

REASONS FOR HIGH TURNOVER RATE
OF DISPATCHERS AT STILLWATER,
OKLAHOMA, POLICE DEPARTMENT

By

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REASONS FOR HIGH TURNOVER RATE
OF DISPATCHERS AT STILLWATER,
OKLAHOMA, POLICE DEPARTMENT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Chapter | Page |
|---|------|
| I. RESEARCH PROBLEM | 1 |
| Need for Study | 1 |
| Statement of the Problem | 1 |
| II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE | 3 |
| Job Satisfaction and Job Tenure | 3 |
| Stress and Job Tenure | 5 |
| III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES | 12 |
| Hypothesis | 12 |
| Methodology | 12 |
| Job Satisfaction Questionnaire | 13 |
| Job Dimension Survey | 14 |
| Demographic Factors | 18 |
| Strengths and Weaknesses in Methodology..... | 19 |
| Obstacles | 21 |
| Analysis of Results | 22 |
| IV. FINDINGS | 23 |
| Subjects | 23 |
| Observations | 24 |
| Interviews | 28 |
| Questionnaires | 33 |
| V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS | 46 |
| Summary | 46 |
| Conclusions | 46 |
| Recommendations | 50 |
| Future Research | 55 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 56 |

| | | |
|-----|--|----|
| VI. | APPENDICES | 58 |
| | Appendix A ACCESS LETTER | 59 |
| | Appendix B PARTICIPANT LETTER | 61 |
| | Appendix C COVER LETTER | 63 |
| | Appendix D FOLLOW-UP LETTER | 65 |
| | Appendix E INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GROUP I | 67 |
| | Appendix F INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GROUP II..... | 70 |
| | Appendix G INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GROUP III..... | 73 |
| | Appendix H DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE, GROUPS I, II, and III | 76 |
| | Appendix I JOB DIMENSION SURVEY GROUPS I, II, AND III | 79 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | PAGE NUMBER |
|--|----------------|
| FIGURE 1. STRESS CURVES | 7 |
| FIGURE 2. JOB DIMENSION SURVEY I | 14 |
| FIGURE 3. JOB DIMENSION SURVEY II | 16 |
| FIGURE 4. JOB DIMENSION SURVEY III | 16 |
| FIGURE 5. JOB DIMENSION SURVEY IV | 16 |
| FIGURE 6. MAJOR DISPATCH COMPLAINTS AS REVEALED IN INTERVIEWS | 30 |
| FIGURE 7. SURVEY DATA OF REASONS FOR JOB SATISFACTION ACCORDING TO THE JOB DIMENSION SURVEY (JDS) | 35 |
| FIGURE 8. MAJOR REASONS CITED BY FORMER DISPATCHERS FOR TRANSFERRING OUT OF DISPATCH | 37 |
| FIGURE 9. MAJOR REASONS CITED BY FORMER TRAINEES FOR DROPPING OUT | 37 |
| FIGURE 10. INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE OF EIGHT DISPATCHERS AND ONE TRANSFEREE ON THE JDS | 38 |
| FIGURE 11. AVERAGE SCORES FOR EACH ITEM ON THE JOB DIMENSION SURVEY (JDS) IN GRAPHIC FORM | 38 |
| FIGURE 12. DISSATISFACTION SCORES OF THE SEVEN SAMPLES FOR SUPERVISION'S INSTRUCTIONS ON THE CLEAR/CONFUSION CONTINUUM | 39 |
| FIGURE 13. DISSATISFACTION SCORES OF THE SEVEN SAMPLES FOR SUPERVISION'S EFFICIENCY | 39 |
| FIGURE 14A. HISTOGRAM OF REASONS FOR JOB SATISFACTION BY MEAN SCORE ON THE JDS | 41 |

| | |
|---|----|
| FIGURE 14B. HISTOGRAM OF REASONS FOR JOB DISSATISFACTION BY MEAN SCORE ON THE JDS | 41 |
| FIGURE 15A. HISTOGRAM OF REASONS FOR JOB SATISFACTION BY AVERAGE SCORE ON THE JDS | 44 |
| FIGURE 15B. HISTOGRAM OF REASONS FOR JOB DISSATISFACTION BY AVERAGE SCORE ON THE JDS | 44 |
| FIGURE 16. HISTOGRAM OF SUB-REASONS FOR JOB DISSATISFACTION BY AVERAGE SCORE ON THE JDS | 45 |
| FIGURE 17. FACTORS SIGNIFICANTLY RELATED TO DISPATCHER TENURE | 48 |
| FIGURE 18. CRITERIA FOR TRAINEE QUALIFICATIONS | 54 |

CHAPTER I

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Need For The Study

The high rate of turnover among police dispatchers was a concern within the Stillwater, Oklahoma, Police Department in as much as it resulted in high costs to the Department in terms of training as well as time devoted to dispatcher selection by personnel at the highest echelons within the Department.

