

# Employee Turnover: Using Life Experiences as a Model to Recruit for Retention

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## Abstract

*The issue of employee turnover is not new nor is it the explicit domain of criminal justice agencies. Agency leaders are constantly vigilant in retarding the amount of turnover in sworn positions. While turnover has its benefits to the criminal justice field the benefits are overshadowed by the negative impacts on the agency. Agencies are using innovative techniques to retain officers. The ability to recruit and train officers that have the highest probability of staying with the employing agency could have dramatic effects on budgets, manpower, and morale resulting in a leaner, healthier department and improved quality of service provided to the public. This study has examined the relationship between personnel hired and personnel who resigned during the first five years of employment. The examination was specifically related to age, marital status, number of dependants, military experience and educational level. Taking a look at the life experiences of potential officers before recruiting may help ease the crises.*

## Introduction

While employee turnover is often cited as a negative impact upon the agency or corporation some turnover is in fact desirable. Lack of turnover can cause stagnation in an agency. New employees often bring new ideas, approaches and attitudes that allow the organization to grow and flex with the changing norms of society. Often turnover helps organizations that are going through cultural change by weeding out those employees that have not bought into the new organizational vision. They often find it extremely hard to realign with the changes leading to job dissatisfaction. Job dissatisfaction is often cited as the number one cause of turnover. The Saratoga Institute (Kevin Dobbs, 2001) reports in a study of 20,000 workers who just left an employer that poor supervisory behavior was the main reason a person quit.

The lack of turnover may have a fiscal impact on the organization as well. Turnover is costly in terms of lost productivity, interruption of organizational strategies, employee replacement expenses, potentially devastating in loss of intellectual capital, lower employee moral and interrupts the quality to service (Kraemer, n.d.). Generally tenure with the organization means that the employee is near the top of their pay scales creating a higher operational salary base for the organization. The question that plagues organizations is when is turnover too much or too costly? Studies indicate that turnover rates in excess of 5 percent present law enforcement administrators with significant managerial problems (Harris 1998).

In a study of police agencies across the nation (Koper, Moore, and Maguire 2001) on average large agencies had an annual turnover of 5 percent and small agencies had an annual turnover of 7 percent.

A minority of officers leaving small agencies left due to retirement. The majority (59%) left due to other circumstances which might have included employment with other agencies or leaving the policing profession altogether. Agency respondents from small agencies in the study estimated that about 45 percent of departing officers went to work for other law enforcement agencies. This migration would account in part for the difference in the turnover percentage between large and small agencies.

The study indicated measurable differences between large and small agencies. In large agencies 49 percent of those officers departing left due to retirement (20% in small agencies). It was estimated that just 24 percent of officers departing large agencies went to work for other law enforcement agencies compared with the 45 percent as indicated earlier for small agencies (Harris 1998).

The study indicated that officers serving in large agencies seem more likely to serve full careers than officers in smaller organizations. Two thirds of the officers leaving small agencies had five or fewer years of service compared with one third in larger agencies. Officers in the middle of their careers (6 -14 years) were the least likely group to leave their respective agencies. The high representation of short-term officer turnover may suggest that officers who decide to take jobs with other law enforcement agencies and those that decide to leave the profession do so early in their career.

A preliminary look at officers departing the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) within the last five years indicates patterns that are closely associated with turnover in large agencies. Details of the turnover pattern will be discussed later in greater detail.

As already mentioned there are benefits to turnover but most agencies are struggling with the negative impact and the inability to staff open positions. The impact can be extremely costly to the agency when the turnover occurs extremely early in the tenure of an officer. The higher cost of training and the lack of seniority caused by the turnover can have a significant impact on agencies often affecting the agency culture as well as services provided to the public. Many studies (Harris 1998, Koper, Maguire, and Moore 2001) have looked into where officers are going when leaving employment and what types of migration patterns are being exhibited. Most agencies keep records as to why officers leave. Other than retirement the number one reason FWC officers leave the agency, as cited on exit interviews, is for more money whether they leave for another agency or get out of the profession.

In order to retain officers during the tenure period that has the largest turnover (0 to 5 years) agencies should be recruiting with retention in mind. It is understood that some of the officers that leave during this time period will leave due to failed training, dismissal or their own volition. A large percentage of those that leave of their own volition during that period do so due to the confluency theory, a theory attributing unwanted turnover to lack of pre-employment job

awareness and incongruence's between job expectations and job realities. FWC, due to the nature of specialized law enforcement work and a result of recent changes in job responsibility may suffer a higher than normal rate of attrition related to the confluency theory.

A study of police officers from Birmingham Alabama (Harris 1998) found that officers who are satisfied with opportunities for advancement were less likely to turnover. Due to the average tenure of FWC, as indicated by the information provided later, there assuredly will be significant opportunities for advancement.

Questions posed by this research examined common life experience denominators of officers that are voluntarily leaving employment. If agency recruiters know that potential officers with particular experiences, ages, work backgrounds or life commitments are more likely to stay with the agency beyond the 5 year range they may better meet the personnel needs of FWC. The result would be a lower turnover rate resulting in a cost saving due to training, a reduction in man-hours spent in recruiting efforts, long term slowdown in the loss of institutional knowledge and better public service due to more experienced workforce. To start hiring for retention you need an organization model of who you want to hire.

