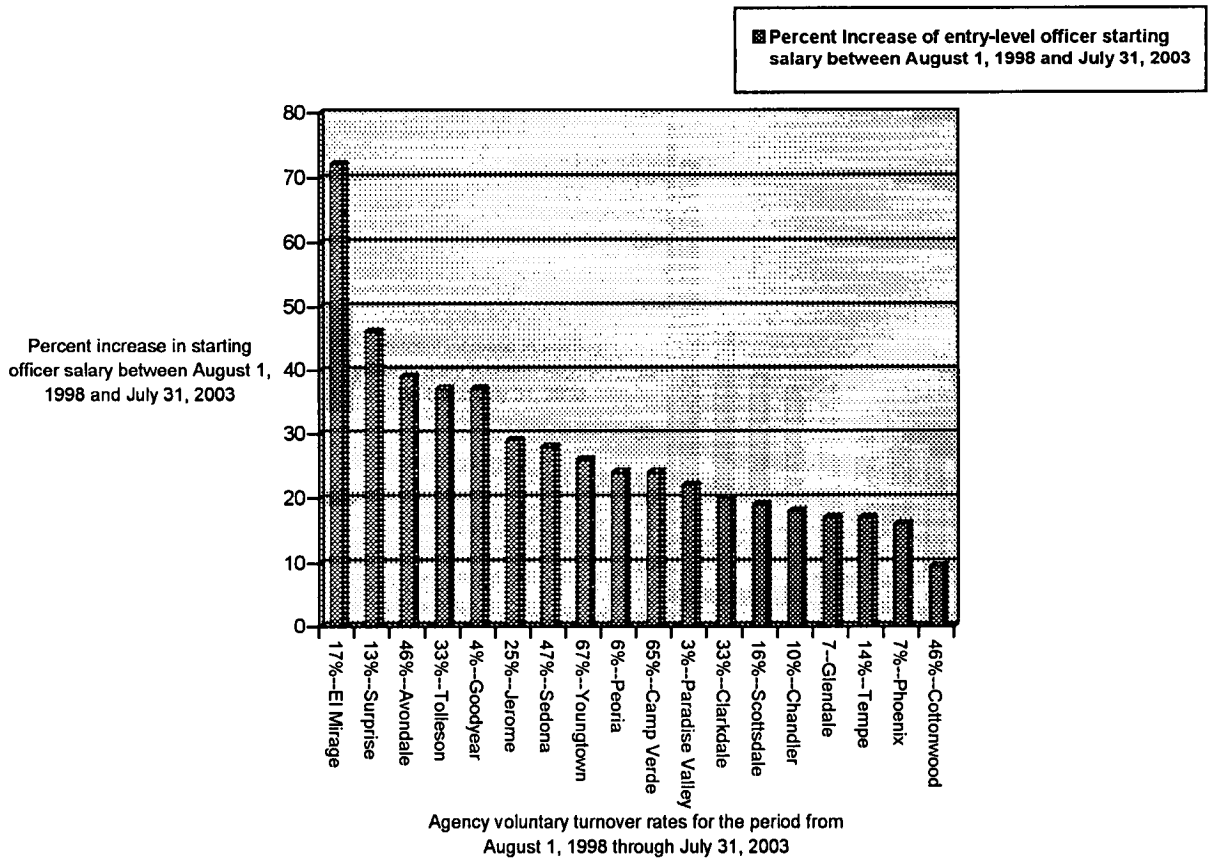
Table 6

| Agency	Salary	Above (Below) Average Salary	Turnover Rate	Below (Above) the Average Turnover Rate
Avondale *	$ 40,857	$ 3,882	46%	(64%)
Camp Verde	$ 30,139	($ 6,836)	65%	(132%)
Chandler	$ 39,726	$ 2,751	10%	64%
Clarkdale	$ 26,280	($ 10,695)	33%	(18%)
Cottonwood	$ 31,550	($ 5,425)	46%	(64%)
El Mirage *	$ 35,692	($ 1,283)	17%	39%
Glendale	$ 38,500	$ 1,525	7%	75%
Goodyear	$ 38,934	$ 1,959	4%	86%
Jerome	$ 26,900	($ 10,075)	75%	(168%)
Paradise Valley	$ 41,592	$ 4,617	3%	89%
Peoria	$ 40,622	$ 3,647	6%	79%
Phoenix	$ 39,000	$ 2,025	7%	75%
Scottsdale	$ 41,428	$ 4,453	16%	43%
Sedona *	$ 38,397	$ 1,422	47%	(68%)
Surprise	$ 41,492	$ 4,517	13%	54%
Tempe	$ 40,747	$ 3,772	14%	50%
Tolleson	$ 36,962	($13.00)	33%	(18%)
Youngtown	$ 36,733	($ 242.00)	67%	(139%)

- Salaries are based on entry level-lateral officer rates (as of August 2003).
- Average salary for all 18 agencies is $36,975 (as of August 2003).
- Average 5-year turnover rate for all 18 agencies is 28% (for the time period of August 1, 1998 through July 31, 2003).
- Nine of the top ten agencies in the survey, with regard to the best retention rates, all have starting salaries over the average.
- Six of the bottom eight agencies in the survey, with regard to the worst retention rates, all have starting salaries under the average.
- 15 of the 18 agencies show a direct correlation between salary and retention (if the agency's salary is above average, the turnover rate is below average—if the agency's salary is below average, the turnover rate is above average).
- The only three agencies that don't have a direct correlation are Avondale, El Mirage, and Sedona. Avondale and Sedona both have above average salaries and below average retention rates, while El Mirage has a below average salary and an above average retention rate. This is explainable since there are other factors in play that affect retention rates; however, this data clearly shows that salary is a significant contributing factor with regard to retention rates.