Interviews with three Stillwater Police officials revealed agreement that this was a longitudinal problem which needed to be investigated and addressed with appropriate solutions.

At the request of Stillwater Police Lt. Ronald Thrasher the reasons for this phenomenon became the topic of research of this study.

Statement of the Problem

Two situations within the Police Dispatch Operations Department concerned the Stillwater Police Department. The primary problem was "burnout" or early withdrawal from the workplace due to work-related stress. The second problem was the multi-task phase of dispatcher training. Many

trainees do not complete training because of inability to acquire the "split-ear technique," a term coined by dispatch veterans.

Constant demands are made on the dispatch operators' time, requests being generated not only by the public but by fellow staff members, police officers and wives of the same. Emergency calls originate from 911 phones, Stillwater police direct phone lines, and the ambulance and fire department.

Dispatch operators are expected to keep a constant logging of the whereabouts of police officers and be level-headed in all crisis situations and police inquiries from local citizenry. Mistakes must be kept at a minimum with a departmental goal set at ninety-five percent accuracy.

A dispatcher has more than one boss. As the shifts change in other departments, most dispatchers remain on the job. Long hours are worked with high expectations and little reward. It is not unusual for dispatchers to stay on 12-hour shifts with little chance of slowdown time.

Dispatch operators have to be on call during evenings and holidays. Crime and emergencies do not stop because others are enjoying Christmas or Thanksgiving.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A review of the literature was conducted to determine if there is an established relationship between job satisfaction, stress indicators, and job turnover in the service professions.

Job Satisfaction and Job Tenure

A sizable portion of behavioral science research in organizations has focused on possible connections between job attitudes, particular job satisfaction, and various job behaviors. Industrial psychologists and labor economists, for example, have explored the relationship between job satisfaction and job tenure (Myers & Shultz, 1951; Parnes, 1954; Rottenberg, 1956; Vroom, 1964; Hulin, 1966 & 1968; and Mikes & Hulin, 1968). Lack of job satisfaction has been linked not only to turnover, absenteeism, tardiness, waste, grievances, and accidents but also to employee receptivity to change, loyalty, commitment to organizational objectives, and degree of participation and contribution (Stamps, 1978).

Ayala Pines insisted that in certain professions, some individuals get tired of working in chronically stressful situations. Pines further suggested that many people are

"so severely in need and dependent that they drain energy from the worker" (Pines, 1981, pp. 80-81).

Many professionals under the constant barrage of meeting with emergency situations have suffered from feelings of despair for their clients. Many are exposed to private matters which reveal the weaknesses of mankind and stimulate responses such as affection and hostility with such frequency that the professional is ultimately rendered able to respond with neither (Fox, 1963). Fox demonstrated that veteran workers expressed that a certain detached attitude was the worker's best weapon against burnout or job withdrawal (Fox, 1963).

There are certain white collar occupations that tend to be more oriented toward people than toward things (Hirschorn, 1988). A high degree of empathy can produce more stress on the worker than on others who can be more objective or less affected. Individuals who enter helping professions can usually relate to the social contacts and can actually put themselves into another person's shoes. "This could happen to me or this could have been my mother," are thoughts that the other researchers say workers constantly experience (Wolf, 1986).

A common problem among dispatch operators is shift work. A study was conducted to improve shift work conditions at the laboratory for Clinical Stress Research, Stockholm. The study surveyed working conditions and health indicators of 747 police officers performing shift work

duties. Fifty-two percent of the policemen were dissatisfied with their working hours, and even more stated they would be willing to forgo extra pay for inconvenient working hours in exchange for a better shift work schedule (Cooper, 1983).

Approximately one-third of the working population in Sweden must work inconvenient hours. Conventional shift work is the lot of about five percent of all employed persons in Sweden. A rotating schedule befalls about eight percent of working people in Sweden. Nursing personnel, police, post and telecommunication workers usually perform shift work (Wolf, 1986). Wolf noted the diastolic blood pressure was also somewhat higher among shift workers than in regular workers (Wolf, 1986).

Stress and Job Tenure

Stress can be any physical, chemical or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension (Hulin, 1966); and stress curves are different for each person (See Figure 1, McGorry and Singh, 1966). Because stress is a personal notion and stressors are perceived differently by each person, it is important to recognize what the individual considers to be stressful (Hulin, 1989). Most professionals list time management problems as their greatest stressors. They usually describe balancing personal and professional

time as a subsidiary problem (Long & Pfifferling, 1986, Part II).