There are numerous life experiences that may have an impact on the decisions to leave an agency. This study will focus on just five. Are officers that are hired below a certain age more likely to leave the agency? Does marital status and numbers of dependants at time of hire have an influence? Is there a correlation between those that leave and prior military experience? Is there a pattern associated with educational level? Does a pattern exist when the factors are considered in combination?

Armed with the above data recruiters may get the best bang for the buck when seeking out potential employees. They can focus their efforts in places where they are more likely to find individuals with the desired combination of life experiences. As mentioned earlier job satisfaction is a large factor in employee turnover. Recruiters may be able to select candidates that are more compatible with particular agency work resulting in a more satisfied employee.

### *Defining the Problem*

In 1999 the Florida Legislature merged the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (GFC) and the Florida Marine Patrol (FMP) into the newly formed Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). Approximately 350 former GFC officers and 350 former FMP officers were affected by the merger. As a result of the merger the Division of Law Enforcement in FWC became the largest state conservation law enforcement agency in the United States with approximately 700 sworn positions.

FWC recruits and trains its own officers through the FWC Academy. The academy is 29 weeks long with the first 20 weeks consisting of the Basic Recruit Curriculum and the remaining 9 weeks being agency specific. The academy training is followed-up by a 12 week field training session. Since the merger the

academy has graduated 7 recruit classes for a total of approximately 300 graduates.

Agencies seem to be competing for employees in an ever shrinking applicant pool. It is cost effective for agencies to hire officers that have already had law enforcement training and shown that they have the aptitude, desire, knowledge, skills and abilities to remain in the law enforcement profession (Joinsen, 1999). Competing for market share is a given for most successful businesses, but battling for what AON Consultant's America @ Work 1999 study calls "workforce share" may be a new challenge for human resources. Unfortunately most companies need for qualified employees co-exists with a shrinking labor pool and workforce that feels little compunction about jumping ship for a better offer. The study indicates that roughly 25 percent of surveyed employees would change jobs for a 10 percent pay raise, while more than half would leave for a 20 percent pay raise. (Joinsen 1999) As agencies compete amongst each other for these individuals it may be at the cost of law enforcement in general for Florida as few industries benefit from nomadic employees.

## Methods

The study will analyze officers with 5 years or less time with the agency. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will serve as a base for the study. Due to the merger in 1999 those officers were hired in the past five years using the same recruitment methods and criteria. The hiring period is also small enough to reduce or minimize the effects of generational gaps and recruiting criteria that may have influenced the agency hiring practices. Phase one consisted of an in depth look at turnover within the agency. The period from January 1, 2001 to December 31, 2005 was analyzed. The analysis consisted of a yearly breakdown of annual attrition rate as well as an overall average of the five year period. The information was reduced to percentages that occur due to retirement, resignations due to employment with other law enforcement agencies, resignations while in an initial officer training period, and resignations due to other factors (other factors may include resignation due to internal investigations, unknown reasons or employment outside of law enforcement, death, or disability).

Phase two was an analysis of those officers that FWC hired to get an average age, percent that were married, percent that had dependant children, percent with military experience, percent without college degrees, percent with associate degrees, and percent with baccalaureate degrees at the time of entrance into the FWC Academy. This was accomplished by a survey (appendix A) of FWC class # 8. Through research of personnel files and surveys (appendix) the same information was gathered for FWC Class 1 and FWC Class 2. The information was categorized by class number as well as pooled to look at a statistical hiring base. All information gathered was related to a particular officer's life experiences before entrance into the academy. Phase two's primary purpose was to look at the normal hiring demographics related to age, marital status, and

number of dependants, military experience, and educational background. Parts of phase two information can be used as a base line in which to compare future academy classes.

Phase three was an in depth look at FWC Class 1 and FWC Class 2 after approximately five years of employment. The analysis compared those officers leaving the agency during the training process and the following years of employment. Using the life experiences as mentioned above officers that have remained active with the agency were compared with officers that have left the agency to see if a pattern exists concerning the life experiences. Personnel files, academy records and agency records were used to gather the necessary information and reconstruct the academy class as individual life experiences upon entrance into the academy for those individuals not provided a questionnaire (appendix). In addition to the above information, data was gathered from agency records as to the reasons for leaving the Agency. The data was further broken down to include life experience models for those that resigned from the agency during initial officer training and those that resigned since graduation from the academy to August 1 2006.

The following definitions were used in this study as follows:

1. Voluntary Turnover – The employee has the option to remain but decides to accept employment elsewhere or leaves the labor force altogether.
2. Involuntary Turnover – Employee is discharged or must resign for reasons outside of his/her control.
3. Life Experience Model – An examination of a group of subjects that indicates age, marital status, number of dependants, military experience, and educational level.
  - a. Age – The age of the subject upon entering the FWC Academy.
  - b. Marital Status – Marital status of the subject upon entering the FWC Academy.
  - c. Number of Dependants – The number of dependants (dependant as defined by Internal Revenue Service Tax Code) upon entering the FWC Academy.
  - d. Military Experience – Number of years of active service with one or more of the US Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines or Coast Guard.
  - e. Educational Background – collegiate level Associate, Baccalaureate and Master Degrees.

