Ethics in Policing: Not Just Shoulds, Coulds, and Ought To's

Bonnie Beech

Abstract

Ethics research is currently one of law enforcement's greatest training and leadership needs. At no time in the history of policing has it been more vital that leaders in law enforcement confront the ethical issues facing this profession. This a summary of law enforcement misconduct in Florida from the years l990-l996 and a discussion of ethics in policing today. The major topics discussed are leadership, selection and recruitment, training, and the police officer code of ethics. Possible alternatives and suggestions for impacting ethical misconduct, such as modeling ethical behavior and revising and reprioritizing the way ethics is taught, are offered by law enforcement administrators and leaders in education.

Introduction

Honesty, integrity, courage, responsibility, good character . . . all of these words have been used to describe a person who is ethical. Ethics seems to be a popular topic for discussion these days, especially in the law enforcement field. The criminal justice officer should represent the highest level of ethical conduct in a community, but society's view of acceptable police behavior has changed significantly. All across the country we have witnessed an erosion of the public confidence in police officers and law enforcement institutions. Much of this dissatisfaction has been attributed to incidents such as Waco, Ruby Ridge, and the 1991 Rodney King case In Los Angeles. National attention has been focused on police decisions, standards, and conduct. A 1993 National Law Journal poll of 800 potential jurors revealed (for the first time) the majority of the jurors gave no more credence to testimony from police officers than from other civilians (National Law Journal, 1996).

The major portion of the men and women in law enforcement throughout this country hold the public trust as sacred. They are honest, hard-working police officers who have a commitment to serving the public with integrity and the highest standards of ethical behavior. Despite a rising commitment to integrity in many police departments and law enforcement agencies, a small percentage of officers misuse or abuse the public's trust.

The focus of this paper is to identify the problem areas in police ethics in Florida and to look for solutions to the problems. The role, function, and process of the Florida Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission will be explained. The term 'ethics' will be defined and the debate on whether or not ethics can be taught will be explored. The areas of leadership, selection and recruitment, and training will be discussed, along with the police officer's code of ethics. Finally, ideas and suggestions on ethical issues from leaders in the field of law enforcement and ethical 'experts' will be offered with the

goal being to offer a future path for impacting ethical misconduct.

Background

Ethics research is important because ethics is now law enforcement's greatest training and leadership need. What is learned from the research can make training and leadership much more focused and effective. Ethical issues crop up daily in a law enforcement officer's tour of duty and are some of the toughest tests of an officer's character and values. Since confidence and trust are critical to the police function in our society, it is essential that police administrators ensure police conduct standards are maintained at a level that does not erode the public trust. Officers must be made aware that ethical behavior is in their own best interest and that "policing our own" is the only course to maintain that standard.

In Florida, the job of monitoring police behavior falls to the Florida Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission. The Commission, established in 1977, sets minimum standards for officer training and employment and establishes procedures for denying, suspending, or revoking licenses. The Commission is mandated by the Florida Legislature to ensure that criminal justice officers maintain good moral character and abide by the same laws they enforce. The Commission is committed to the delivery of quality training, ensuring job relatedness in employment and training standards, and increasing the professionalism of law enforcement officers throughout the state. The Commission meets on a quarterly basis and has as its mission, "to ensure that the citizens of the state of Florida are served by the most qualified, well trained, competent, and ethical criminal justice officers in the nation." (Florida Department of Law Enforcement, 1992).

The Commission is composed of nineteen members: Secretary of the Department of Corrections; Attorney General; Commissioner of Education; Director of the Florida Highway Patrol; three sheriffs; three chiefs of police; four law enforcement officers; two state correctional officers; one training center director; one person who is in charge of a county correctional institution; and, one Florida resident who falls into none of the previous categories. The four law enforcement officers on the Commission must be the rank of sergeant or below, have four years of law enforcement officer experience, and be neither a sheriff nor a chief of police.