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These data show that the agencies that pay above the average salary for the region experience a better retention rate than those agencies that pay below the average for the region.

Several of the departments in the survey paid significantly less five years ago than they do now. The increases in salary for these agencies range from a low of ten percent (Cottonwood) to a high of seventy-two percent (El Mirage). El Mirage's salary five years ago was significantly less than any of the other agencies ($20,758), so its drastic increase can be viewed as a necessity in order to retain its police officers.

☒ Percent Increase of entry-level officer starting
salary between August 1, 1998 and July 31, 2003

Percent increase in starting
officer salary between August 1,
1998 and July 31, 2003

Agency voluntary turnover rates for the period from
August 1, 1998 through July 31, 2003

One final area for analysis is that of an officer-to-population ratio. It can be argued, all else being equal, that the greater the ratio of population-to-officer, the harder an officer might have to work—and equally so, the lower the ratio of population-to-officer, the less an officer will have to work. The following chart displays the results of each agency's population to officer ratio and the agency's corresponding voluntary police officer retention rates.

Cities Ranked by Voluntary Police officer Retention Rates
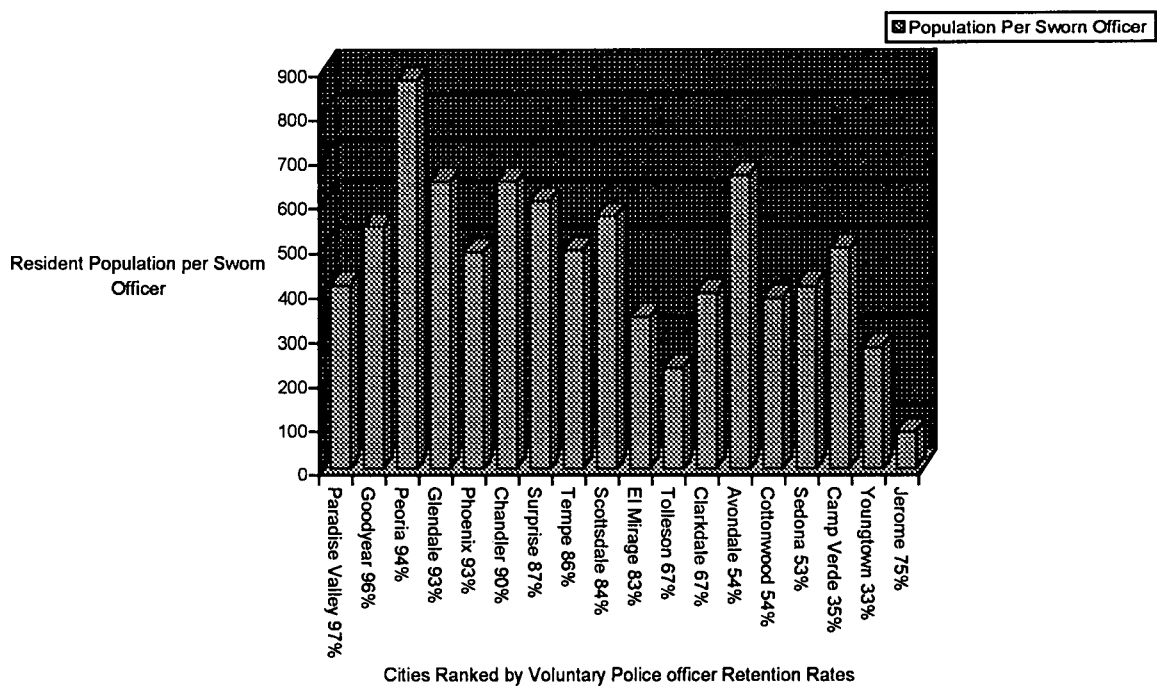
These data suggest no direct correlation between the number of police officers per resident population and an agency's voluntary police officer retention rate. As a matter of fact, in general, the agencies that have a higher ratio of officer-to-population tend to have better voluntary retention rates.

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Impact on the Community

Any manager or supervisor concerned with police officer retention rates should consider more than just the fiscal impact on the municipality (approximately $25,000 per lost officer [view Appendix B]). It is possible for an agency to make up that lost money by not filling the vacant position right away; however, the citizens will go without a full compliment of police officers for a period of time. Some of these other considerations include the loss of all an officer's training, the loss of the officer's experience, the loss of the officer's familiarity with the area, and the loss of the officer's familiarity and interaction with the citizenry. One benefit of having experienced and well-trained police officers is in the area of civil liability—an area that is of the utmost importance to police managers.

As with all research, there are certain threats to both its internal and external validity. Please view Appendix C for a breakdown of the threats to both the internal and external validity for the primary data used in this research.

Issues for Managers to Consider

There are several police officer retention issues for police supervisors and city leaders to consider.

Compensation: According to Hays & Kearney (2003, P. 143) one of the most powerful reward systems is pay. Pay systems are highly instrumental in personnel recruitment, retention, and motivation (Condrey, 1998, p. 608). Some municipalities

that don't pay prevailing wages to their police officers are currently experiencing problematic retention issues.