## Results

### *Phase One*

The results from phase one is from data provided by the agencies data systems. The time period evaluated is from January 1 2001 to August 1, 2006 unless otherwise indicated.

FWC currently has approximately 723 sworn positions. Since January of 2001 FWC has lost a total of 308 officers. The attrition rate is equal to a 42.60 percent turnover from January 1, 2001 to August 1, 2006. This number includes all aspects of termination of employment, voluntary and involuntary. Of the 308 officers 137 retired (44.48%), 57 left for employment with another law enforcement agency (18.50%), 115 left for personal reasons or involuntary separation (37.33%). FWC compares the closest with large agencies in which 49 percent of those departing did so due to retirement and 24% did so due to employment with other law enforcement organizations (Koper, Moore and Maguire 2001).

Of the 115 that left FWC for personal reasons or involuntary separation 46 (40.00%) did so during training.

A better analysis of the actual turnover rates or trend within FWC may be seen in a yearly breakdown. The rates indicated below include all aspects of termination of employment.

Table 1  
Attrition by Year – 2001 through 2005

<b>Year</b>	<b># leaving agency</b>	<b>Total # officers</b>	<b>Annual %</b>
2001	66	723	9.12%
2002	56	723	7.74%
2003	54	723	7.46%
2004	39	723	5.39%
2005	53	723	7.33%
Total	268	723	7.41%

The annual average for the period as indicated above stands at 7.41percent (table 1). The annual attrition rate for FWC is slightly larger than the percentages for small agencies as concluded by the Koper, Moore, and Maguire 2001 study in which 7 percent was the estimated turnover. While FWC's annual rate was over two percentage points higher than the 5 percent average of large agencies it in part may be explained due to the effects of retirement due to the Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP), particularly in 2003 where 81.48% of those departing did so due to retirement.

In looking at turnover the agency for the most part has no control over the percentage of people that retire. They may not have much control over those officers that leave on their own accord or resign while in the academy. The movement of these individuals away from the agency or law enforcement profession may be considered normal or even healthy for the organization as a

percentage of them leaving may not be suited for a career in law enforcement. The agency should be concerned with those officers that leave and seek employment with other law enforcement agencies. These individuals have concluded training and have shown for the most part to be compatible with a career in law enforcement. While money is the number one factor cited by officers as the reason for leaving numerous studies indicate it is rarely the only factor. As most agencies wrestle with recruitment and retention issues it is natural that they are competing for the same applicant and employee pool.

Table 2 shows an analysis of the annual attrition rate of FWC officers leaving the agency due to employment with another law enforcement agency. The results indicate that 2002 had the highest percentage of officers leaving for employment with other agencies. A hypothesis may be that in 2002 the agency was going through the largest cultural changes due to the merger and that the cultural shift in part could have influenced the numbers.

Table 2  
Officers Leaving Due To Employment with Other Agencies

<b>Year</b>	<b>Resign to other LE Agency</b>	<b>Total # officers leaving</b>	<b>% of officer leaving to other LE</b>
2001	15	66	22.72%
2002	13	56	23.21%
2003	1	54	1.85%
2004	4	39	10.25
2005	8	53	15.09%
Total	41	268	15.29%

The average annual rate of officers that leave the agency for employment with another agency constituted 15.29 percent (table 2) of those officers that leave annually.

A brief look at 2006 indicates a significantly higher trend. As of August 1<sup>st</sup> 16 (40.00%) of the 40 officers departing FWC did so for employment with another law enforcement agency. This in part may be due to state law enforcement agencies inability to keep a competitive salary for tenured officers.

### *Phase Two*

Information from a total 143 individuals was gathered. A questionnaire (appendix) was filled out for each individual.

Phase two is a breakdown of officers employed using the five life experiences mentioned earlier. This is an in depth look at the new hire demographics and may be used to establish a base line. Officers departing the agency from FWC Class 1 and 2 will be measured from this base line.

FWC Class 1 started on January 8, 2001 and ended July 6, 2001. The Class started with 49 recruits and graduated 41 officers. As of August 1, 2001 (5 years, 3 weeks later) only 32 (65.30%) remain employed with FWC. FWC Class 2 started on September 24, 2001 and ended on March 22, 2002. The class

started with 48 recruits and graduated 40 officers. As of August 1, 2006 (4 years, 4 months later) 31 (64.5%) remain employed with FWC. FWC Academy Class 8 started on February 26, 2006 and is scheduled to graduate on September 8, 2006.

The first life experience that was evaluated was age (table 3). The following is a breakdown by academy class of the recruit age upon entering the academy. For analysis later and ease of recruitment friendly information the class participants were broken down in 5 year increments. FWC does not hire anyone below the age of 19 years old. There is no current cap on age.

Table 3  
Average Age and Age by Group

<b>Life Experience</b>	<b>Class 1</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Class 2</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Class 8</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Average age</b>	26.71	N/A	28.75	N/A	28.84	N/A
<b>&lt; = to 25 years old</b>	28	57.14%	17	35.41%	19	41.30%
<b>26 to 30 years old</b>	10	20.40%	13	27.08%	10	21.73%
<b>31 to 35 years old</b>	4	8.16%	13	27.08%	9	19.56%
<b>36 to 40 years old</b>	7	14.28%	3	6.25%	6	13.04%
<b>&gt;= to 41 years old</b>	0	0%	2	4.16%	2	4.34%
<b>Total in Class</b>	49	N/A	48	N/A	46	N/A

The second life experience evaluated was marital status upon entering the academy (table 4). The numbers are not inclusive of anyone that got married during or after the academy.