A law enforcement officer must maintain certain standards to be certified in the state of Florida. One of these standards is good moral character. The Commission defines failure to have ''good moral character'' as:

1. Any act or acts which would constitute a felony offense whether criminally prosecuted or not;
2. Any act or acts which would constitute a serious misdemeanor, whether criminally prosecuted or not;
3. The following non-criminal acts or conduct:
    - excessive use of force, under color of authority;

- sexual harassment involving physical contact or misuse of official position;
- misuse of official position as defined in Section 112.313(6), Florida Statutes;
- engaging in sex while on duty;
- unprofessional relationship with an inmate, probationer, or parolee, or community controllee as follows:
    - having written or oral communication that is intended to facilitate conduct which is prohibited by the Commission
    - engaging in physical conduct which is prohibited by law or rule
- false statements which are material to an investigation involving a sustained Commission moral character violation
- conduct which violates the standards of Commission test administration (cheating on the Commission examination)
- any other conduct which subverts or attempts to subvert the Commission, criminal justice training school, or employing agency examination process
- the unlawful use of controlled substances.

When officer misconduct is investigated and sustained by the agency, and the conduct is a violation which falls within the specific penalty guidelines of the Commission, the agency must notify the Commission. The Commission may issue a letter of guidance (warning) or a letter acknowledging the agency's discipline (letter of acknowledgment), reprimand the officer, require additional training, suspend or revoke the officer's certificate or dismiss the case. When an officer's certificate is revoked by the Commission through the officer discipline process, the officer can no longer work as a certified officer in the state of Florida (Florida Department of Law Enforcement, 1992).

Review of the Literature

A clear understanding of the meaning of ethics is important; however, it is difficult to define the term. Webster defines ethics as the study of the general nature of morals and the specific moral choices an individual makes in relating to others. Character, honesty, integrity, and morality are dimensions of the word ethics and are part of its definition, but ethics is a branch of philosophy dealing with right conduct.

In reviewing what has been written about ethics in policing, multiple issues emerged for consideration. One of the common concerns is how ethical misconduct taints the public's perception of police and how detrimental that perception is to the profession. A number of different writers have expressed concern about leadership and the part it plays in the ethical picture of an organization. At a police symposium in Washington DC in l996, organized by the United States Attorney General, integrity, ethics, and leadership were the topics of discussion. Total ethical commitment from the leader of the organization was the overriding theme which emerged from the symposium (Hoffman, 1997). This theme, without exception, echoed throughout this research.

A considerable amount of what has been written attempts to determine the cause of poor public perception of police. One author said the loss of respect for police is due to a lack of understanding as to what the police are supposed to accomplish for the people. The author said a fraudulent objective for law enforcement is the prevention of crime (Bowman, l996). At the Washington police symposium, one chief said the ethics problem has been made an issue because it is media-driven (Hoffman, l997).

Several law enforcement officials, who wrote about the causes of misconduct in the profession, cited cynicism, distrust, burnout, and stress and boredom as possible reasons for officer misconduct. Edwin Delattre, who is the Dean of the School of Education at Boston University and who wrote, *Character and Cops*, said, "There is a fair amount of evidence to support that crime pays, and you can get away with it. There is a disrespect for limits, for truth telling. It runs to a central contempt for limits and self control" (Delattre, personal communication, August l6, l997). The opinions about what causes law enforcement misconduct are varied, but, the majority of the professionals recognized ethical misconduct tarnishes the profession and there is definitely a need to address the problems. Little has been written, however, about what is happening in Florida in regard to police officer misconduct and what to do about it.

Most people would agree that the moral values in this country have changed in the past few decades. There is a public question concerning the issue of police integrity. One current integrity problem in law enforcement that was researched involved the Justice Department's Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) crime lab. On January 21, 1997 the FBI suspended with pay Agent/Scientist Dr. Fred Whitehurst for blowing the whistle on the lack of professional standards at the lab. For eight years Dr. Whitehurst had voiced concerns and been ignored by the FBI. Two days later an independent report was released which supported all of Whitehurst's complaints. However, the message that whistle blowers would be suspended was clear to the employees of the Justice Department (Hoffman, l997).