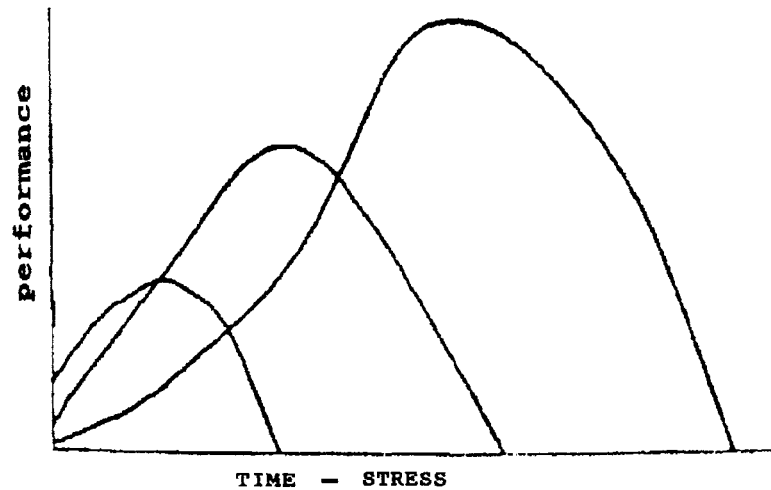
Robert L. Kahn, Director of the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan, found career overload to be one of the most frequent forms of role conflict in bureaucratic organizations. He summarized the response of people he studied: "We don't object to the things we are asked to do, and we don't find them inappropriate or unreasonable, but we can't meet all the demands simultaneously within the constraints of time and resources" (Kahn, 1978).

Kahn's summary is that society demands too much from public servants such as police. And expects police to not only protect but serve as marriage counselors, ministers, and curb-side psychiatrists. The study confirmed that 70% of police officers felt that they were under the stress of overload (Kahn, 1978).

Riley and Zaccaro, who take Marxist perspective, describing social control and power as unequally distributed among members of work organizations. These authors stressed that workers have little control over resources and demands from their work environment. They listed four basic assumptions of behavior in complex organizations:

1. A basic set of needs are shared by all humans. These include: a) physiological maintenance, b) job security, c) order and meaning, and d) control over one's environment.

Stress Curves



Up to a certain level of stimulation or stress, performance increases; beyond it, performance declines. Stress curves are different for each person.

Source: McGorry, and Singh (1985).

Figure 1. Stress Curves

2. All humans are characterized by individual differences.
3. When supplies to meet needs are inadequate, workers' needs receive lowest priority.
4. Reward systems such as incentives to increase emotional well being are under-utilized.

Each of these basic assumptions has been repeatedly identified as a powerful source of stress at work (Riley & Zaccaro, 1984).

The literature further indicates that high-performing, committed persons can and too frequently do lose their ability to cope effectively in jobs that involve high levels of human contact.

McGee and Cooper, in an approach to deciding which people will fit into high stress jobs give applicants a simple questionnaire to determine which individuals are likely to develop a high level of stress due to perfectionism. The questionnaire is as follows:

1. I expect myself to do well at nearly everything I do.
2. I get upset with myself whenever I don't do something well.
3. I suffer through a game of golf or tennis when I'm not playing my best.
4. I shy away from trying new things.
5. I often lose patience with my colleagues....if they don't catch on to something quickly.
6. I rarely think of shortcuts....
7. I have a reputation at work of being someone who is hard to please.

8. I usually refuse to start a project unless I have all the optimum equipment.....

"Yes" answers to most questions indicate the applicant is a perfectionist and may not be happy or agreeable in a high stress position with people that demand levels of high performance.

Ramona Ford believes that certain types of personalities may contribute to high-stress on their job. She describes the Type A personality as one of aggressiveness at the work place with workaholic tendencies. These workers are people pleasers that perceive stress more readily than others which may be the force, as the author notes, behind the higher risk of heart disease among this group. Ford maps out certain factors that she attributes to stressors in the workplace:

- 1) Outside influences such as family, financial problems, health and retirement
- 2) Low self-esteem
- 3) job dissatisfaction due to poor relations with co-workers, supervisors, and lack of recognition
- 4) Work overloads - no vacation, no breaks, no training
- 5) Incongruity between job status such as high education and low status positions
- 6) Workers cannot express personal feelings but must remain cheerful, courteous and caring at all times

Ford says these Type A personalities may fit the White Collar professional more readily than the Blue Collar worker. Ford also mentions a theory from Karl Marx about Blue Collar workers. Karl Marx had outline negative stereotypes of factory workers that had no control over their environment. He believed that lower status workers rated lowest in job satisfaction. He describes boredom and lack of being able to use one's abilities had an adverse effect on mental health. Marx stressed that workers who are under constant supervision with little reward and no inducements to increase production exhibit the highest degree of job dissatisfaction. Also workers being paid an hourly wage instead of a salary as most white collar workers are, have higher job absenteeism. Marx pointed out the workers' surroundings are machines which need constant attention which further alienates the worker from other people (Ford 1988).

McGee and Cooper believe that there are self-help books that are related to the work situation and stress activities or coping strategies in the work environment. The authors describes various helping skills for personality development and intrapersonal skill management.

These authors point out that occupational stress can only be adequately investigated by taking a multidisciplinary approach. For example, they explain, social influences have to be accounted for, as they can affect the mental and physical health and behavior of an

individual at work. They further note that psychological tendencies within the individual dictate the ways he or she responds to difficult situations. They suggest an individuals' philosophical approaches to life affect their perceptions, reactions, and tolerances, and their home lives, work habits and leisure pursuits all play roles in the work place (Cooper & Marshall, 1980).