Table 4  
Married and Unmarried

<b>Life Experience</b>	<b>Class 1</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Class 2</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Class 8</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Married</b>	22	44.89%	21	43.75%	19	41.30%
<b>Not Married</b>	27	57.14%	27	56.25%	27	58.69%
<b>Total in Class</b>	49	N/A	48	N/A	46	N/A

The third life experience evaluated was the number of recruits that had dependants at the time of entering the academy (table 5).

Table 5  
Mean Numbers With and Without Dependants

<b>Life Experience</b>	<b>Class 1</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Class 2</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Class 8</b>	<b>%</b>
<b># with dependants</b>	12	24.48%	11	22.91%	15	32.60%
<b># with out dependants</b>	37	75.51%	37	77.08%	31	67.39%
<b>Average # of dependants</b>	1.91	N/A	1.45	N/A	1.6	N/A
<b>Total in Class</b>	49	N/A	48	N/A	46	N/A

The fourth life experience evaluated was military service (table 6). Military service only counted if the respondent had spent time in the United States Army, United States Navy, United States Air Force, United States Marine Corps, or United States Coast Guard. It was also inclusive of active or reserve duty. Military service was also counted if the respondent was a member of the National Guard.

Table 6  
Numbers With and Without Military Service

<b>Life Experience</b>	<b>Class 1</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Class 2</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Class 8</b>	<b>%</b>
<b># with military Service</b>	24	48.97%	17	35.41%	19	41.30%
<b># with out military service</b>	25	51.02%	31	64.58%	27	58.69%
<b>Total in Class</b>	49	N/A	48	N/A	46	N/A

Table 7 represents the numbers in each class broken down by military branch (table 7).

Table 7  
Military Branch

<b>Life Experience</b>	<b>Class 1</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Class 2</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Class 8</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>US Army</b>	11	45.83%	5	29.41%	3	15.78%
<b>US Air Force</b>	2	8.33%	7	41.17%	6	31.57%
<b>US Navy</b>	4	16.66%	1	5.88%	3	15.78%
<b>USMC</b>	5	20.83%	1	5.88%	6	31.57%
<b>US Coast Guard</b>	2	8.33%	3	17.64%	1	5.26%
<b>Total in Class</b>	24	N/A	17	N/A	19	N/A

The fifth life experience evaluated was educational level (table 8). Information was gathered from respondents as to their highest educational level. Respondents with multiple degrees were only given credit for the highest degree obtained. No information was gathered that would differentiate between degrees in science and arts.

Table 8  
Educational Level

<b>Life Experience</b>	<b>Class 1</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Class 2</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Class 8</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>No College</b>	7	14.28%	11	22.91%	4	8.69%
<b>Some college no degree</b>	24	48.97%	13	27.08%	12	26.08%
<b>Associates degree</b>	6	12.24%	7	14.48%	7	15.21%
<b>Baccalaureate degree</b>	11	24.44%	16	33.33%	20	43.47%
<b>Masters degree</b>	1	2.08%	1	2.08%	3	6.52%
<b>Total in Class</b>	49	N/A	48	N/A	46	N/A

The following information is a culmination of the above totals by life experience category (table 9). The information is provided for future studies as well as a bench mark to measure future recruitment efforts. The numbers below were not used for the phase three analysis as FWC Class 8 has not graduated. Only Academy class 1 and 2 (table 10) will be used for the comparison. The table is based on a total of 143 respondents.

Table 9  
Culmination of Class 1, 2, and 8

<b>Life Experience</b>	<b># Class 1, 2, and 8</b>	<b>Out of</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Average Age</b>	28.1 years old	143	N/A
<b>&lt;= to 25</b>	64	143	44.75%
<b>26 to 30</b>	33	143	23.07%
<b>31 to 35</b>	26	143	18.18%
<b>36 to 40</b>	16	143	11.18%
<b>&gt;= to 41</b>	4	143	2.79%
<b>Married</b>	62	143	43.35%
<b>Not Married</b>	81	143	56.54%
<b># with dependants</b>	38	143	26.57%
<b># without dependants</b>	105	143	73.42%
<b>Average # of dependants</b>	1.65 years old	N/A	N/A
<b># with military service</b>	60	143	41.95%
<b># without military service</b>	83	143	58.04%
<b>US Army</b>	19	60	31.66%
<b>US Navy</b>	15	60	25.00%
<b>US Air Force</b>	8	60	13.33%
<b>USMC</b>	12	60	20.00%
<b>US Coast Guard</b>	6	60	10.00%
<b>No college</b>	22	143	15.38%
<b>Some College no degree</b>	49	143	34.26%
<b>Associates degree</b>	20	143	13.98%
<b>Baccalaureate degree</b>	47	143	32.86%
<b>Masters Degree</b>	5	143	3.49%

The following table is a culmination of FWC Class 1 and 2. The figures are used later for a bench mark from which a comparison is made of those officers departing within the time period. The table is based on a total of 97 respondents.