Stories of ethical misconduct and police corruption continue to hit the news. Recently, there have been reports of abuses to prisoners in the Texas correctional system and New York City police officers were alleged to have beaten and then sodomized a Haitian immigrant using a toilet bowl plunger. Here in Florida a south Florida newspaper, the Sun-Sentinel, published a series of articles on police officer misconduct in the state. The articles described cases of domestic abuse, lying, sexual battery, and abusive conduct by officers in Florida and focused on aggressive behavior of officers in Florida (Schulte & Benedick, 1997).

Method

It was determined the best method to analyze the reported police officer misconduct in Florida was to examine officer discipline records from the Florida Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission. The years 1990-l996 were determined to be a sufficient range of time for a representation of the trends and problem areas. Statistical reports were gathered from the officer discipline section of the Bureau of Standards. Since many similiar offenses were named differently in the reports, six major

categories were identified to give order to the statistics. The six categories of offenses charged were: drug related offenses; line-of-duty offenses; perjury/false statement offenses; property offenses; sexual offenses; violent offenses; and, other offenses. Examples of drug offenses included possessing, selling, or receiving drugs and testing positive for drugs. Line-of-duty offenses consisted of charges incurred while the officer was working in his official capacity, such as bribery, tampering with evidence, official misconduct, illegal arrests, misuse of public position, and obstructing a police investigation. Illustrations of property offenses were fraud, criminal mischief, larceny, burglary, forgery, buying/selling/receiving stolen property, embezzlement and arson. Offenses categorized as crimes of violence were excessive force, weapons offenses, assault/battery, murder, and homicide. Sexual offenses included indecent exposure, sexual harassment, sexual assault/battery, sex on duty, and possession or sale of obscene material. The sixth category contains all the other offenses which did not fit into the previous categories, such as gambling, driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, divulging confidential information, stalking, trespassing, and cheating on exams.

Comparisons were made using the number of police officers disciplined versus the number of officers employed, as well as the increases for each year in categories of violations for offenses that have been reviewed by the Commission. Based on this analysis, key issues were determined and questions emerged. These points and questions formed the basis for interviews. Several knowledgeable, recognized experts on law enforcement concerns and ethics were interviewed for their thoughts and ideas on solutions or alternatives on how to deal with ethics-related problems currently facing the law enforcement profession, the importance of aggressively addressing ethics in teaching and training at all levels of the profession, and reflections concerning the ethical forecasts for the millennium. The people interviewed were: Dr. Edwin Delattre, Dean of the School of Education, Boston University; Dr. Stephen Vicchio, Professor of Philosophy, Notre Dame University; Mr. Tim Moore, Director, Florida Department of Law Enforcement; Mr. Lee McGehee, Director, Florida Criminal Justice Executive Institute; Chief Bill Berger, North Miami Beach (Florida) Police Department; and Chief Richard Coffey, University of West Florida (Pensacola, FL) Police Department. (See Appendix A for interview questions)

Results

An analysis of the data concerning police misconduct reveals that law enforcement officers in Florida are most frequently found to be committing offenses of perjury/false statement and property offenses. These were the two most frequent violations reviewed by the Commission. The highest number of cases to appear before the Commission was 284 in l994. Property offenses were the highest violations for the years l990 and l99l. For the years l992, l993, l995, and l996, perjury/false statement headed the list of officer discipline cases. In the year l994 perjury/false statement and violent offenses tied for first place.

An interesting note is that between l994 and l995 the number of cases appears to drop form 284 to 253. A possible explanation for this is the ‘fast track’ processing of

cases. This procedure is the result of a legislative enactment in l995 and involves discipline which is a letter of guidance or a letter of acknowledgment sent to the offending officer. This process moves cases more quickly through the discipline process. With the addition of the fast-tracked cases, the total for l995 becomes 322.

A positive observation when reviewing the data is that the percent of law enforcement officers disciplined ranged from .3% to .7%. This percentage of officers disciplined is very small compared to the approximately 40,000 law enforcement officers employed in the state. (Appendix B contains detailed data for the total violations by type for the years l990-l996; Appendix C depicts the total number of Commission administered discipline for those years; Appendix D is this same data including the 'fast-tracked' cases; and Appendix E shows a breakdown of violations for each year from l990-l996.)

