

Rekindling Police Burnout: Implications for the Motivation and Retention of Personnel

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Abstract

A qualitative research design was utilized to address the issue of police burnout as described in the pertinent literature. The goals of the study were to determine the causes of burnout among a sample of recently retired or separated police officers and what could be done to alleviate those feelings. Data gleaned from respondents produced three common themes: benefits of higher education (graduate degrees); physical separation from the policing environment coupled with critical reflection of their careers; and the art or practice of teaching traditional age students courses in criminal justice in a higher education setting. Respondents reported all of these factors combined to alleviate their former feelings of burnout and to significantly transform their previous perspectives of the field of policing. The conclusions section of the report offer sound recommendations for an improved response to the individual and organizational consequences of police burnout.

Advances in technology, increasing budgetary constraints, changing police roles, and generational differences regarding attitudes and beliefs within the law enforcement community all combine to create problems with the recruitment and retention of qualified personnel more than ever before. Regarding retention issues specifically, burnout plays a critical role. In its most basic sense, burnout is described as "...a chronic state of emotional exhaustion stemming from an unrelenting series of on-the-job pressures with few moments of positive experience" (Champoux, 2000, p. 308). However, much of the literature surrounding the issue of stress and subsequent burnout center around what many authors identify as critical incident stress, or severe emotional trauma brought on by involvement with deadly force and/or other violent encounters (McCamey et al, 2003). Similarly, corresponding employee assistance programs, if they exist at all, tend to focus on violence-induced forms of stress or symptoms of stress such as alcoholism, drug abuse, and cynicism (Thibault et al, 2001).

Practical experience, however, coupled with data collected for this research project, suggest that a substantial number of stressors related to burnout are caused by a variety of internal or organizational factors, (such as rigid bureaucratic or mechanistic structures and commensurate policies and procedures) as well as feelings of marginalization due to a lack of any real input into the decision making process or any real or perceived sense of autonomy. Supporting the notion that a variety of stressors contribute to police officer burnout, Zhao, Thurman, and He (1999) conducted an exhaustive study that found job satisfaction among police officers to be multidimensional. These dimensions included perceptions about the importance of their work; recognition, or lack thereof, received from their respective agencies; autonomy; and the capability to do their work. Autonomy, however, emerged as a significant variable in all related regression analyses (Zhao et al., 1999). "...this finding suggests that police officers like to work in an environment where they enjoy considerable freedom to decide what they will do. [The] traditional model of policing emphasizes control to enhance employees' conformity and predictability ... this is achieved, however, by sacrificing field officers' freedom to solve problems" (Zhao et al., 1999, p. 12). It is these variables--employee control, forced conformity, and lack of autonomy--that, in part, drive the research at hand.

No matter what the particular cause, the fact remains that when burnout occurs, a significant number of police officers who may once have been productive members of their organizations, frequently become marginal employees, or worse. The consequences of this condition, at the very least, can be damaging to the organization, not only in terms of work productivity, but perhaps more important, in terms of positive community relations. The question which begs an answer then is what actions or steps can be implemented to take police officers who were once productive and enthusiastic but have fallen victim to burnout for the reasons cited above, and re-instill or re-ignite the flame which once motivated them. Herein lay the goals of this research project.

Review of the Literature

There is a large body of extant literature that addresses the related issues of stress and burnout as they pertain to law enforcement practitioners, as well as personnel that work in similar human service professions. Accordingly, there is an imperative to provide a pragmatic framework for understanding the various components of behavior that exacerbate the concept of burnout. In a study of 250 New Zealand nurses for example, Kalliath and Beck (2001) noted the affect of low levels of supervisory support in relation to job burnout and turnover. Nurses, like police officers, "are frequently exposed to intense and emotionally draining life and death situations, which over time can take a toll on them personally" (p.72). Similarly, Zhao, Thurman, and He (1999) found that the affect of the police agency's work environment is a principal source of job satisfaction. Their detailed study revealed that the majority

of research into the concept of job satisfaction among police officers has previously focused on four key independent variables that have revealed inconsistent and contradictory results, namely: an officer's educational background; ethnicity; gender; and years of service and/or police officer's rank. The results of their research indicated that the work environment is a crucial feature of job satisfaction in police work along with the significance of individual autonomy, wherein police officers have the freedom to choose how they will carry out their specific function. Carter (2002) focuses on the concept of self-image and the relationship of that image to the work environment as it pertains to issues such as morale. He correctly points out that "What is called good morale is a state of well-being that stems from a sense of purpose and confidence in the future. It depends on role conception, role performance, and role satisfaction" (pp. 177-178). Carter has emphasized that the move toward community policing may serve to enhance job satisfaction giving the police officer a "greater sense of purpose in their profession, and the feeling of accomplishment when they help resolve community problems" (p. 182). Related to Carter's study is the seminal research of Herzberg (1968), who indicated that job satisfaction is closely associated with how important the employee perceives the work to be, the level of responsibility that is attached to the work, and the recognition received by the employee for doing the work.