Boynton (2003) says the police union for the City of Grafton, MA surveyed twenty surrounding communities, and, according to their results, Grafton ranks at the bottom for both starting and maximum salaries. Starting pay for a new police officer is $24,997, which compares to the region's starting salary of $35,099. According to the union's attorney, police are seeking compatibility with the median pay scale for the region, as well as pay that reflects the officer's decision-making authority in life and death situations. "There has been a rampant turnover of young, high-quality police officers that simply can't afford to raise a family, buy a house and support themselves on a base pay of $25,000 per year". The attorney says that Boynton's officer turnover rate over the past three years is thirty percent. "Those officers have gone on to higher-paying departments". "Further aggravating the problem, according to the union, is the fact that Grafton pays for police academy training for cadets, who later leave the department. When those officers leave, the town loses that initial investment and has to repeat the training process again when hiring new officers. At a cost of $24,000 per officer to be academy trained, the town is losing financially, and the taxpayers are losing out on the opportunity to have a more experienced police department".

The Rye, NH police department is also experiencing retention problems. "This used to be a quiet town and residents felt safe in their community. But recent robberies

and accidents have some residents asking...how do we keep the [police officers] we already have (Wallace, 2000)? According to Wallace (2000), Rye is having a difficult time keeping its officers because its salaries are lower than the average. "The cost of living has skyrocketed and salaries have not kept up". One of the town's city council members said, "It's important for us to be competitive so that our employees will not be lured away" and the police chief added, "Loyalty keeps the officer here, but loyalty will only take you so far if you want to pay your bills".

The Vermillion (SD) Police Department's "Chief's Corner" newsletter states, "An area that requires immediate attention is officer retention" (Mabry, 2003). The chief says that it costs his agency approximately $20,000 to hire, equip, and train each officer, yet they keep losing these officers to higher paying departments. The chief mentions that if the agency can control retention, that $20,000 can go toward additional resources or technology—which will be used to better service the community.

The Decatur (AL) police department, according to Fleischauer (2002), says they need to make adjustments to their pay scale because they are behind in pay with cities that have comparable populations. The police chief states his agency doesn't have a lot of upward mobility, so he recommended to council that the department implement a master police officer designation—a position that is considered a promotion.

Even the federal government is feeling the affects of pay disparity. "The lower-paid federal forces often lose officers to higher-paying agencies, according to Defense Protective Services Deputy Chief Inoch H. Williams. We lose a lot of experienced persons. For police forces across the country, this is a standard complaint. Officers have long jumped from one agency to another in search of extra pay" (Becker, 2001).

Fox, Lawson, & Associates (2002) compared salaries in 2001 prior to September 11 with salaries after September 11. Agencies from across the country are represented in the comparison and the results show that after September 11, salaries for intermediate-level firefighters rose an average of twenty-four percent, while salaries for intermediate-level police officers rose an average of one-and-a-half percent. Whereas this data doesn't directly correlate to pay disparities among regional police departments, it does provide evidence that police salaries aren't raising at levels that even keep up with the cost of inflation.

According to Mortgage Banking (2003), none of America's police officers would qualify to purchase a median-priced home based on median income. Even though these data suggest police salaries should be raised across the board—it highlights the importance for agencies to not allow a significant pay disparity to exist within the region. According to Pascarella (1999), municipal police officer salaries are positively correlated with increasing housing values, incomes, and physical

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characteristics, and regional economic differentials. Pascarella's research concludes that there is a need for a consistent police salary scale across all communities and jurisdictions within a region and they shouldn't be based solely on a particular community's financial resources.

A study conducted by Vicki Yost (2000) examines why the Detroit Police Department is losing officers to other agencies. The study compares police officer pay in Detroit, Chicago, Baltimore, and two of each city's suburbs. The conclusion drawn from that study is "a direct correlation exists between the officer retention rate of the cities and the parity of pay with their suburbs" (Yost, 2000). Yost surveyed sixty-five Detroit police officers that left employment with the department. Of the fifty surveys that were returned, the results show that all fifty officers had obtained law enforcement employment elsewhere and pay was the most important reason why the officers left employment with the City of Detroit.

It is apparent that pay affects police officer retention, but there are still other important issues to consider as well.

General Retention Issues: Retention is more than a job for human resources or just senior leadership—it is a job for every manager and first-line supervisor within a police organization. A commitment from top management to employee retention will help motivate lower level managers and supervisors. From a strategic management standpoint, reducing the level of voluntary organizational turnover will not only help

keep talented police officers in one's own community, it should also result in a lower financial bottom line.

Avoid desperation hiring—when candidates are few and your needs are immediate, managers can fall victim to desperation hiring (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2002, p. 72). This is an issue that many people from organizations that aren't competitive with salary are sometimes forced to deal with. Often times feeling forced to hire a candidate (whom might not have been hired if the applicant pool was larger) only results in that employee being fired or forced to resign. One supervisor from a Verde Valley police department commented that many of his agency's officers who were either forced to resign or fired, probably should never have been hired in the first place—but the agency was in desperate need of officers and the applicant pool was very small. The agency satisficed and the result was the agency losing money (hiring and training), losing manpower hours (training), and depending on how poor the officer's behavior and actions were, losing respect from community members. One should never advocate choosing an officer applicant simply because he or she was the best of those who applied—if not enough quality applicants apply, then consider one of two things: reopen the position and look at a new batch of applicants or two, devise a strategy that will attract better quality applicants in the first place.

Retention issues require planning and a lack of planning often results in situations like the one mentioned above.

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The Supervisor: "In a recent poll of 50,000 visitors to www.careerbuilder.com and www.msm.com, one in three polled described their boss as a 'nightmare' and an additional 11 percent said more gently that their boss was 'difficult to work with'. Another 80 percent of turnover can be related to unsatisfactory relationships with the boss (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2002, p. 90).