What is occurring in Florida in regard to police officer misconduct mirrors reported police misconduct across the nation, according to the National Law Enforcement Officer Disciplinary Research Project compiled by Neal Trautman, executive director of the National Institute of Ethics. This report reflects that the most frequent decertifications nationally were falsifying records reflecting earned compensatory time and earned overtime. The second most frequent violation was lying in court, and the most serious misconduct involved greed violations, such as stealing and illegal confiscation and/or use of seized narcotics (Trautman, l997).

Discussion

Police administrators are concerned about the ethical issues being raised by the public. These law enforcement professionals are currently open to discussion on the topic. Lee McGehee, director of the Florida Criminal Justice Executive Institute calls the era in which we are living a period of "casual ethics." "As we move into the next decade and into the next millennium, issues of integrity will become some of the most significant ever faced by mankind" (McGehee, l991, p. i). The need for organizational values was an important issue for Director McGehee. He stressed the point that organizations should be living their values, teaching those values, and reinforcing those values in organizational policies. An organizational culture which stresses ethics and integrity is the hallmark of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

In an effort to coordinate a strategic five-year plan for the Commission, Director McGehee surveyed the police chiefs and sheriffs about their concerns. The number one issue, without exception, for the heads of law enforcement agencies in Florida was lack of discipline found in current law enforcement officers. Many administrators said police officers are being retained in the profession who should be removed. There is apprehension that Florida's disciplinary system has not allowed that to be done as rapidly as possible. The number two concern was the fear that low minimum standards for entering recruit school and an open enrollment system in the community colleges creates a system whereby unqualified people may easily enter the recruit academy.

When law enforcement administrators and educators were asked what is the

primary cause of ethical problems in policing today, most said it is a reflection of the moral decay and the loss of values in our society today. Many law enforcement leaders felt the current generation of police officers do not have the moral and ethical standards of the previous generations. These leaders felt the lack of military training and the lack of education were contributing factors. Character was cited by all the law enforcement administrators and educators who were interviewed as the foundation of personal integrity and discipline, but the consensus of opinion was that character and ethical behavior cannot be taught. What can be taught, however, is judgment and discretion and what is expected of a police officer. These expectations can be conveyed in training and in the code of ethics (L. McGehee, personal communication, July l5, l997).

An interesting point to note here is the issue of expectations and accountability. When police officers know what is expected of them, and understand the consequences of unacceptable behavior, then officers have guidelines to follow. Regardless of their personal code of ethics, they then can be held accountable for expected behaviors.

The importance of modeling ethical behavior cannot be overemphasized. Both Dr. Edwin Delattre and Dr. Stephen Vicchio said ethical behavior has to be seen to be believed. Dr. Vicchio said,

> I think there is a problem when the people at the top fudge the truth in political situations then come back and try to be honest with the people who work with them, and the people who work for them don't believe them because they have already seen them say things that aren't true (Vicchio, personal communication, May 22, l997).

At a symposium on police integrity Dr. Vicchio recently cited a study of 100 Americans who were asked to rank their confidence in public officials to do the right thing. In the survey, police officers fell from number five in l980 to number ten in l995. The conclusion was drawn was that the public thinks the police have an integrity problem, even if the police do not perceive a lack of integrity as a serious problem themselves (Vicchio, 1997).

Police chiefs face many ethical dilemmas in the performance of their duties. Chief Richard Pennington of the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) was challenged with unethical and illegal behavior when he arrived in New Orleans in l994. He has been very successful in his initiatives to revamp that department. Prior to Pennington's arrival, police officers in New Orleans were renting their radios to drug dealers and tow truck drivers. One of the lieutenants had substantiated Mafia connections. One officer was indicted for murder, and he and several other officers were running a cocaine ring. One of NOPD's female officers was involved in a robbery of a local restaurant. She shot and killed her fellow officer who responded to the call. Chief Pennington recruited five FBI agents and placed them in command positions. The Chief has fired 40 police officers in two years. He has raised the beginning salary from $l6,000 to $30,000, and has set up a public integrity unit located apart from the police department. This unit has a toll free number for public complaints of police (Pennington, personal communication, May 20, l997).