Other research studies have highlighted the lack of supervisor and organizational support, while indicating that long-term police stress will result in burnout, reduced motivation, and poor performance (Anshel, 2000). Research by Elroy, Terpinig, and Kohls (2001) revealed that the major factors contributing to burnout included role conflict, role ambiguity, adequacy of time to accomplish tasks, and low worker support.

A review of the literature as it relates to strategies for the retention and motivation of personnel addresses the issue of continuing education in its relationship to the law enforcement professional specifically, and the field of criminal justice in general. Continuing professional education as it relates to the law enforcement profession has not witnessed a great deal of research, both from the pre-service and in-service perspective.

The value and need for continuing professional education within the law enforcement community, however, is undisputed. New procedures, changing trends of crime, information technology, the ever-expanding base of knowledge regarding criminal behavior, and huge liability concerns (to mention a few) add to the level of perceived stress and are a major contributory factor in regards to the concept of "burnout." Effective solutions require continuing education programs that are informative, relevant, and address a specific need or concern. Creating programs that enable that needed change involves a careful assessment of how a program should be structured and carried out. The objective of this category is to shift the emphasis on the way continuing law enforcement professional education has been conducted. Moreover, it is an attempt to arrive at a system of continuing education that has substance and quality, and causes a positive change in behavior and attitude, both in the pre and in-service practitioner. The purpose is to attempt to correct perceived inadequacies in the current state of continuing law enforcement education while improving the quality of service delivered as the result of that correction. It is our belief that law enforcement professionals seek continuing educational programs of substance and worth and that current methods of instruction have proven both inadequate and of little practical use. It is also our belief that as criminal justice practitioners become involved in the direction and delivery of their education and training, they become stakeholders in the value that the profession has to them as individuals. Houle's (1975) classic work identified eight "aims" of continuing professional education. According to Houle (1975, pp. 438-439) continuing profession education should strive to:

1. keep up with the new knowledge required to perform responsibly in the chosen career;

2. master new conceptions of the career itself;
3. keep up with changes in the relevant basic disciplines;
4. prepare (sometimes after the fact) for changes in a personal career line;
- 5.. maintain freshness of outlook in the work done, so that detail is not neglected;
6. continue to grow as a well-rounded person;
7. retain the power to learn; and
8. discharge effectively the social role imposed by membership in a profession.

The eighth "aim" illustrates the compelling dichotomy that exists between the desired outcome of continuing professional education and the current state of continuing professional law enforcement education. Houle (1975) explained this point in greater detail, stating that "the professional must learn how to take collective responsibility, to make right choices on issues, to improve and extend the delivery of service, to collaborate with allied professions, and to help police the actions of fellow professionals" (p. 439).

Miller's (1967) seminal work in this area proposed an educational model-the process model, which is built upon the way in which adults learn. This led to his conclusion that essentially education was useless unless the participants were given a stake in wanting the information: "It means involving the participants in identifying their own educational needs" (p. 322). From the law enforcement education perspective, practitioners seek ongoing professional education that is both useful and pragmatic. As such, when police officers become stakeholders in the content, quality and delivery of the instruction they receive, the conversion to effective practice is both a natural and valuable outcome.

Similarly, Cervero (1988) believed that continuing professional education required a foundation of knowledge attached to the various components of effective functioning: "To build the strongest conceptual base for practice, it is important to blend what we know about professional education and learning, human resource development, the structure and content of pre-service preparation, and the context of professional practice" (p. 17).

Schon (1983) broke down the knowledge base of each profession into four required elements: "It is specialized, firmly bounded, scientific, and standardized" (p. 23). He further delineated two separate forms of knowledge that were at the basis of what he called professional artistry: "knowing-in-action" and "reflection-in-action" (p. 54). While Schon describes "knowing-in-action," as the "characteristic mode of ordinary practical knowledge" (p. 54), Brookfield (1987) describes "reflection-in-action," as "...theories in use, acknowledging the contextual complexity of work settings, and problem setting ...all important elements in the process of critical thinking at the workplace" (p. 155). Brookfield further elaborated on this distinction: "critical reflection is much more than a purely cognitive process of analysis and speculation. Instead, critical reflection in action is an artistic process. It is intuitive, improvisational, and creative" (p. 155). In summary, and according to Cervero and Wilson (1994), "Simply put, ... education cannot be a neutral activity; if it were, why would anyone care about it? Therein lies educators' central responsibility--namely, what kind of world will their practice shape?" (p. 5).