The nine big complaints employees have about their managers, according to Ashby & Pell (2001, p. 3-12) are:

- Gross compensation inequities
- A fear-based management style (authoritarian leadership)
- Lack of a clear career path
- Tolerance of poor performance
- Broken promises
- Putting personal interests ahead of what's best for the agency (showing favoritism)
- Being treated as second-class citizens
- Lack of recognition for superior work
- Feeling unappreciated

These nine issues are all important for managers and supervisors to consider when dealing with employee retention. If any of these issues exist within the supervisor—subordinate relationship, then problems are likely to arise in the areas of motivation, job satisfaction, and turnover.

In the largest study ever conducted on workplace satisfaction (as of 1999), the top four reasons employees gave for workplace satisfaction were knowing what is expected of them, having the tools to do a good job, having the opportunity to do what they do best, and receiving recognition or praise for good work (Gostick & Elton, 2001, p. 13). Each of these concepts is something that supervisors usually have either direct or indirect control over.

Praise and recognition come in two forms: informal and formal. Informal praise and recognition costs very little and yet it can do so much. "Most employees would value a regular E-mail or a visit from their boss, saying how much they are appreciated or even how they can improve their performance. And who wouldn't love to be asked, 'how can we better recognize you'" (Gostick & Elton, 2001, p. 30-31)? Some simple suggestions include sending a voice mail to the employee and a higher-level supervisor praising the employee's work performance—making informal recognition occur within earshot of other employees—starting briefing, at least once a week, by recognizing an outstanding performer (and let others know what they need to do to be an outstanding performer as well)—and sending out department-wide E-mail that addresses employee accomplishments.

Stephen Covey, one of the foremost authorities on workplace efficiency, says that building strong relationships with one's employees is a key to increasing their overall commitment to the organization. He says the key to relationships is trust; the key to

trust is credibility; the key to credibility is consistency. This consistency arises from tight alignment on vision, values, and key objectives at the top; clear, achievable priorities in the middle; and open information sharing and dialogue at the work-group level (Gostick & Elton, 2001, p. 59).

This open information sharing and dialogue at the work-group level cannot be under-emphasized. Communication, in the form of finding out what motivates one's employees, is important—for without it, a supervisor can only make assumptions. Since motivation and retention are linked, knowing not only what will motivate each employee, but also how to motivate them, is essential for improving an organization's voluntary retention numbers. Again, this often falls back on the line-supervisor, since top leadership most likely (at least in larger departments) won't have the time to discover what motivates each employee in the organization. First-line supervisors are essential to an organization's retention issues.

"Check out your files. Somewhere in there is a letter from a boss thanking you for a job well done, right? You've cleaned out all the others over the years, but this letter of praise remains. Why is that? Praise works for everyone. There's really no such thing as too much praise (as long as it's sincere). Regardless of individual differences, virtually all employees want to hear how valuable they are to the team, how important their work is, and what great work they have done" (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2002, P. 163). If employees aren't valuable to the team and/or they aren't putting forth excellent work, then it is time to find out what motivates those

employees and work with them accordingly (counseling, training sessions, open and honest communication, etc.)—so they become valuable members of the organization. (If after you, as a manager, have done everything possible to motivate, train, and encourage top performance, and the employee still isn't meeting standards, then, with proper documentation, it is time to consider replacing that employee.)

According to Douglas McGregor (Shafritz & Ott, 2001, p. 179-184), there are two basic management philosophies. Theory X managers believe that employees are generally lazy, they must be coerced into working, they lack ambition, they dislike responsibility, and they are resistant to change. On the other hand, Theory Y managers believe that employees seek out responsibility, they are not lazy by nature, and they are able to handle tasks without "management by control". Theory Y states that the essential task of management is to arrange organizational conditions and methods of operation so that people can achieve their own goals best by directing their own efforts toward organizational objectives.

As the bottom line, a supervisor or manager must care about his or her employees and the supervisor/manager must actively strive toward both the motivation and retention of those employees. Good supervisors are essential. "One study found that 50 percent of work satisfaction is determined by the relationship a worker has with his or her immediate boss" and "research by the Corporate Leadership Council

found that a high quality manager is of standout importance in attracting and retaining key talent" (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2002, p. 17).

Motivation: "Effective employee motivation has long been one of management's most difficult and important duties" (Condrey, 1998, p. 565). There are several theories of motivation that are applicable for police supervisors and managers. The following information is a brief overview of some theories of motivation:

Hierarchy of Needs: Abraham Maslow describes five distinct levels of individual needs: self-actualization and esteem—the higher-order needs, to social, safety, and physiological—the lower-order needs. Once lower order needs are met (food, water, shelter, etc.) then social order needs are sought (relationships, affiliation, and a sense of belonging). Higher-order needs are satisfied lastly, and these include a need for self-respect, recognition in the eyes of others, and a desire to achieve self-fulfillment through the creative and full use of one's talents (Schermerhorn, Jr. et al, 1998 p. 65-66).

ERG Theory: Clayton Alderfer's theory is similar to Maslow's theory; however, needs are broken down into these categories: existence needs, relatedness needs, and growth needs. Unlike Maslow, Alderfer believed that if a higher order need couldn't be satisfied (for whatever reason); an already satisfied lower need could become reactivated. Both theories understand the importance of individual needs (Schermerhorn, Jr. et al, 1998, p. 66).