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

Hypothesis

The literature revealed that relationships exist between job satisfaction, stress, and turnover in the workplace among such professionals as police officers, emergency medical technicians, and nurses. However, no literature focusing on turnover among police dispatchers has been published. The hypothesis underlying this study is that put forward by Stillwater Police Lt. Ron Thrasher, i.e., that dispatchers leave their positions because of high stress and high expectations of the department that the dispatchers perform with minimum error.

Methodology

Dispatchers were grouped into three categories. The first category consisted of 1) dispatchers who are still on the job. The second category was 2) those individuals who transferred out of dispatch into another department within the Stillwater Police Department. The third group was 3) those individuals who did not finish training.

Methodology used to study all groups was a combination of in-depth interviews (See Appendices E, F and G),

observation, and questionnaires (See Appendix H). This researcher observed the veteran dispatchers on-the-job for 320 hours with objectivity to gain insight into the job situation and to determine the qualities they possessed which enabled them to weather the stress. The interviews in Appendix E with both closed and open ended questions was conducted on this group. All groups also responded to a demographic questionnaire.

Job Satisfaction Questionnaire

The Job Dimension Survey (Swenson, Belt & Sweney, 1975) developed by the Center for Human Appraisal of Wichita State University was administered to Group I. This 81 item instrument was used to determine satisfaction with the intrinsic/extrinsic rewards of the job. For example, the participants equate their satisfaction with an item such as "pay you get now" by circling a number on the continuous scale:

BAD 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 GOOD

Three satisfaction criteria, Work Itself, People on the Job, and Supervision represent intrinsic job rewards, and six satisfaction criteria represent the extrinsic job rewards: Hours of Work, Size of Work Unit (number of people), Regional Aspects (geographical location). Work Unit (physical conditions), Opportunities for Promotion and Present Pay.

JOB DIMENSION SURVEY

As a provider of service to the community of Stillwater, Oklahoma, Stillwater Police Department Dispatch, your attitudes and opinions about your job are important. The purpose of this survey is to elicit your response of candid evaluation of various dimensions of your current job. Participation in this research is strictly voluntary and anonymity is guaranteed by this researcher.

I

Figure 2

Think of the job environment in which you work. What is it like? Then circle the number along each scale which best represents your description of the following factors:

Hours of Work (Individual responses characterized by polarized

scores* resulting in neutral average scores)

Bad 1----2----3----4-+-5----6----7 **Good**

Fair 1----2----3-|---4----5----6----7 **Unfair**

Convenient 1----2----3-|---4----5----6----7 **Inconvenient**

Too Long 1----2----3-|---4----5----6----7 **Too Short**

Regular 1----2----3-|-4----5----6----7 **Irregular**

Size of work unit (number of people)

Good 1----2----3----4----5---+6----7 **Bad**

Too Large 1----2----3----4----5---+6----7 **Too Small**

Insufficient 1----2----3----4----5--+-6----7 **Sufficient**

Efficient 1----2----3----4----5---+6----7 **Inefficient**

Regional Aspects (geographical location)

Good 1----2-|-3----4----5----6----7 **Bad**

Unpleasant 1----2----3---+4----5----6----7 **Pleasant**

Isolated 1----2----3--|-4----5----6----7 **Convenient**

Work Unit (physical conditions)

Unconfining 1----2----3----4----5----6|---7 **Confining**

Satisfact. 1----2----3----4----5---[6]---7 **Unsatisfac.**

Bad 1----2--|-3----4----5----6----7 **Good**

Practical 1----2----3----4----5-+6----7 **Impractical**

Efficient 1----2----3----4----5---+6----7 **Inefficient**

II

Figure 3

Work Itself

Think of the work that you perform. Then circle the number along each which best approximates your description of work on your present job.

Boring 1----2----3----4----5----6|---7 **Fascinating**

Challenging 1--|-2----3----4----5----6----7 **Routine**

Satisfy 1--|-2----3----4----5----6----7 **Dissatisfy**

Good 1--|-2----3----4----5----6----7 **Bad**

Dignify 1----2|----3----4----5----6----7 **Undignify**

Unrespect 1----2----3----4----5-|-6----7 **Respected**

Useless 1----2----3----4----5----6-|-7 **Useful**

Clear 1----2+---3----4----5----6----7 **Confusing**

Complex 1--|-2----3----4----5----6----7 **Simple**

III

Figure 4

People on the job

Think of the majority of the people that you work with now or the people you meet in connection with your work. Then circle the number along each scale which best approximates your description of people on your present job.