We take the position that there is a need to link in-service training and education to the purposes of policing and to actively involve the law enforcement practitioner in the delivery of that training. Currently, it is not linked, nor is it related to the performance of police officers or the growth of police officers individually or law enforcement in general. Law enforcement vocational training and continuing professional education programs in criminal justice must develop new standards that are relevant to the field and address the concerns of both the practitioner and society in

general. Current models of training have proven to be inadequate and do not take full advantage of the limited resources of time and money. At a period when public agencies are under increased scrutiny with regard to an accountability of those resources used, it becomes progressively more important to use those funds in the most effective manner possible. As such, a new model of learning needs to be developed within the police-training curriculum that brings about a change in the structure, intent, focus, and outcome of that delivery system.

Along with this intended change is a reorientation of the existing mindset, or philosophy, of how police training has been performed in the past, with the view of approaching this new model in a way that adequately confronts those concerns and nurtures a value to the police officer that becomes internalized. In short, police training needs to step "out-of-the-box" and explore new methods that infuse relevance and meaning into preexisting training paradigms that have proven to be ineffective.

In an article by Guthrie (2000), the issue of higher learning and police training as it is related to cognitive and communication skills and less on the use of force, indicated that "higher-order thinking" began at the college level and was then "supplemented by quality law enforcement entry-level academy and in-service training" (p. 124). The needed change in the existing training philosophy was discussed:

Typically, academy training is rigid, authoritarian and does not lend itself to higher order thinking. It is conducted in a paramilitary setting, with discipline the mainstay of daily activities. In-service training is somewhat less rigid with more interaction and problem solving. Law enforcement needs to incorporate more use of cognitive skills and problem solving in entry-level training. Service is the operative word and the guiding principle to be employed.... The problem with law enforcement is that the need for reform in the training process and educational standards is grounded, for the most part, in anecdotal information with little current empirical evidence (p. 125).

Brown (2001) viewed the concept of learning from a phenomenological perspective, articulating that the importance of that which was learned related to how the person, in this case the criminal justice student, viewed the experience of learning. "The relevance of acquiring an education is often predicated upon what is valued in the acquisition of knowledge"(p. 101). It can be argued here that the information that was valued, within the context of training, was knowledge that was useful to the recruit or in-service trainee, directly relating to practice and demonstrated by competency in that skill or knowledge.

Of particular note is the relatively recent nationwide move toward community policing which requires not only a redefinition of both recruit and in-service training, but also a revision of existing training curricula to adjust to this operational paradigm. Addressing this need, Birzer (1999) indicated that: "What new officers learn from the police academy curriculum serves as the foundation and building blocks for effective change in policing"(p. 16). Restating the point that modern police training requires information that is both practical and relevant, a departure from the traditional police-training model is advocated. This new model of policing addresses the community policing principle of problem solving and attempts to understand the root causes of crime. "Training should refocus on more pertinent and relevant issues (eg., conflict resolution, quality-of-life issues) than the traditional curriculum, which has largely centered on the mechanical and technical aspects of policing" (p. 17).

Crime and crime prevention activities occupy approximately 15% of the average police officer's daily routine. The vast majority of his or her work involves calls of a service-related nature. Yet, and as correctly pointed out by Birzer (1999), "The paradox in the current state of police training is that the majority of training curricula are designed almost exclusively to teach officers what they will be doing a small percentage of their on-duty time" (p.

17). It is further recommended in this article that due to the increased interaction with citizens, police officers operating under the community-policing model be trained in subjects as diverse as interpersonal interaction, ethnic and cultural diversity, drug and alcohol awareness, de-escalation skills, domestic violence, and communication skills.

Birzer (1999) recommended that police academies place less emphasis on the traditional lecture format "which emphasizes mastery and obedience, puts undue stress on students, and does not encourage effective learning or support the community-policing mission" (p. 17). Birzer further indicated in his article that police departments "should shift training from mastery and obedience to a focus on empowering... that may foster a more effective learning experience" (p. 18). This article, which served as a framework for the changing viewpoints of how police recruit-and in-service training should be restructured, noted the important andragogical principle of student self-direction. "Training conducted in the police academy should highlight self-directed learning, which goes hand-in-hand with community policing.... for community policing to succeed, police officers must be self-directed" (p. 18).