Two-Factor Theory: Frederick Herzberg's theory breaks down motivational factors into two categories: satisfiers and dissatisfiers. According to the theory, hygiene factors are causes of dissatisfaction and they pertain to the environment in which people work rather than the work itself. Hygiene factors include salary, working conditions, relationships with coworkers, and the quality of supervision. What is important to understand is, according to Herzberg, improving a hygiene factor won't increase job satisfaction—it will only decrease the level of dissatisfaction. The elements that will increase job satisfaction are a sense of achievement, recognition, and responsibility (Schermerhorn, Jr. et al, 1998, p. 68-69).

The three motivation theories mentioned so far are all content theories. Two other theories, both process theories, are the equity theory and the expectancy theory. Equity theory is simple: one's own contributions and rewards should equal others' contributions and rewards. If one employee performs at a certain level and receives a certain reward (salary, recognition, etc.), then another employee performing at a similar level shouldn't receive more money or more recognition (Schermerhorn, Jr. et all, 1998, p. 69-71).

Victor Vroom's expectancy theory is similar to the equity theory in that a person expects a certain reward based on a level of work effort. Any time an organization lacks equality in pay or rewards—or when employees aren't receiving what they expect to receive (as far as quality of supervision or salary) then the level of

motivation will be low; low motivation often leads to high turnover (Schermerhorn, Jr. et al, 1998, p. 71).

Job satisfaction and motivation are linked and both can be defined as a person's emotional response to aspects of work (such as pay, supervision, and benefits) or to the work itself. "Like motivation, job satisfaction is a complex notion that manifests itself in different ways in different people. Whether job satisfaction is high or low depends on a number of factors, including how well a person's needs and wants are met through the work, the working conditions themselves, the extent to which an individual defines himself or herself through work, and individual personality traits" (French, 1998, p. 109).

There are other motivation theories; however, this research is designed only to mention the importance of supervisors and managers having a basic understanding of the various theories—and how motivation can affect both job satisfaction and employee retention. "Beyond fair pay, people want challenging, meaningful work, a chance to learn and grow, great coworkers, recognition, respect, and a good boss. The manager can influence these factors. Senior leadership and organizational policies matter too—but the manager has more power than anyone else in the retention challenge" (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2002 p. xiii).

Job Satisfaction and Turnover: Job satisfaction is the degree to which individuals feel positively or negatively about their jobs. It is an attitude or emotional response to work tasks as well as to the physical and social conditions of the workplace (Schermerhorn Jr., et al, 1998, p. 73-78). Because job satisfaction is an attitude that affects human behavior in the workplace, it can determine how much an employee identifies with his or her particular organization. "An individual who has high organizational commitment is considered very loyal; an individual who is highly involved in a job is considered very dedicated to it" (Schermerhorn Jr., et al, 1998 p. 73).

Low job satisfaction can lead to both high absenteeism and high turnover rates. According to Schermerhorn Jr., et al (1998, p. 74), dissatisfied workers are more likely to quit their jobs than are satisfied workers. Both absenteeism and turnover can be costly to organizations. Whenever a skilled employee is lost—temporarily or permanently, both productivity and work group morale may suffer. The costs of turnover are especially high. To replace a worker, it may be very expensive to recruit, select, and train someone else, and it may take some time for a newcomer's performance to reach the standard of the former worker. "In business, turnover is a huge drain on the bottom line. Experts estimate that it costs up to three times the previous worker's salary to replace an employee. Many mid-to-large-sized companies will spend $40,000 or more during an employee's first year on training, mentoring and supplying that employee with all of the tools and knowledge needed to do the job properly" (Gostick & Elton, 2001 p. 24). A COO of a major bank says,

"We're not just losing people; we're losing great people. Almost one in every five of the people who leave us voluntarily every year is our top performer. The cost of this turnover in lost productivity, paperwork, recruitment, and training is huge" (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2002, p. 127).

Statistics for police agencies aren't too far off from the business world. Using an annual salary of $31,500, it costs an agency approximately $25,418 to replace a lost police officer. If the employer is able to hire somebody who is already sworn, that cost is reduced to $10,517 (view Appendix B for the breakdown). These estimates are low since they only take into consideration the salary and benefits paid to the new employee during his or her initial training (seventeen weeks in the academy and twelve weeks in field training).

Organizational Culture: Organizational culture is defined as, "A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (Schein, 1992, p. 12). According to Schein (1992, p. 17) the three components that make up organizational culture are visible artifacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions. Whereas many police department cultures are similar, there are important differences among certain agencies. There probably are those agencies whose culture emits an almost missionary zeal (enthusiasm among all employees) and where a sense of pride,

sincerity, and cooperation is felt among its members. It is these agencies that, more likely than not, will be able to retain its officers at a better rate than similar paying agencies that don't have such a culture. According to Ashby and Pell (2001 p. 34-45), a value-based management style is needed if an organization desires to achieve a sense of pride, sincerity, and cooperation among its members. Those organizations that want to change a lack-luster organizational culture into an outstanding one must make a cultural change. Any organization that chooses to make a cultural change (changing the basic underlying assumptions of all group members) must realize that this change process is a multi-year endeavor (Schein, 1992). Considering its magnitude, the decision to change an organization's culture is a decision that is best left for top city leaders to make.