Table 10  
Culmination of Class 1 and 2

<b>Life Experience</b>	<b># Class 1</b>	<b># Class 2</b>	<b>Combined</b>	<b>Out of</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Average Age</b>	26.71	28.75	27.73	97	N/A
<b>&lt;= to 25 years old</b>	48	17	45	97	46.39%
<b>26 to 30 years old</b>	10	13	23	97	23.71%
<b>31 to 35 years old</b>	4	13	17	97	17.52%
<b>36 to 40 years old</b>	7	3	10	97	10.30%
<b>&gt;=to 41 years old</b>	0	2	2	97	2.06%
<b>Married</b>	22	21	43	97	44.32%
<b>Not married</b>	27	27	54	97	55.67%
<b># with dependants</b>	12	11	23	97	23.71%
<b># with out dependants</b>	37	37	74	97	76.28%
<b># with military service</b>	24	17	41	97	42.26%
<b># without military service</b>	25	31	56	97	57.73%
<b>US Army</b>	11	5	16	41	39.02%
<b>US Navy</b>	2	7	9	41	21.95%
<b>US Air Force</b>	4	1	5	41	12.19%
<b>USMC</b>	5	1	6	41	14.63%
<b>US Coast Guard</b>	2	3	5	41	12.19%
<b>No College</b>	7	11	18	97	18.55%
<b>Some college no degree</b>	24	13	37	97	38.14%
<b>Associates degree</b>	6	7	13	97	13.40%
<b>Baccalaureate degree</b>	11	16	27	97	27.83%
<b>Masters degree</b>	1	1	2	97	2.06%

### *Phase Three*

Phase 3 was an evaluation of the officers that left FWC that entered and or graduated from FWC class 1 and 2. The personnel are broken down by the five life experiences mentioned above. Two distinct groups will be evaluated, personnel that left the agency during training whether, voluntary or involuntary, and officers that left the agency for other employment or personal reasons. Academy class 1 and 2 had 16 personnel that left the agency during training (table 11).

Table 11  
Officers Leaving During Training - Class 1 and 2

<b>Life Experience</b>	<b># of personnel</b>	<b>Out of</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Average Age</b>	26.06 years old	16	N/A
<b>&lt;= to 25 years old</b>	8	16	50.00%
<b>26 to 30 years old</b>	5	16	31.25%
<b>31 to 35 years old</b>	2	16	12.50%
<b>36 to 40 years old</b>	1	16	6.25%
<b>&gt;= 41 years old</b>	0	16	0%
<b>Married</b>	5	16	31.25%
<b>Not Married</b>	11	16	68.75%
<b># with dependants</b>	2	16	12.5%
<b># with out dependants</b>	14	16	87.5%
<b># with military service</b>	3	16	18.75%
<b># without military service</b>	13	16	81.25%
<b>No college</b>	1	16	6.25%
<b>Some college no degree</b>	7	16	43.75%
<b>Associates degree</b>	3	16	18.75%
<b>Baccalaureate degree</b>	5	16	31.25%
<b>Masters degree</b>	0	16	0%

The following table is a breakdown of those individuals that graduated from FWC Class 1 or 2 and left the agency for reasons other than resignation during initial officer training during the 5 year period following entrance into the academy (table 12). The table does not include officers that were fired or resigned in lieu of being fired.

Table 12  
Officers Leaving After Training from Class 1 and 2

<b>Life Experience</b>	<b># of personnel</b>	<b>Out of</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Average Age</b>	27.35 years old	N/A	N/A
<b>&lt;= to 25 years old</b>	6	14	42.85%
<b>26 to 30 years old</b>	5	14	35.71%
<b>31 to 35 years old</b>	1	14	7.14%
<b>36 to 40 years old</b>	2	14	14.28%
<b>&gt;= 41 years old</b>	0	14	0%
<b>Married</b>	5	14	35.71%
<b>Not Married</b>	9	14	64.28%
<b># with dependants</b>	2	14	14.28%
<b># with out dependants</b>	12	14	85.71%
<b># with military service</b>	7	14	50.00%
<b># without military service</b>	7	14	50.00%
<b>No college</b>	1	14	7.14%
<b>Some college no degree</b>	5	14	35.71%
<b>Associates degree</b>	1	14	7.14%

<b>Baccalaureate degree</b>	7	14	50.00%
<b>Masters degree</b>	0	14	0%

### Discussion

There are several mitigating and aggravating circumstances that greatly influenced the percentages in the analysis period. In 2000 the agency underwent a merger as previously mentioned. Due to possible or imminent cultural changes and work responsibilities it is likely that a percentage of employees may have opted to retire at an earlier date than expected. In 2003 the first round of officers retired as they ended their deferred retirement option program (DROP) period which greatly increased the percentage of retirees during that year. While most of the DROP retirees would have left during that period anyway there is no way to measure the percentage precisely.

Another contributing factor is the number of new hires during the analysis period. FWC hired and trained approximately 300 new officers during the period. This represents a large increase in the average hiring rate. The current attrition rate during training is estimated at 13%. The Koper, Maguire, and Moore study (2001) indicated an 8% failure rate in small agencies and an 11% in larger agencies. This is inclusive of time until they are released to solo patrol. The percentage of officers that leave FWC during training may be influenced by the duration of the academy. The FWC academy may be significantly longer than the agencies involved in the Koper, Maguire, and Moore study.