It is correctly pointed out that the mechanistic and highly behavioral nature of police work needs to change, as well as the current command-and-control structure that allows that thought and behavior process to thrive. It is the rigid adherence to this control structure that effectively prevents highly motivated and intelligent police officers from exercising any modicum of self-direction. This lack of self-direction contributes to a feeling of powerlessness, thereby exacerbating police burnout. Truly, many police officers believe that any human mistake, made while exercising even the smallest amount of self-direction, results in some form of punishment. It should not surprise most law enforcement practitioners that the concept of self-direction, whether it's personal input into self-directed learning or self-directed practice, is not an activity encouraged by most policing agencies. Police departments, in general, choose to direct their officers learning as well as their practice.

Wade and Hammick (1999) discussed an approach to vocational training primarily directed to students in the health care industry. In their description of action learning, they gave an overview of the process involved that offered students the opportunity to become action enquirers:

It is usual for an issue or problem from practice to be presented by a student, and the intention of the activity is one of "getting things done," i.e. it is a problem-solving exercise. Having raised a concern, the presenting student looks to their colleagues to help them explore and reflect upon the situation or problem, by questioning or drawing upon their own experience.... An action plan which eventually helps them reach a satisfactory outcome follows. (p. 164)

In describing the objective, "Action learning-circles allow students to focus their learning upon their own practice and encourage their colleagues to act as critical co-investigators promoting dialogue and collaborative enquiry" (Wade & Hammick, 1999, p. 164).

In conclusion, this section seeks to summarize and highlight some of the more important design considerations when planning a curriculum for police recruit training and continuing professional law-enforcement education. The references to aspects of police training that have been recommended, and that also embody many of the principles firmly rooted in higher education, do not diminish the fact that the primary objective of vocational training is to teach the vocational skills necessary to perform that job function. These references and recommendations do, however, fall outside the traditional structure of firmly established police training paradigms and seek to involve practitioners on a level not previously utilized.

It is difficult to overstate the importance and complexity of policing a large and complex society. As such, training courses designed to teach that

job function need to remain intact. Rather, the intention here is to incorporate those stated and recommended principles of professional education within the existing police training structure, while incorporating new ideas intended to stimulate a renewed interest in the profession. It is our belief that a focus and a re-dedication to recognizing those special qualities that the adult learner brings to the training environment will serve to strengthen and add new relevance and importance to what may be the most critical element of law enforcement, that of training and education. In the words of the "father of adult education," Eduard C. Lindeman (1961):

Adult education is an attempt to discover a new method and create a new incentive for learning; its implications are qualitative, not quantitative....adult learners are precisely those whose intellectual aspirations are least likely to be aroused by the rigid, uncompromising requirements of authoritative, conventionalized institutions of learning. (p. 19)

Methods

Subjects

Purposeful sampling combined with snowball sampling techniques were utilized to identify the sample population. Through the process of snowball sampling, eight subjects were identified as appropriate for this qualitative study. Of the eight interviewees, all had been separated, either through retirement or career change, from their respective agencies for a minimum of one year. Regarding level of education, four had master's degrees, two had terminal degrees, and the remaining two were working toward completion of a terminal degree in the field of criminal justice or a related discipline. Their ages ranged from forty to fifty-five and all but two were currently employed at the time of their interviews as full-time professors and/or instructors at various Illinois universities and community colleges, teaching both graduate and undergraduate criminal justice courses. The remaining two interviewees, at the time of their interviews, held positions as adjunct professors, one at a university and one at a community college.

Design and Procedures

The design used for the research at hand was qualitative or ethnographic-like in nature and relied upon in-depth interviewing as the primary source of data collection. Document analyses were used as well to collect pertinent data. Prior to actually identifying a research population from which to draw our sample, the researchers, all former or retired members of both the Chicago Police and a suburban Cook County, Illinois police department, and all currently teaching in a higher education setting, began the process of serious discussion and reflection on the issues related to burnout. The one common denominator which emerged from these collective reflections was that being physically removed from the police department for a period of time, coupled with teaching criminal justice classes at the university level, aided in overcoming the detrimental symptoms associated with prior periods of stress and burnout. With this in mind, the researchers then set about the process of selecting a similar sample population to investigate these prior observations.

Once the subjects were identified, the researchers utilized a structured interview process. Each of the interviews were conducted during the time period of February-March, 2003. Saturation, the point in which no new or additional information was gleaned, was reached after the eighth interview. Participation in the research was voluntary in nature and each interviewee was informed of the purpose of the research, the identity of the principal investigators, and offered a guarantee of anonymity. All interviewees voluntarily agreed to participate.