Implications and Consequences: Research and experience confirm the link between high dissatisfaction and certain behavioral reactions. For example, in a study of eighty-two employees at various levels in several organizations, it was found that frustration could have extremely negative consequences for organizational goals. Such self-reported behaviors as interpersonal arguments, ignoring a supervisor, considering quitting, purposefully damaging or defacing equipment, doing work incorrectly, taking underserved breaks, or using drugs appeared with considerable frequency (French, 1998, p. 110). One would hope that police officers would avoid all of those actions, especially the latter; however, it isn't known what professions were examined in this study. What is clear is that these are possible implications and consequences for extreme dissatisfaction with an organization.

An Australian study of turnover—frequently calculated as the ratio of the number of employee separations during a month to the number of employees on the payroll at the middle of the month—found that one factor was dissatisfaction. This study determined that high turnover was part of a broader set of problems, including lowered production and quality, higher costs, low satisfaction with superiors, work anxiety, absenteeism, and accidents. The researchers concluded that long-term solutions to turnover are to be found in "identifying and remedying specific issues producing dissatisfaction as well as more substantive programs of organization development or other forms of planned change" (French, 1998, p. 110-111).

Strategy for Police Supervisors and City Leaders: These are questions to ask one's self when attempting to determine whether or not one's agency is honestly concerned with achieving excellent employee retention rates:

- Is the agency's compensation program at least at par with competitors for the same types of personnel?
- Do you make employees feel that their work is vital to the agency's success?
- Do you provide training to keep officers at the cutting edge of technology?
- Do you send employees to professional development training programs?
- Do you keep in mind employees' personal and professional goals and provide for them to achieve those goals?

- Do you encourage employees to contribute their ideas and suggestions?

- Do you provide opportunities for employees to assume more responsibility?

- Do employees see career paths as open to them and what steps are you taking to help employees along those paths?

- Do you give both private and public recognition for each person's accomplishments and superior performance?

- Do you sense a feeling of pride in the work and the agency among officers?

If an agency is able to incorporate an analysis of these questions into its strategic planning process and take action on the results of that analysis, then long-term success in the area of improved police officer retention rates will most likely be realized.

There are things that are simply out of management's control when it comes to voluntary turnover—better climate, better schools, moving to be closer to family, one's spouse desires to move, etc., so nothing can stop voluntary turnover in its entirety. The goal should be to reduce the level of turnover to an acceptable level; this level must be individually determined by each organization. Is thirty percent acceptable? Ten percent? Strategic management involves, in part, setting operational goals for the future. Retention goals should be included in a strategic management plan to help ensure the long-term success of an agency.

CONCLUSIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A review of the information presented in this research leads to the conclusion that there are several employee-retention related concepts that management can and should influence.

After reviewing all of the data from the survey of police officers, the survey of eighteen central Arizona police departments, and from all secondary sources, there appears to be a direct correlation between pay and an agency's voluntary police officer retention rate. Even though pay was listed as the most important issue in each part of the officer survey, there were several other important retention issues as well. The majority of these other issues, that officers felt were very important and would cause them to leave employment with an agency, had to do specifically with management action or inaction.

An analysis of the data show that agencies in the survey that have a starting salary that is within 10.7 percent of the highest paying department in the region (defined as within a two-hour drive and having a similar cost of living) experience the best sworn police officer voluntary retention rates.

Areas for further research include expanding this particular research to include all of the municipal police departments within a two-hour drive of Phoenix. The current study uses agencies that are all within an approximate two-hour drive of each other; however, further studies can include one central location (such as

Phoenix) and use all agencies within a two-hour drive radius from that central location. In addition, obtaining cooperation from both Mesa and Gilbert should prove useful.

Replicating this research in other areas of the country is an option, so long as the agencies involved are within the two-hour drive limit from each other and there is a comparable cost-of-living.

The officer survey that revealed pay is the most important issue in police officer retention and that management issues are the next most important, can be replicated in any police agency across the country to determine if similar findings exist.