Unpredict 1----2----3----4----5--|6----7 **Predict**
Boring 1----2----3--|4----5----6----7 **Stimulating**
Slow 1----2----3-|4----5----6----7 **Fast**
Unambitious 1----2----3|4----5----6----7 **Ambitious**
Irresponsible 1----2----3----4--|5----6----7 **Responsible**
Active 1----2----3----4-|5----6----7 **Lazy**
Disloyal 1----2----3---[4]----5----6----7 **Loyal**
Unfriendly 1----2----3----4---|5----6----7 **Friendly**
Disrespectful 1----2----3----4--|5----6----7 **Respectful**
Happy 1----2----3----4--|5----6----7 **Unhappy**

IV

Figure 5

Opportunities for promotion

Think of the opportunities for promotion that you have now. Then circle the number along the scale which best apprimates you description of promotion opportunities.

Clear 1----2---[3]---4----5----6----7 **Confusing**
Bad 1----2-|3----4----5----6----7 **Good**
Irregular 1----2---[3]---4----5----6----7 **Regular**
Arbitrary 1----2-|3----4----5----6----7 **Ability**

Infrequent 1--|-2----3----4----5----6----7 **Frequent**
Fair 1----2----3----4--|-5----6----7 **Unfair**
Unlimited 1----2----3----4----5--|-6----7 **Limited**
Unrestrict 1----2----3----4----5----6--|-7 **Restrict**
Endless 1----2----3----4----5----6--|-7 **Dead End**

Demographic Factors

A Demographic Questionnaire (Appendix H) was used to obtain information pertaining to personal variables from the respondents in this study. The instrument was designed to provide personal demographic information relating to the following variables: age, gender, marital status, work setting, position, income, number of years at present position, number of years employed with City of Stillwater, full-time versus part-time, hours of work time per week, level of education, training in another area currently being pursued, relationship with co-workers, and attitudes toward leaving/staying in dispatch.

In-depth interviews were also administered to Group Two. Interview questions (See Appendix F) were related to reasons for transfer as well as other job stressors. Group Two consisted of a smaller sample, but they were among the individuals who left dispatch and were therefore able to shed light on reasons for leaving.

The last group and smallest consisted of individuals who chose to leave training. With this group, some issues were addressed that could pinpoint the dispatch training problem. Again, a questionnaire (See Appendices H, and G) was administered along with indepth interviews.

Observation and interviewing of these three groups of individuals was conducted under strict confidentiality. The sociological code of ethics was upheld and abided by. No names were used or coded for future identification. The

individuals who agreed to be interviewed were allowed to end the interviews at any time or stop the interviews to ask questions.

A letter of introduction (See Appendix B) was used for access and entry to observe and question these three groups. If any persons expressed a concern or did not want to be interviewed, their requests were honored, with no animosity shown toward them.

Information to be shared with supervisors and staff was provided in such a way that no life histories were written or repeated by the interviewer.

During participant observation, the researcher presented a letter of introduction and quietly blended into the work environment.

No judgments were passed among employees and no sides were taken. The legal codes were respected and appreciated at all times.

The instrument administered as a questionnaire was adapted from the Job Dimension Survey developed by the Center for Appraisal at Wichita State University.

Strengths and Weaknesses in Methodology

A major strength was easy access to the Stillwater Police Department due to Lt. Ron Thrasher's influence in the police department. He introduced this researcher to several officials who were supervisors and veterans of the police

department who possessed insight regarding dispatch turnover rate.

These introductions were eased and this researcher was less challenged due to Lt. Thrasher's position in the department and the respect he enjoyed among his fellow officers. Dispatchers also felt less threatened by an observer in their midst due to Thrasher's assurance regarding the reliability of this study.

Weaknesses inherent in the methodology employed in the study were both the possibility of unconscious researcher bias and the shortcomings of a single case study as being rather weak in nature and not particularly valid among the research community. However, this researcher made every effort to be open-minded and view situations with freshness and a lack of narrowness one might develop during years of experience in one area or due to holding pre-conceived notions.

Another weakness in this case study was the limitation of quantitative data. Some researchers believe qualitative methods are too biased and lack validity. However, strictly quantitative research does not provide data as rich as that accompanied by observation in settings that are more natural. People are more relaxed and tend to be more descriptive and honest on a one-to-one basis. A developed feeling of friendship and shared communication by both parties is usually experienced during interviews accompanied by observation.

This research was not a covert study because all of those being interviewed knew what was being observed and why. Subjects were more helpful since a highly respected member of the department had taken this researcher under his wing, so to speak. Individuals felt more comfortable speaking about their concerns and were more open over the issues raised.

Obstacles

Midway during research, during the period when the questionnaires were to be turned in to this researcher, a personnel change took place in a supervisory position. This supervisor made it known to this researcher as well as the dispatchers that he "did not give a ---- (obscenity deleted) about this questionnaire." Moreover, his concerns that dispatchers might be called at home for interviews and that something might take place without his permission were emphatically voiced.