The questions which guided the interviews focused on the following five areas: if they felt the effects of burnout as described by Champoux (2000) at any time during their respective careers; the perceived reasons for burnout; whether or not a length of absence from the police environment alleviated in any way their prior feelings of burnout; the effects, if any, of their formal education on their assessment of these issues; and whether or not the act of teaching in a higher education setting had any affect on these same perceptions. The data gleaned from the interviews were transcribed and coded appropriately, using the techniques of analytic induction and constant comparison to arrive at common or emergent themes. These themes formed the basis for our narrations in the following section.

Results

As stated in the preceding section, data gleaned from the interviews were coded using the techniques of analytic induction and constant comparison to arrive at common or emergent themes. Before proceeding to those themes and their corresponding narrative descriptions, a few words regarding the demographics of the interviewees seem to be in order.

Three major themes developed from the data analyses: the role of higher education; physical absence from their respective agencies coupled with critical reflection of their careers and stages of frustration or burnout; and the experience of teaching criminal justice courses to primarily traditional age students. While each theme will be addressed separately in this section, it seemed to be a combination of all three variables, which led to recommendations for an improved response to the problems associated with burnout. Those recommendations shall be addressed in the conclusions section of this report.

Benefits of Higher Education for Police Officers

One of the three themes to emerge from this study was an understanding of the benefit of the higher education experience. Virtually all the respondents recognized the major role education played in their chosen profession and how a further understanding of it can affect this emerging profession. All the respondents were police officers of considerable service and all held advanced academic degrees of some type. Adding to this was their experience of teaching in higher education and a strong ability to reflect on those experiences. The former officers identified three sub-themes during the interviews. They saw the benefits of higher education as relating to the individual, the profession, and the organization.

This individual sub-theme received the greatest attention from the respondents. Many validated the observations of previous researchers such as Cox and Moore (1992), Stevens (1999), and Wilson (1999). The respondents identified 16 areas where, in their estimation, the benefit of higher education was dramatic. No sense of an order of importance could be observed, but rather the group of responses, when seen in their totality, painted a portrait of individuals in the throes of professional change. It appears that quiet evolution is shaping the face of police service.

This list of responses addressing the individual sub-theme is:

- Qualification for promotion
- Creates cognitive confidence
- Builds an environment for reflection
- Teaches reflection
- Provides additional experiences from which to reflect

- Creates behavioral change
- Allows for modeling and testing hypothesis
- Creates positive personal change
- Creates a constructive concept of information discrimination
- Creates critical thought, analysis of information, problem solving skills
- Diminishes the fear of learning
- Creates a change in the social construct of Police Officers
- Expands the understanding of skills
- Creates cognitive connections to skills
- Develops greater communication skills
- Inculcates personal responsibility

Although most of the responses appear straightforward and obvious, a few require additional comment. Creating cognitive confidence was one such response that needed elaboration. Many respondents reported that the passage through a higher education experience granted them greater confidence. This was done by having interacted with academic professionals that fostered and encouraged the respondents to maximize their cognitive experiences through challenge and academic criticism. The greater the learning effort became, the greater the reward. The reward they describe is a confidence of knowing and the development of abilities to reason and think creatively. Or, as one respondent stated, "I didn't think I could learn until I met friends who went to school. When I started going, I was amazed at how the more I learned, the more I wanted to learn." This in turn diminishes the fear of learning felt by many. One respondent stated that he "finally received permission to learn." This was in a series of remarks expressing how he had felt about his formative years and how his family's social standing had him assigned to a social "caste" in which learning opportunities were limited. The majority of those interviewed expressed similar experiences growing up.

The ability to reflect on experience and how the experience of reflection is interpreted are other points that require additional explanation. Reflection as a guided activity was mostly unheard of as a practice by the respondents until it was taught to them. It was the exposure to this process that positively affected each of them. Reflection, it was expressed, has become the foundation for modeling and testing hypotheses as well as creation of constructive concepts of information discrimination. Reflection was also seen as serving as the basis of the creation for critical thought, analysis of information, and problem solving skills. One former officer put it this way, "I never experienced knowing in the deepest part of my being as when I learned how to reflect and use what I have done in my life and not simply exist.

Commentary addressing the change in the social construct of police officers needs to be mentioned as well. Many of the respondents identified with the profession of policing more than academia. This is quite understandable given the years of service the respondents gave to their respective communities. In this identification with policing however, the respondents saw the necessity for the acceptance of police officers by the public and that change will find education at its foundation. What was very interesting was the observation by the respondents that society constructs the image of the police and that policing needs to change to society's image of what a police officer should be. One respondent said it best when he stated, "We need to look and behave like professionals if we are to be considered professionals."