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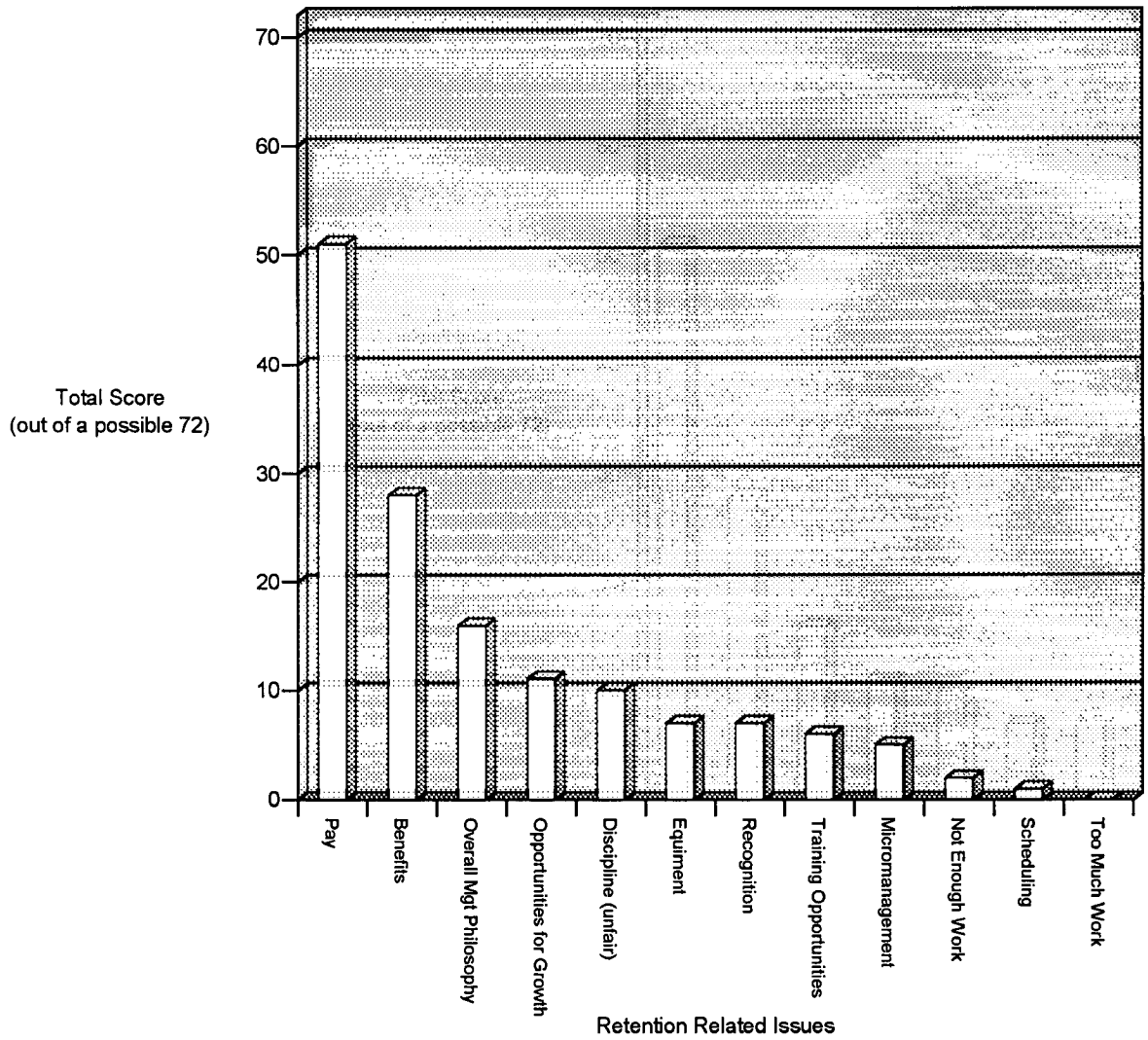
- Using these twelve issues, respondents ranked the top three most important. Any issue receiving a "1" ranking received a weight of 3, any "2" ranking received a weight of 2, and any "3" ranking received a weight of 1. Pay is, by almost a two-to-one margin, the most important issue.

Explanation of the financial cost breakdown for a city to replace a sworn police officer based on an annual salary of $31,550:

Annual Expenditures:
- Salary $31,550
- Retirement @15.94%
- Public Safety Life @ .57%
- Health Insurance $ 4,172*
- Worker's Compensation Insurance 4.41%
- Social Security Insurance 6.2%
- Medicare Insurance 1.45%
- Uniform Allowance $840[#]

Total annual cost for a police officer under this scenario: $45,577.83

Using the assumption that an agency will send a new police officer through a 17-week academy and the new officer will spend 12-weeks in a field training program, the total cost for this hypothetical municipality to replace a sworn police officer is $25,418.40

Hourly rate cost to the city is $21.9124
Total hourly rate $21.9124 x 40 hours per week x 29 weeks (academy plus
FTO) = $ 25,418.40

Using the assumption that the city will replace the lost officer with an officer that is already sworn and thus will only have to put the new officer through a 12-week field training officer program reduces the expenditure amount to $ 10,517.95

Hourly rate cost to the city is $21.9124
Total hourly rate $21.9124 x 40 hours per week x 12 weeks (FTO) = $10,517.95

- These figures are a low estimate, since they don't take into account any potential vacation buyback nor do they take into account any of the costs for advertising for the position, psychological exams, polygraph exams, medical exams, or overtime for any current officers participating in the hiring process are factored in.

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* This health insurance figure represents one particular agency in the study at a "single" rate for health insurance.

\# This is based on an approximate monthly uniform allowance of $70.00. This figure will vary by agency.

Threats to internal validity:

History: There are many factors that affect sworn police officer retention rates; it is always possible that other factors affected the dependent variable.

Maturation: Not applicable by design.

Statistical Regression: Not applicable by design.

Selection: All sworn non-supervisory personnel from every municipal Verde Valley police department were provided an equal opportunity to complete the survey. There wasn't random assignment of the surveys—all officers were given an equal opportunity to participate. In this sense, selection is not an issue; however, the survey wasn't offered to each agency in the study (Phoenix area officers weren't surveyed, but data from Phoenix area departments was used).

Experimental mortality: Not applicable by design.

Testing: Not applicable by design.

Instrumentation: Not applicable with regard to the survey of Verde Valley police officers, but applicable for the survey of all police departments. Agencies were asked for the starting officer (and starting lateral) salary in July of 1998; the current starting officer (and starting lateral officer) salary [August 2003]; the number of sworn officers the department currently has; and for the cumulative total of the number of sworn personnel who voluntarily left city employment, for reasons other than retirement, during the five-year time period of August 1, 1998 through July 31, 2003. The researcher is dependent on agency representatives providing accurate data.

Design Contamination: Not applicable by design.

Threats to External Validity:

Unique program features: Not a threat so long as the same survey questions are used.

Effects of selection: If the selection of officers from the Verde Valley represents officers' opinions from across the United States with regard to views about retention issues, then selection isn't an issue. To improve the program's external validity, this same survey can be conducted using officers from other geographic regions of the country.