The charts below show the comparison of four different groups by life experiences. Significant differences will be discussed in detail by life experience.

Figure 1  
Average Age

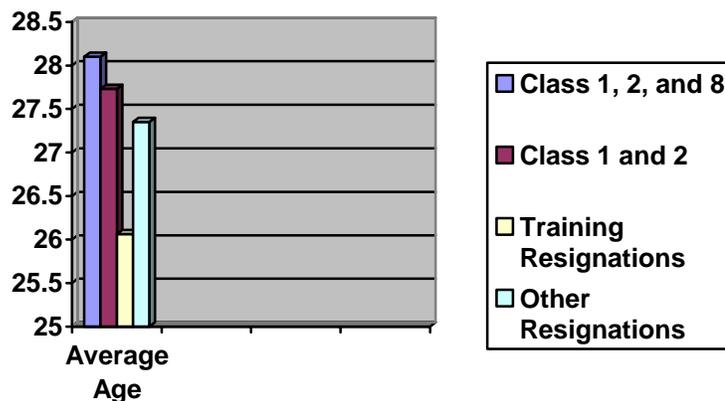
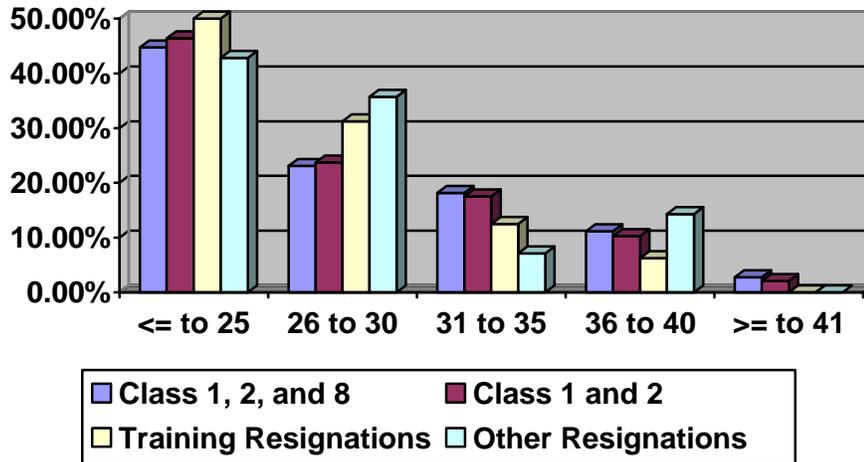


Figure 1 indicates that the age upon entering the academy does play a role in retention. The most significant difference was in those recruits that

resigned from the agency during initial officer training. The average age of those entering the academy from class 1 and 2 was 27.73 years old (table 10) compared with just 26.06 years old (table 11) for those that resigned during training. This resulted in a difference of 1.67 years. While there was a difference in those that left for other reasons it was significantly less.

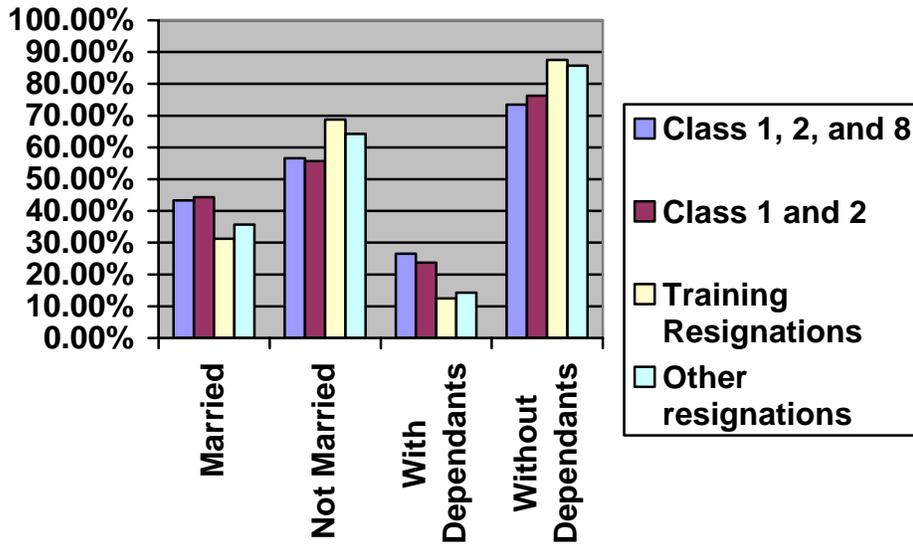
Figure 2  
Average Age by 5 Year Group



A better view of the relationship to age can be demonstrated by figure 2 which is broken down by age groups. While it was previously thought that officers that were hired that were less than 26 years old were the most likely group to leave the agency the data demonstrated otherwise. The highest percentage that left the agency was the 26 to 30 year old range. The 26 to 30 age group comprised 23.71 percent of those recruits hired in class 1 and 2 (table 10). Yet the same group comprised 31.25 percent of those leaving during initial training (table 11) and 35.71 percent of those leaving for other reasons.