The inculcation of personal responsibility was considered a major advantage of the process of higher education. The respondents identified with the process that one must go through as being personally developmental. The process was seen as one in which a person must learn to be responsible to one's self and not deflect the responsibility of academic failure onto another or some other variable. Respondents saw, through their academic experience, that a determination to be successful was created in them from the process. This determination carried over into their professional lives allowing them, in their estimation, to be more fully prepared to deal with the rigor of policing. "It's the only thing we have today for most people to go through to learn self discipline." It was their willingness to accept personal responsibility and their full comprehension of their responsibilities that several of the subjects thought to be the genesis of police professionalism.

Responses addressing the professional sub-theme indicated that higher education creates positive change in the practice and that it also creates positive change in the public perception of the practice. The respondents agreed fully that the two primary points concerning the professional aspect of the experience of higher education would result in positive change for policing organizations. The respondents showed concern that change needs to take place and that change needs to occur for very direct operational and professional reasons. Change, simply to say change has occurred, was denigrated. It was refreshing to see that change, once the nemesis of policing, was now being embraced by those who hold a potential to create change. "I never thought I could talk about change without getting a boss mad" said one former police manager. "Now I teach it and they (students) want more."

The creation of change in the public perception of policing as a profession appeared many times during the interviews. It became apparent that the subjects were cognizant of the necessity of public acceptance of policing as a professional body and knew that education was the key to that recognition. The interaction with the public and the public's perception of policing was a reoccurring theme that surfaced again and again. Responses concerning the organizational sub-theme:

- A. Creates behavioral change in the organization
- B. Decreases citizen complaints about police conduct
- C. Increases citizen confidence in police
- D. Increases citizen perception of community safety
- E. Creates change in organizational performance
- F. Increases task and skill performance
- G. Creates image of professionalism
- H. Fewer incidents of disciplinary action are required
- I. Forces agencies into continuing professional education initiatives

Even after a least one year of separation between the respondents and their respective police organizations, some measure of frustration could still be witnessed in the former relationships. The respondents were still very concerned about their former employers and co-workers. The subjects still saw themselves as police officers and regarded themselves as still possessing a vested interest in the operational and organizational activities of their former organizations. One respondent stated simply, "You only stop being a copper when they bury you." Because of their old connections the respondents were very cognizant of change in organizational behavior brought about, in their estimation, by the inclusion of higher education into the mainstream of the culture. It was the conclusion of the

subjects that change brought about by higher education is positive as it shows that some form of organizational reflection is occurring.

The greatest change witnessed was the increasing organizational acceptance of educated police officers. It was assumed that the entrenched, anti-education administrative positions held several decades ago have disappeared to a great extent. Education was observed as now being fostered through organizational command channels, whose members are the product of higher education. (A and E) "When I was a recruit I had a commander who hated anyone who had more than a GED. He hated me because I had a degree. Today, command members with graduate degrees are common. Those people are affecting change," stated one former police manager.

The open acceptance of education has also changed how the organization reacts to skill and task training. It has become acceptable to seek internal, as well as external content expertise. Prior to the understanding of educational value, only a selected few external candidates would ever have been selected to add new information to the pool. Many officers felt there was a change in operational abilities. They were relieved to see the increase in abilities of skill and task performances. (E and F) With this increase in ability come a positive increase in the perceptions of the organization and an increase in the perception of safety felt by many citizens. Additionally, a marked decrease in complaints about police officers occurs in a highly educated force. (B and H) "I think it's because they have a broader perspective and can think more critically," stated one respondent.

The benefits of the higher education experience seem clear cut. The individual and the organization have everything to gain and nothing to lose in this relationship. The only possible exception may be that if education leads policing to professionalism, the politics of control of state and municipal workers will be threatened (Shannon, 2002). Education is the foundation of emancipation for the profession of policing, but it must shirk off the yoke of politics to achieve it.

Separation and Critical Reflection

Another theme that emerged related to the separation from policing all the respondents experienced and the time that the separation allowed for reflection concerning the prior profession. What was suggested by the respondents was, in fact, a personal transformation that occurred, and still does occur, through a continuous investigation and monitoring of their past efforts to become more effective as practitioners in their new field of teaching. It was the experience of higher education, and the forced requirement of learning to be critical in thought, that gave the former officers the impetus to reflect wisely. In a few cases, instruction in critical reflection was actually required.

The data provided by our respondents tends to validate the contentions made by Brookfield (1995) in that the subjects reported a process of reflection that involved four steps. Not all four steps were reported in the same way by every subject, however the variations appear close enough to support Brookfield's concept. What the respondents saw was that events and conditions, created by the higher education experience, impacted on how they thought about their past work. This then acted on the review and creation of their understanding and how the understanding affected how they teach today. The events and conditions created by the higher education process involved the shaping of their assumptions by a fuller understanding on one's self, greater exposure to theory, an understanding of one's new place in relationship to students, and engagement with colleagues.