Effects of setting: There is a pay disparity between the various police departments in this study. Another similar agency survey can be conducted, using agencies from other geographic regions of the country, to determine whether or not there will be similar results. Because part of the methodology behind this study involves using agencies within a specific geographic region (a one to two hour drive), and each of the communities has a similar cost-of-living index, any future studies that use these same program features should produce similar results.

Effects of history: Since the study involves turnover during a 5-year time period, history shouldn't be an issue. Other studies, conducted during different 5-year time periods, will allow for a comparison to determine whether or not history is an issue.

Effects of testing: Not applicable by design.

Reactive effects of experimental arrangements: Not applicable by design.

Survey

Police Officer Retention

I would like to thank you completing this survey. The four questions below shouldn't take very long to answer and the data you provide is very important. If you are able to, please E-mail your completed response to clarkdalekid@aol.com (as either a Word attachment or copied and pasted into a basic E-mail narrative field) by August 25, 2003. Once again, thank you. This survey is part of a study that will attempt to determine whether or not, and to what extent, pay affects a city's police officer retention rate. The survey is being given to every Phoenix area and every Verde Valley municipal police agency.

Agency:

1. Currently, how many sworn personnel does your police department have?

2. What was your police department's starting officer salary in July of 1998?

$	Laterals $

3. What is your current police department's starting officer salary?

$	Laterals $

4. Cumulatively, from August 1, 1998 through July 31, 2003, how many sworn personnel from your police department voluntarily left your city's employment (excluding retirement)?

That is the end of the survey; once again, thank you. If you would like to contact me, please either E-mail or call me at the Cottonwood Police Department, 928-634-4246 x 221.

Sincerely,

David Ross, Cottonwood Police Department &
Executive Master of Public Administration Graduate Student

Survey for all Verde Valley Area Police Officers

I would like to thank everybody in advance for taking the time to complete this survey. You are under absolutely no obligation to complete this form; however, the information you provide will be a part of a study that attempts to determine not only the causes behind a police officer voluntarily leaving one department for another department, but also what the benefits are to a community in retaining qualified police officers. I don't anticipate this form taking very long to complete. Every officer from Jerome, Clarkdale, Cottonwood, Camp Verde, and Sedona will be given an opportunity to complete this survey. There is no need to put your name anywhere on this form. I will be picking up all completed forms on August 18, 2003.

For each of the reasons listed below, please circle

A: Whether or not that reason alone would cause you to leave an agency and seek another police

job, and

B: How important, in general, you believe this issue is.

Finally, of all of these issues, which three are the most important? Only three of the following reasons will have a rating (1 being the most important, 2 being the next most important, and 3 being the next most important)—all others will have this section left blank.

You aren't being asked to rate your current employer; these are general questions that pertain to why a police officer might leave an agency (not necessarily the agency you work for).

Training opportunities—would this issue alone cause you to leave an employer? YES NO
This issue is: very important—somewhat important—not too important—not important at all
Top three ranking? _____

Benefits (health insurance, vacation, flex leave, uniform allowance, etc.)—would this issue alone cause you t leave an employer? YES NO
This issue is: very important—somewhat important—not too important—not important at all
Top three ranking? _____

Pay—would this issue alone cause you to leave an employer? YES NO
This issue is: very important—somewhat important—not too important—not important at all
Top three ranking? _____

Amount of required work (you want to stay busier)—would this issue alone cause you to leave an employer? YES NO
This issue is: very important—somewhat important—not too important—not important at all
Top three ranking? _____

Amount of required work (you feel overworked and want less required work)—would this issue alone cause you to leave an employer? YES   NO
This issue is: very important—somewhat important—not too important—not important at all
Top three ranking? _____

Recognition (you feel management doesn't appreciate the value you bring to an agency)—would this issue alone cause you to leave an employer? YES   NO
This issue is: very important—somewhat important—not too important—not important at all
Top three ranking? _____

Equipment (you want better equipment--computers in patrol cars, newer patrol cars, tasers, rifles, etc.)—would this issue alone cause you to leave an employer? YES   NO
This issue is: very important—somewhat important—not too important—not important at all
Top three ranking? _____

Micromanagement (you want less of it)—would this issue alone cause you to leave an employer? YES   NO
This issue is: very important—somewhat important—not too important—not important at all
Top three ranking? _____

Management isn't fair in the way it hands out discipline—would this issue alone cause you to leave an employer? YES   NO
This issue is: very important—somewhat important—not too important—not important at all
Top three ranking? _____

Overall management philosophy (management ethics and values)—would this issue alone cause
you to leave an employer?   YES   NO
This issue is: very important—somewhat important—not too important—not important at all
Top three ranking? _____

Scheduling (4-10's, 5-8's, days off issues, etc.)—would this issue alone cause you to leave an employer? YES   NO
This issue is: very important—somewhat important—not too important—not important at all
Top three ranking? _____

Personal growth (better promotional opportunities or more specialty assignments)—would this issue alone cause you to leave an employer? YES   NO
This issue is: very important—somewhat important—not too important—not important at all
Top three ranking? _____

While employed as a police officer, have you applied for any other police jobs within the past five years (based in part on any of the reasons stated above)? YES NO

There are other reasons why an officer might seek employment elsewhere (better schools, better climate, family issues, etc.); however, these are all issues that an agency has little or no control over—thus, you aren't being asked for your input on them. This ends the survey—Thank you for your valuable input.

If you have reason to contact me, please call the Cottonwood Police Department at 634-4246 x 221 or E-mail me at clarkdalekid@aol.com.

Sincerely,

David Ross
Executive Master of Public Administration Graduate Student