A significant decrease in the percentage can be seen in those leaving that were 31 or older upon entering the academy. The only exception is the 36 to 40 year old group who left the agency for other reasons during the evaluation period. The data supported the hypothesis that the older a person is upon entering the academy the more likely they are to remain with the agency at least 5 years.

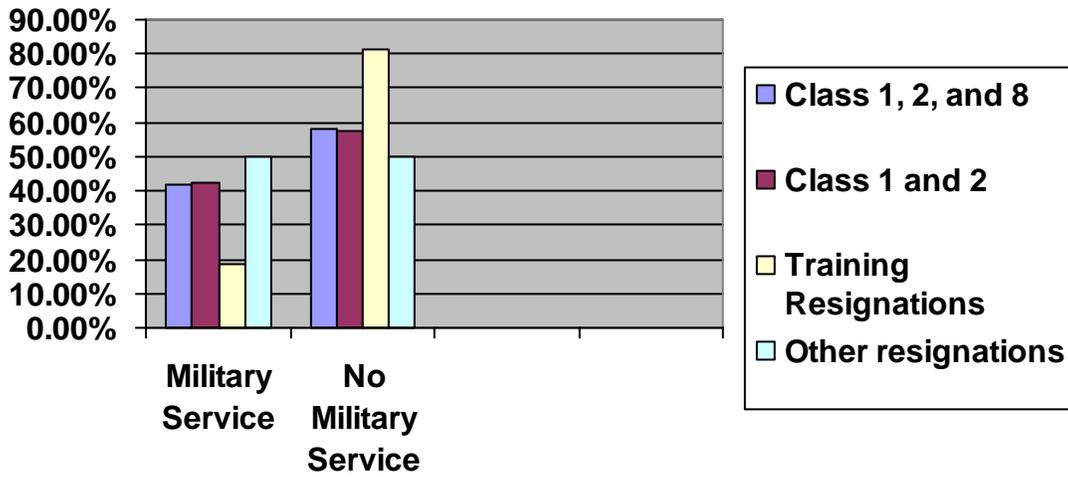
Figure 3  
 Percentage Married and Unmarried, With and Without Dependents



The data indicated a notable difference in the retention pattern for married people. Unmarried people were more likely to resign from the Agency during initial officer training and resign later for other reasons. Unmarried people comprised 55.67 percent of class 1 and 2 (table 10) yet they comprised 68.75 percent of those that resigned during training (table 11) and 64.28 percent that resigned for other reasons (table 12).

While the above findings were not overly surprising a large difference was noted when dependants were considered. 23.71 percent of class 1 and 2 had dependants (table 10) yet only 12.5 percent that resigned during initial officer training (table 11) had dependants and 14.28 percent that resigned later for other reasons had dependants. Dependants at the time of entering the academy appeared to be the best retention indicator of the five life experiences. The data supported the hypothesis that married people with dependants were more likely to remain with the agency at least five years.

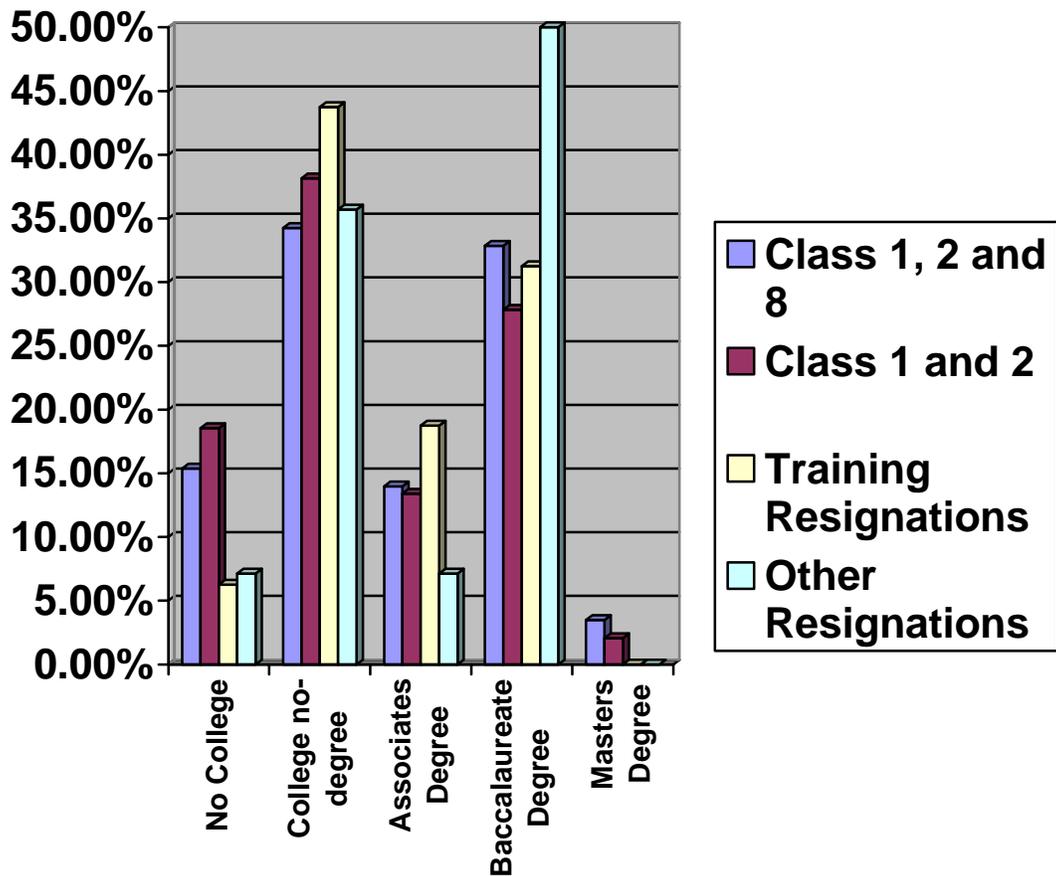
Figure 4  
 Percentage With and Without Military Service