Another difficulty which did arise were some guarded responses on the part of some of the working dispatchers, who apparently had reservations about the confidentiality of the study. One apparent discrepancy was the summary of the Job Dimension Survey where dispatchers pointed out a lack of supervision but during the face-to-face interviews these areas of concern were not mentioned or at least answers were guarded. During some interviews the supervisor was near by but absent during other interviews. The researcher noted

more openness at the times when the interviewer and interviewee were alone.

Analysis of Results

The 320 hours of observation of dispatchers at the Stillwater Police Department were summarized (See Chapter IV, Findings).

During interviews, notes were taken, and major job satisfactions as well as complaints were summarized (See pages 13 - 15) and then presented in graphic form (See Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5).

Written questionnaires were tabulated and averaged. A questionnaire was marked with the average rating each item received (See Figure 2). Questionnaire scores were presented in graphic form (See Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5). The demographics of questionnaire respondents were also summarized (See Chapter IV, Findings, see Appendix H).

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Subjects

The researcher interviewed three groups that were either dispatchers, transferees, or people who had dropped out of training. All of the three groups were white, middle class individuals. Most respondents were candid and were willing to talk about their jobs. The interviews are broken down into the three groups.

Group I. Nine working dispatchers responded to the Jobs Dimension Survey and the demographics questionnaire. One veteran dispatcher responded to the interview which did not query as to demographics. Of these, four were between the ages of 24 and 26, three of these four were male. They had been on the job between two and one half and six years. Only the female was married. Only one of the four, a male, did have a Bachelor's Degree.

The other five working dispatchers were aged 32-36 and female. All but one of these five women were married. Three had been on the job four to five years and two were eleven year veterans. One had a Bachelor's degree. All of them categorized their annual incomes in the \$19,000-20,000 range

except for one in the \$20,000-21,000 range. All worked 40 hour week plus eight to twelve hours overtime.

Group II. Two people who had transferred responded to the Dimension Job Survey and the Demographics Questionnaire. They were between the ages of 29 and 32. One, a single female, with a high school education had become a full-time janitor and was earning \$12,000-15,000, and the other, a married female, had become a full-time secretary in the department and was earning \$15,000-17,000. Three other transferees responded to interviews but not to the questionnaires. They were all females, married with children, and currently working in the Police Department as secretaries.

Group III. Three former dispatcher trainees who had dropped out of training responded to the questionnaire. Their ages ranged from 25 to 28. They were all single, one being female. They all were earning between \$12,000 and \$15,000 working full-time, one as a waiter, one a sales clerk, and one a dishwasher. One had a Bachelor's Degree.

All respondents in all groups were employed full-time.

Observations

This researcher observed 320 hours at the Stillwater Police Dispatch Department from September 1, 1994 to

December 1, 1994. The observance was six days a week every evening from 4PM to 8PM.

This researcher had the opportunity to observe the multi-task work load first hand.

The Dispatch Department is located in the basement of the Police Department which is two floors down from the police entrance. The small, confined area is surrounded by computers and video cameras. Each dispatcher of the two on duty is given a chair on rollers (for easy access) and a switchboard that is constantly used to dispatch calls. Two telephones are available with six lines to be on hold when deemed necessary. Two other phones which are emergency 911 receivers are located to the right of each person's switchboard. All incoming calls of both phones are recorded for the purpose of both accuracy and the liability element. Calls can be played back to correct information and for proof that they were handled correctly. All calls from the public are monitored by a police officer in the upstairs office.

When any of the dispatchers are curt or discourteous, a call from an officer is heard immediately.

The video cameras serve two purposes. One is to be able to full view prisoners for security measures. For their own safety all prisoners' belts and shoe laces are taken by the charging officer to prevent the detainees from harming themselves. Another purpose of the video camera is to record the interaction of the police with the prisoners

and to protect the police from lawsuits or claims that the money and property returned to the prisoners upon discharge was no less than that taken when they were incarcerated.

To the left of each dispatcher is a computer with which to access motor vehicle records and outstanding warrants. When officers stop cars in traffic they often call dispatch to check license numbers in case offenders should be detained. This service is quickly performed and radioed back to the officers in the field. Sometimes backup is needed for further assistance. The excitement rises when a dispatcher gets a "hit," which is a detainee in some violation of the law.

In-coming calls from the public occur with greatest frequency during the evening hours. Calls are quickly handled, but many times the public is put on hold while other lines are answered. Even though several lines are blinking at once, the dispatchers seem to handle each call with ease, however, this researcher experienced constant tension.

Many times tension in the room was extremely high, but these professionals seemed to take it in stride and get the job done. This control can most likely be attributed to years on the job and the knowledge that crisis situations are short-lived. These veteran dispatchers did not appear callous toward their job but merely experienced in handling many difficult situations over many years.

The multi-task component of dispatching, besides being many jobs at once, requires a talent that each veteran dispatcher has developed of being able to listen to several people at once with complete understanding.

Many 911 emergency calls which came in were handled immediately, with the dispatcher talking to the caller while dispatching an officer to the scene. Though each call that comes through this line was not an emergency, an officer was usually sent out to investigate the problem.