The act of the autobiographical inventory allowed many respondents to recognize aspects of their experiences that they may otherwise have forgotten. The value of the exercise is to put the person in the position of

another who is inspecting their past. The respondents became aware of their paradigmatic assumptions that give rise to their reasoning. It also created a connection with the student for now one can see how we are seen. "It was one of the more difficult things I ever had to do," stated one respondent, "I had to come to grips with who I am and I felt vulnerable."

Exposure to theory provided the members of our sample with new and multiple interpretations of familiar situations. Our sample had been very involved with practical and definitive answers prior to their involvement with higher education. Theory was never consulted except in casual ways. As the necessity to evolve into a faculty member became apparent, the members of the group all found that a closer tie to theory was required. During the passage to faculty status, the respondents all became aware of the additional understanding they garnered through a deeper involvement with theory. It was for many former officers the perfect addition to their new self awareness. Theory allowed them another way to see their past performances and reinterpret meanings and events. One respondent put it this way, "I never realized until I was forced to learn the theory of my work how limited I was as a police officer."

While many of the respondents mentioned the relationship they have with students as important and part of the reflection process, most did not express in much detail how the relationship actually works. Perhaps the most poignant comment came from one respondent who sees his students as an indicator to determine his performance. "I try to see me through their eyes" he said, "I want to know if what I understand from my experience is working."

Many respondents described the collegial experience as a thoughtful process that unravels mysteries concerning different versions of events. It was described by the subjects as critical conversations between peers that open perspectives of thought and understanding, all while comparing the new information with experience. "I have learned I cannot learn in isolation," said one respondent. Most of our group considered the collegial experience to be of major importance in the reflection process. It is considered by them as a comfortable, yet challenging, experience that brings substance to the critical reflection process. Many describe the interaction or debate that accompanies these processes as "the place that completes reflection."

All of the former officers realized that the period of separation between policing and their higher education activities allowed them to recognize these changes. It was generally believed that the separation of at least one year was necessary to achieve a transition into a fully reflective learner and teacher. Many reported that during this period the speed at which they recognized their personal growth and understanding of these phenomena increased rapidly as new concepts were developed from prior experience. As one person said, "having the time to think about what I used to do, comparing it to what I do now, allows me to understand that I know more than I thought I did."

In conclusion, a number of the subjects reported their use of critical reflection as a constant, or near constant, feature of their teaching. What they reported responds favorably to what Schon (1983, 1988) refers to as reflection-in-action. This reflection-in-action concept follows the belief that professionals reflect in the midst of action without interruption. Their thinking reshapes what they are doing as they do it. The respondents detailed this activity during the interviews and considered it primary to their functions as educators.

The Practice and Art of Teaching

The last major theme which emerged from the data were the respondents' beliefs that the complexities involved in teaching traditional age criminal justice students in higher education settings reminded them of why they once entered the policing profession. In particular, the various activities involved in preparing a new course for

facilitation, i.e. setting goals and objectives, thorough reviews of the pertinent literature bases, and decisions regarding evaluation techniques, combined to eventually provide them with a better understanding as to why their respective organizations acted as they did. In other words, what they once viewed as decision making bodies acting with no rhyme or reason, suddenly "began to make sense." Stated by one of the respondents:

I had only been retired about six weeks when I was hired to teach my first college-level class. I fully intended, even during the process of preparing for the class, to tell the students like it is ... not any of the bullshit found in text books. But when I walked into the classroom that first day of class I could see the enthusiasm and eagerness in their faces... their anticipation of learning about law enforcement from a teacher who was the real deal, so to speak, the real police ... and then it hit me like a ton of bricks. I saw myself twenty-five years earlier and remembered why it was that I joined the force ... to make a difference ... to do the right thing... idealistic motives. From that point on I had to change my M.O. [modus operandi] for the class ...I didn't have the heart to impart my cynicism on them. In retrospect, I think that made me a better teacher, it made me remember why I went on the job and really caused me to begin reflecting on my past experiences.

As stated earlier regarding the theme of separation and reflection, the latter was a common thread throughout the interviews. Reflection on the various stages of respondents' respective careers, coupled with teaching traditional age college students, seemed to be one of the most salient findings gleaned from this particular portion of the analyses. Most of the respondents, six in all, reported facilitating in-service training activities for police officers at one time or another during their careers, and really felt a sense of disdain for and frustration with those activities.