The hypothesis that people with military experience were more likely to remain with the agency at least five years was only partially supported. The data indicated that people with military experience were significantly less likely to resign during initial officer training however they were more likely to resign in the first five years. 42.26 percent (table 10) of class 1 and 2 had military experience yet only 18.75 percent (table 11) of those resigning during initial officer training had military service, but 50.00 percent (table 12) of those resigning within the following five years.

During the research it was noted that all of those that retired from the military (total of 3) remained with the agency. They were also over 35 years old. This is a general observation and more research is needed on the topic. Due to the low number military retired respondents a more detailed analysis using this data would be inconclusive.

Figure 5  
Educational Level



The data did not indicate that educational levels were a good indicator of retention; however some significant differences were noted. There was a 0 percent turnover of those with masters degrees however due to the low percentage of people entering the academy with masters degrees the data is inconclusive. The most significant retention rate was in those individuals that entered the academy with no college. 18.55 percent of those entering class 1 and 2 (table 10) had no college yet only 6.25 percent of those resigning during initial officer training (table 11) and 7.14 percent of those resigning later had no college.

Another significant difference can be seen in those with baccalaureate degrees who resign from the agency for other reasons. 27.83 percent of those entering class 1 and 2 (table 10) had baccalaureate degrees yet 50.00 percent of those resigning for other reasons (table 12) had baccalaureate degrees. A portion of this may be explained as a percentage of those individuals resigned from the agency due to employment with federal law enforcement agencies that require a baccalaureate degree.

In July of 2005 FWC had 627 front line personnel. These numbers include lieutenants, investigators, and officers. Within FWC lieutenants are first line supervisors. A breakdown in 5 year increments from July 2005 indicate the following percentages: < 5 years = 39.2 percent, 5 to 10 years = 14.3 percent, 10 to 15 years = 9.7 percent, 15 to 20 years = 13.8 percent, 20 to 25 years = 12.2 percent, and >25 years = 10.5 percent.

The above mentioned information has resulted in two major concerns for the agency. First is the loss of institutional knowledge at the officer level and second is the ability to staff leadership positions in the future. The number one reason cited in exit interview questionnaires of those officers that are leaving employment with FWC is money. The salary of officers is primarily set by the Florida Legislature and mostly out of the span of control of the agency. As a result of the two concerns FWC has a formal recruitment plan and has started initiatives to retain officers and mentor personnel for key leadership positions.

As indicated from the above numbers FWC has a very young tenured workforce. Retention of those officers that have been hired in the past five years may become critical as the agency looks to fill the ranks of retiring middle managers. The likely source for those positions would be the officers in the 10 to 15 year bracket yet they constitute the smallest percentage of the work force. Retention may become critical.

Captain Jack Daugherty has been an officer with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission since its inception in 1999 and is currently assigned as an Area Supervisor of operations in the Northeast Region. Jack started his law enforcement career in 1992 with the Florida Marine Patrol where he served as an officer and Academy Training Lieutenant. While with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission he has served as an Academy Training Lieutenant, Watch Commander and Patrol Supervisor.

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## Appendix

### Law Enforcement Survey Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

CLASS \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

REASON LEFT \_\_\_\_\_

The below information is being gathered to assist the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission in their recruiting activities. The persons filling out the questionnaire will remain anonymous. The information gathered as a result of the questionnaire will be used to assist law enforcement agencies in the building of recruitment models.

1. What was your age when you when you entered the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Academy?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_ Years old
2. What was your marital status at the time of employment with FWC?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_ Married  
  
\_\_\_\_\_ Not married  
(If you checked not married you may skip to question #4)
3. If married at the time of employment with FWC for what amount of time prior to entering the FWC Academy?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_ Years
4. Other than you or your spouse how many dependants did you have upon entering the FWC Academy?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_ Dependants

5. At the time of employment with FWC did you have any prior military service?

\_\_\_\_\_ Active Duty

\_\_\_\_\_ Reserves of National Guard

\_\_\_\_\_ No service

If answered yes to active duty or National Guard please indicate the branch of service and number of years of service.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Branch)

\_\_\_\_\_ # of years active

\_\_\_\_\_ # of year's reserves

\_\_\_\_\_ # of years National Guard

6. Please indicate your level of education upon entering the FWC Academy.

\_\_\_\_\_ Some College but no degree

\_\_\_\_\_ Associates degree

\_\_\_\_\_ Baccalaureate degree

\_\_\_\_\_ Masters degree

THANK YOU for taking the time to fill out the questionnaire.