An organizational culture that values ethical behavior and models right conduct is what is needed. Delattre said, “The way people conduct themselves is learned by watching others and by nature. Ethical behavior has to be seen to be believed. People are most affected by considerations of ethics when they see people who are just quietly and unassumingly decent” (E. J. Delattre, personal communication, August 6, l997). After the O.J. Simpson trial, Romona Ripston, executive director of the Southern California branch of the American Civil Liberties Union, said, “Everybody talks about what a bad guy Mark Fuhrman was, but he worked with other police officers. None of them came forward to complain about him” (Gleick, l995, p. 41).

A number of important issues have emerged in the interviews with police administrators and educators about the topic of police ethics. While the comments were essentially similar, four topics seem to surface as the focus of the conversations. Those areas were the areas of leadership, selection and recruitment, training, and codes of ethics.

At no time in the history of policing has it been more vital than now that leaders in law enforcement face the ethical issues confronting their profession. The challenges to police authority and the public perception of police as “out of control” are blips on the radar screen that are indicating perceived problems within the profession. Police leaders must take action to strive for higher standards, ideals, and values that incorporate principle based leadership and demonstrate their commitment to the ideals of integrity, honesty, fairness, justice, courage, loyalty, and compassion.

Colin Powell, acknowledged by many to be one of the most trusted men in America, calls for honest self-reflection to clarify what leadership is. Top administrators must think through who they are and for what they stand. They must recognize the responsibility attached to the authority of leadership within a law enforcement organization in today’s society. Powell, a retired United States Army General and the twelfth Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, serves as the principal military advisor to the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the National Security Council. Throughout his distinguished military career, General Powell earned the reputation for wisdom, calm strength, and leadership. These character traits were most visibly demonstrated during crises at the highest levels of government. Powell has said leaders must always be honest, have integrity, and be of good character. He emphasizes that leaders must insist on high standards and points out that organizations must insist on leadership training and must invest in leadership as a lifelong training process (C. Powell, teleconference, June 4, l997).

A number of the law enforcement administrators expressed a concern about the lack of rigorous selection criterion for police officers. These administrators are united in the belief that thorough background checks, selective recruiting, and careful personal interviews or screening boards are essential. Chief Richard Coffey, new Chairman of the Florida Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission, feels inadequate screening of applicants has led to the selection of officers unsuitable for police work. As one of his first Commission initiatives, and as a response to the needs of Florida police chiefs and

sheriffs, Coffey has appointed a statewide task force to establish a model assessment center for the state of Florida. These assessment centers would test and evaluate officers for police positions, for police academies, and for promotion, and would insure uniformity in the selection and recruitment of police officers in the state (Coffey, personal communication, September 26, l997).

Edwin Delattre, Dean of the School of Education at Boston University and author of *Character and Cops*, quoted Rosen as saying:

> The things that strike me as enormously important in the selection of a police officer are background investigations conducted by really good investigators, the personal interview conducted by people who know what kinds of attitudes, dispositions and habits, what kinds of judgment and communication are really essential to effective policing" (Rosen, l997, p. 11).

Dr. Vicchio and his colleagues at The College of Notre Dame at Maryland are attuned to the need and are developing scenarios that can measure a potential officer's moral decision-making abilities. They are designing a psychological test that will be more astute and more sensitive to determining what makes a good police officer before a person actually becomes an officer. The kinds of things these educators will be looking for are evidence of moral courage, truthfulness, honesty, and other characteristics of ethically centered behavior. Vicchio said that within a couple of years he will know whether this instrument is successful or not (Vicchio, personal communication, May 22, l997).