Statements like "current training is meaningless" or that "coppers are know-it-alls" were at the forefront of these particular sections of the interviews. Ironically though, one of the respondents stated "...I was the same way when the shoe was on the other foot. The few times I was ordered to go to an in-service, I was bored to death and couldn't wait to get the hell out of there ... when I had to train them though, I became infuriated with the attitudes of many of the coppers present." This statement, and others similar in nature, seemed to lend credence to the possibility of the significance attached in assuming the role of an educator or trainer which somehow makes one think from a different perspective. Herein may lay the advantages of higher education, the art of teaching, and critical reflection combined.

Once again, though, addressing the role of critical reflection and its importance, one of the respondents remarked:

Teaching wasn't the only thing. The more courses I taught, the more time I spent reflecting on my past as a police officer. In a way it sometimes makes me ashamed of myself, it reminded me of how I once was on the street. I think it was my formal education, in addition to teaching classes, which has made me a better person ...I mean I know if I went back on the job, I'd be a better copper, a good role model and a great FTO [field training officer] ... because I now have a better understanding of organizational dynamics. Actually a turning point or highlight in my professional life was when I was assigned to teach a class in administration. It was enlightening for me ... bells went off... my past experiences with my agency suddenly made more sense. I saw the forest behind the proverbial trees... it was a moment of great awareness for me.

These particular data are consistent with Mezirow's (1990) theory or notion of what he calls perspective transformation, defined as "...the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions have

come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about the world ... to permit a more inclusive ... and integrative perspective"(p. 14). While of all of the emergent themes are intermingled, it seemed to be the process of critical reflection which had the most impact on the transformation of respondents' perspectives, from one of cynicism toward the field of policing and their respective organizations, to a much improved outlook toward their former profession and agencies to which they were affiliated.

A final concept to emerge under this broader category was the emphasis placed on how all factors combined to rejuvenate respondents' sense of worth or importance in their prior professions. They have now come to recognize that if possible, if they were able to re-join the field of law enforcement, that they would be much better police officers. As one respondent stated:

Since you've asked me this, and I never really gave it much thought before, I was an FTO for many years when I was on the job ... and as I look back I shudder at some of my past actions in that role. I have no doubt that I ruined the perceptions of the job many of those kids had. Frankly, I was not very complimentary to anyone involved, neither them, the department, nor the public. After being away from it and teaching for a while now, in response to your question about doing anything differently knowing what I know now, I absolutely would be a better cop... a better FTO. I don't know if you're aware of this or not, but the department is contemplating bringing recently retired POs [police officers] back on a part-time basis to serve only as FTOs for new recruits ... and I think I'm going to take them up on that. I know I would be a much better mentor now for those new kids coming on the job.

The sense of worth or importance which was rejuvenated in respondents coincides with Zhao's et al (1999) research in that they found a principal reason for burnout to be a perceived lack of importance or lack of any real sense of input into the decision making processes of police officers' respective agencies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

All research projects have limitations and the present one is no exception. Issues regarding validity, reliability, and researcher bias are always of paramount importance, particularly with respect to qualitative inquiries. However, steps were taken to minimize these limitations. Regarding validity, information gleaned from the interviews seemed to be consistent with pertinent portions of the literature. Reliability concerns were diminished by conducting follow-up interviews and additional, albeit, abbreviated interviews with other subjects similarly situated. Those results were also consistent with our initial research findings. Finally, we believe potential researcher bias was minimized by having other educators from our same discipline review our methods and analysis techniques. The input of those individuals aided us greatly in the shaping or construction of our questions used to guide the interviews.

The major themes identified--the benefits of higher education, physical separation from the police profession, critical reflection on respondents' careers, and the practice of teaching traditional age criminal justice students in a higher education setting--all show great promise for alleviation or mitigation of the symptoms of police burnout.

While each of these activities are beneficial in and of themselves, for a variety of reasons, it is their combination which seem to hold the most promise. The fact that the Chicago Police Department, the second largest law enforcement organization in the country, is considering the adoption of a policy for re-hiring recently retired or separated police officers to serve as field training officers or mentors for new recruits lends credence to our hypotheses.

Finally, while the cost of this strategy may be significant, through further research our strategy may very well be refined or condensed to both limit expenditures and reach a larger group of affected officers. At the very least, the implications for both initial recruit and in-service training are significant. Current training curricula could easily incorporate emphases of the topics of critical reflection and perspective transformation. Community policing initiatives, as mixed as the research is regarding its overall effectiveness, is at least a step in this direction and may very well be improved by adding these components to this relatively new policing strategy. If community policing initiatives are implemented and practiced legitimately, line officers have reported feeling a greater sense of autonomy regarding decision making authority, thus increasing job satisfaction. If police organizations are to respond ethically toward this very serious problem, and retain and sustain motivation of affected personnel, then they have everything to gain and nothing to lose by addressing burnout from the aforementioned perspectives.

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