Officers occasionally visited the Dispatch Department. Some came downstairs to complain while others just came to talk and share their adventures. Some public figures were referred to as Crazy Mary or Difficult George but most conversations were simply shop talk to ease the burden of dealing with the stresses of public service.

The male dispatchers were treated with more respect and patience from the officers, supervisors and the public. The officers would ask a female dispatcher to make personal phone calls but did not ask the male dispatchers for the same task. The public would demand action from a female dispatcher but merely ask a male dispatcher in a considerate manner.

The dispatchers are to be praised for the job they do for the public and their department. They perform a difficult job, working long hours with little recognition or gratitude from officers or supervisors. Prior to my observations of dispatchers in action, this researcher had

no idea of the many tasks for which they were responsible and the dedication that is needed to do the job well.

Interviews

Group I. Nine working dispatchers participated in in-depth interviews. Of these, four had no serious complaints about the job. All derived pleasure from the fact that the job was never boring and all found it "exciting" or "challenging", although six of the nine found it too challenging, i.e., stressful.

Four complained that the hours (an 11 hour shift plus two to four hours extra nearly every day) are too long. Two complained about the multi-task component of the job. Two complained about not being able to have holidays with their families. The following complaints were issued by one respondent each:

- No supervision
- Patience is tried beyond endurance
- Training did not adequately prepare for the degree of difficulty of the job
- No career advancement is possible
- Extra duties are added over and above dispatching, e.g. broadcast of the "dog tapes" (Humane Society videotapes of dogs available for adoption, a program aired over the community cable channel);

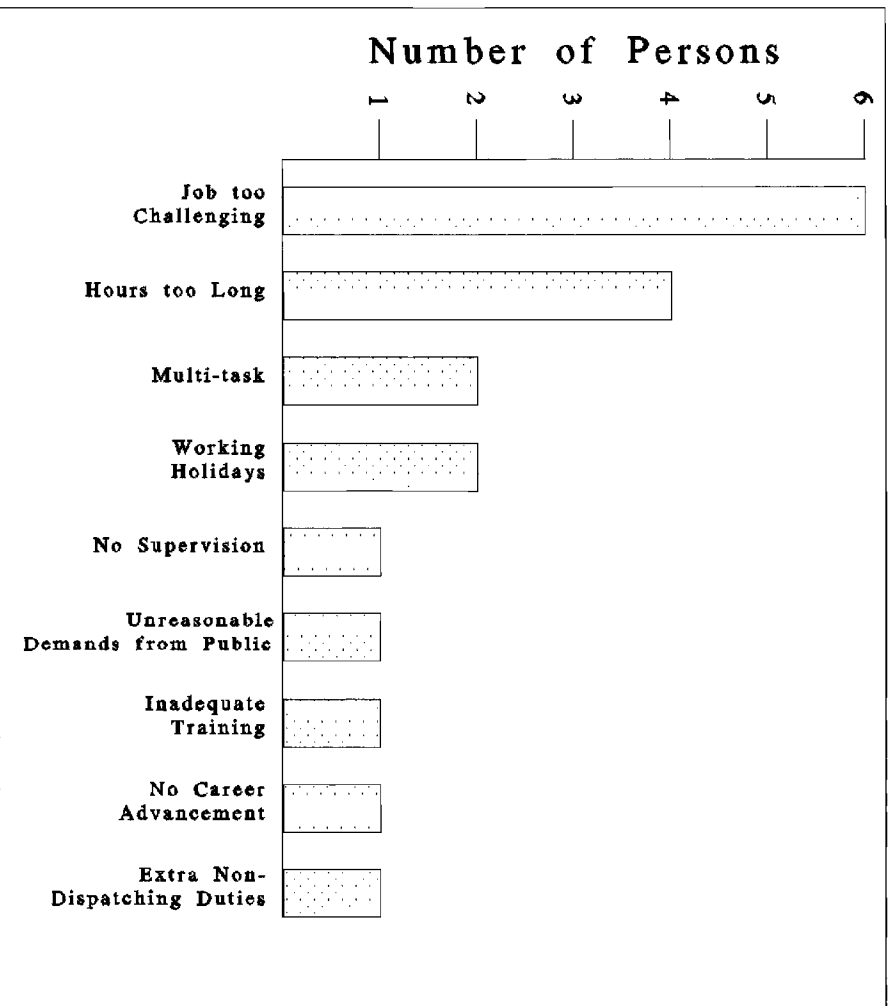
hourly prisoner observation; and favors for policemen. (See Figure 6)

In terms of job satisfaction, besides unanimous approval about the job never being boring, two respondents liked the degree of stress in the job, one liked the hours (a night shift), one felt the money was good, and one said dispatching was "a good job for Stillwater."

All interviewees lived in a metropolitan area which seemed to be more or less satisfying and did not create a problem. Dispatchers seemed unhappy with the closed area they work in (the basement) but did not attribute additional stress to this working environment. All those interviewed seem to shrug off location as minimal but described problems with the public and fellow officers as major stressors.