There is a strong movement in this nation, and the idea began in Florida, that ethics training must be threaded throughout all law enforcement training, both at the recruit level and at the supervisory level. A course taught in Search and Seizure, for example, should contain the ethical considerations of an illegal search or seizing property for which there is no justification. Currently, the basic curriculum for police academies in Florida requires just two hours of ethics training within the legal section of the training. Although more research is needed in this area, some empirical evidence supports the contention that formal ethics training fosters improved ethical behavior (O'Malley, 1997). Training, to be effective, however, must focus on moral reasoning, problem solving, and decision making rather than prescriptive rules and regulations. But, most importantly, ethics training must be integrated into all levels and types of training (Himelfarb, l995). The Florida Department of Law Enforcement is currently researching and revising the entire training curriculum in the state and addressing ethical education for all levels of law enforcement personnel (McGehee, personal communication, July l5, l997).

Another important consideration has been gleaned from the National Law Enforcement Officer Disciplinary Research Project. The majority of contemporary law enforcement ethics training has been at the recruit or field training level. The research revealed the average age for the officers who were the subjects of the research was 32, indicating decertification occurs approximately seven years into an officer's career. This discovery indicates a need to reprioritize the point at which ethics training is provided.

The report recommends ethics training be rejuvenated at the five-to-ten year level of a law enforcement officer's career (Trautman, l997).

Responsibility and accountability are also important aspects of ethics training. The instructor techniques course, which all police instructors must complete, should require instructors to include ethics in the courses that are taught. Currently, instructors appear to be of the mind set that it is 'someone else's' responsibility to teach ethics.

The views about how to teach ethics are varied and disparate. One article on ethics training suggested actual problematic issues relevant to a police officer's daily experiences be used to teach ethics. By using 'real life' ethical dilemmas, analyzing them, and applying an ethical framework, officers learn to mediate all dilemmas, large and small (Pollock & Becker, 1996). John Rawls, author of *A Theory of Justice*, discussed another method of teaching ethics. He described the use of the 'veil of ignorance' test as an instructional tool. The first rule of this theory is to understand the situation--gather information to know the facts. Next, pretend that a veil of ignorance falls over the situation--you do not know who you are or what role you are playing within the situation. Then ask yourself what the rules of fairness should be under these circumstances (Rawls, 1971).

Dr. Stephen Vicchio,of the College of Notre Dame at Maryland uses Plato's story of the magical *Ring of Gyges* to illustrate whether integrity matters to a person. Gyges, a sheep herder, was given a magical ring that would cause him to be invisible. Consequently, whatever he did while wearing the ring, he would be doing under the cloak of anonymity. So Gyges traveled to a nearby castle where he raped the queen and killed the king--taking the throne for himself. The important lesson in this story is, how would you behave differently if you were invisible and there was no fear of condemnation? (Vicchio, personal communication, October 3, l996). Police officers must fully accept their responsibilities toward the badge and stop using that badge as their own *Ring of Gyges*.

The recruit academy should provide students with general ethical guidance, but it cannot eliminate the fallacious thinking they bring to class. Students must be encouraged to enter into dialogue about their individual ethical beliefs. One important element in teaching ethics is ensuring that students understand the difference between honesty and integrity. The interpretation of the meaning of each word varies with individual experiences and standards. The differences are important for law enforcement's moral understanding of ethics in policing. Honesty is being truthful with yourself and others in all of your dealings. A person may be honest without having engaged in the hard work of discernment that integrity requires. For instance, a person can state his belief in one race's inferiority or superiority as a fact without really considering whether this view is right or wrong (Carter, 1996). Edwin Delattre, in his book, *Character and Cops*, calls integrity 'wholeness', being one thing through and through, and he says a person of integrity is the same person in public and in private. Delattre says:

> The mission of policing can only be entrusted to those who understand what is morally important and who respect integrity. Without this kind of

> personal character in police, no set of codes or rules or laws can safeguard that mission from the ravages of police misconduct (Delattre, l994, pp. l4-l5).

One of the greatest challenges in dealing with police integrity issues is improving officer training in specific areas of ethics, such as the law enforcement code of ethics and an improved understanding of what the code means. An organizational statement of ethics carries important symbolic weight as it reflects an organization's commitment to ethics. A code of ethics must set a standard of conduct higher than law, market, and ordinary morality (Davis, l991). The International Chiefs of Police has as one of its goals to review and reaffirm the law enforcement code of ethics to ensure that it is still adequately meeting contemporary needs. Chief Bill Berger of the North Miami Beach (Florida) Police Department is chairing this critical committee (Walchak, l996). In that same direction Chief Patrick Kelly of the Medley (Florida) Police Department has submitted new police conduct standards to the Commission for adoption for police in Florida. These standards supplement the current code of ethics and outline eight principles of conduct, along with rules and definitions of conduct unbecoming a police officer (Kelly, l997).

The benefits of a good code of ethics are many. A code can serve to remind officers of what is (and therefore what is not) expected of them. It can provide a common vocabulary for discussion of tough cases, i.e., 'Is this a use of necessary force?' The emotional language in the code might inspire an officer to do more than he or she would do otherwise (Davis, 1991). However, a code of ethics does not motivate a person to behave well; the code simply provides a guideline to assist those who want to behave appropriately.

Training in ethics, in both the code and its application, is critical. "A code of ethics, when given a central place in the organizational culture, treated as a living document, and endorsed and promoted by senior management, will be a key element in the evolution of ethical policing," (Himelfarb, 1995, p. 24).

There is no question that the move toward an increased awareness of ethics is a healthy direction for law enforcement today. When asked about what the future holds, most police administrators were hopefully optimistic about improvement in police officer conduct. Director Tim Moore said he feels public scrutiny of law enforcement has "bottomed out" and we are on our way back up in the public's eye, but the public will continue to hold our feet to the fire (Moore, personal communication, May 20, l997). All administrators and educators were united in the belief that higher standards in law enforcement be maintained.

Modeling of ethical police behavior can be a powerful tool toward impacting the conduct of police officers in every organization. Agencies who have supervisors who model right conduct and ethical behavior, and who promote officers to supervisory positions who have that essential conduct and behavior, and have chiefs with that right conduct and behavior cannot help but become very ethical organizations. Police agencies must have chiefs who say, "I am requiring you to do the right thing, and I will do

the same."

More research is needed to determine the root causes for the excessive number of false statements and reports and property offense violations committed by police officers. Could the problem be lack of discipline, greed, incompetent employees, bad internal affairs investigations, cynicism about the law, or could it be what Delattre calls, 'noble cause justice'--police officers thinking their mission is so grand and important that the rules can be bent? The one resounding question to consider is why these same problems keep occurring. Why are police officers, who are supposed to be held to a higher standard, lying and stealing?

There is no doubt that leadership training, a positive and ethical organizational culture, sound recruitment and selection procedures, modeling of ethical behavior, and responsibility and accountability are the keys to improving the ethics in policing. What is most important to all law enforcement administrators is a realization that the responsibility to improve the police image is theirs. The professional and personal devastation associated with lying, stealing, brutality, corruption, and scandal is too high a price to pay for lack of commitment to the goals of improving the ethical atmosphere of policing today.

Bonnie Beech is a captain with the University of West Florida Police Department. She has a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from the University of West Florida and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Public Administration. Employed at the University for 26 years, Cpt. Beech has been a law enforcement officer for 16 years and was the first female sergeant and lieutenant at the University. She supervised the University police Patrol division and is currently responsible for investigations, communications, training, crime prevention, and records. Cpt. Beech is a firearms instructor, victim advocate, and certified victim services practitioner. She is currently serving as treasurer of the First Judicial Circuit Law Enforcement Association.

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Appendix A

POLICE ETHICS
Interview Questions

1. What do you think is the primary cause of ethical problems in policing today?

2. From l990-l996 in Florida the primary police misconduct offenses were false statement, larceny, and assault/battery. Why do you think these offenses are most prevalent?

3. Do you think the decentralization of community oriented policing and the freedom it affords contribute to unethical behavior in police officers? If yes, why? If no, why not?

4. Do you think police officers can be taught ethical behavior? Why or why not?

5. How do we go about shaping police conduct and influencing officers to do the right thing?

6. What do you see in the future in regard to police officer misconduct?