Dispatchers complained about the public's overreliance on the 911 emergency line, citing, for example, a man who demanded to talk to the chief of police simply because the dispatcher was new on the job and she did not recognize his name. His complaint was a minor one. Someone had parked at his apartment complex but was not a resident and therefore had no authority to park there. The caller demanded immediate service for removal of the automobile.

Another dispatcher answered a 911 emergency call from a distraught woman who wanted a police officer to give her immediate assistance. She had a mouse that was caught in her trap but was still alive. She had specific instructions



Major Dispatcher Complaints as Revealed in Interviews
FIGURE 6

for the officer as to how he should handle her case. She directed him to remove the trap with the wriggling mouse to the animal shelter and gave further instructions that said mouse would receive death only by lethal injection.

Some of the dispatchers were growing weary of the same warring couples that call for help but refuse to take the legal action necessary to remove the violent partner. Officers are dispatched to scenes of domestic violence only to calm couples down. Abusive partners cannot be removed unless their victims sign complaints. Women who call usually do not even have to say their last names, only that they need help, and immediately they get it. Their calls are so common that all the dispatchers know their histories. Also, a log is kept that lists each time officers are sent to a family troubled by domestic violence.

Many dispatchers feel that the public is not aware of the duties of police officers. A call came in from a single mother who wanted an officer to come to her home and force her son to stay home for the evening. Her oldest son, who was 16, was allowed to leave but her 14-year-old was grounded. She felt that calling the police would show her younger son she meant business.

A dispatcher described tasks that require professional skill but do not necessarily fall under the police officer's expertise. Many calls are about vermin in the house or snakes under the house that people want the police officers to remove.

Many calls, on all shifts, come in to the police department from people who have locked themselves out of their cars and want an officer to unlock the car-door. These incoming calls are threefold on Oklahoma State University game days.

Of course, there are many serious calls that demand immediate attention. Among these are fires, thefts, burglaries, robberies, traffic accidents and assaults. These calls require that an officer be placed on the scene as fast as a dispatcher can get one there. There are only a small number of officers in the field. Sometimes they are called off a mouse case to handle serious problems. Each caller feels his or her call is just as important as another's. It is the dispatcher who is required to determine which cases to pull officers off of in order to respond to those more serious in nature. Dispatchers have a lot of power but also experience reprimand if they make an error in judgment.

Two female dispatchers complained about being asked by officers to relay personal telephone messages. Male officers ask female dispatchers to call their wives for them about dinner, children or appointments. Dispatchers really do not have time for personal calls but must work the calls in around their other duties.

One hundred percent of the dispatchers agreed the job is exciting, challenging and different every day. When asked why people would leave such a job they attributed the

problem to long hours working in a service position with a public that had unreasonable demands.

Group II. Five respondents who had requested transfers out of dispatch are working within the Stillwater Police Department in other positions during the research period. They were all females and wanted shorter hours, less stress, and holidays off so that they could enjoy their families since most are married. They all had found the multi-task component of the job to be the most difficult element of the work itself. (See Figure 8)

Group III. Interview respondents who had quit during their training all quit during the phase of training in which multi-task was introduced. They did not seem to know what a dispatcher did, and they "didn't know it would be that hard." (See Figure 9.)

Questionnaires

Job Dimension Survey (JDS)

The mean of all responses for each item on the Job Dimension Survey are indicated on Figure 2. It should be noted that in two sections of the JDS, "Hours of Work" and "Supervision," the mean scores do not reflect the individual scores. Individual responses in these sections were polarized, e.g. some dispatchers hated their hours, while

others loved their hours. (See Figure 7: Survey Data of Reasons for Job Satisfaction According to JDS; Figure 12: Dissatisfaction Scores of the Seven Samples for Supervisor's Instructions on the Clear/Confusing Continuum; and Figure 13: Dissatisfaction Scores of the Seven Samples for Supervisor's Efficiency).

Those factors, therefore, perceived by the average dispatcher as most satisfactory were:

- I. "Regional Aspect (geographical location)"
- II. The "fascinating," "challenging," "satisfying," "good," "dignified," "respectful," "useful," and "clear," and "complex" nature of the work itself;
- III. Pay that is "adequate for normal expenses."

Factors seen as most unsatisfactory were:

- I. Size of the work unit (number of people), in that it was perceived as : "bad," "too small," "insufficient," and "inefficient."
- II. The physical conditions of the work unit were seen as "confining," "unsatisfactory," "bad," "impractical," and "inefficient."
- III. The people worked with and met in connection with work were seen as "predictable," though it is not likely that this is a source of either satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Survey Data of Reasons for Job Satisfaction According to the JDS

| Major Sources | Minor Sources | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | mean | total-mean |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|------------|
| Job Environment | Hours of Work | 1 | 5 | 5.4 | 4.6 | 4 | 4 | 5.2 | 4.8 | 3.4 | 4.156 | 3 . 3 5 |
| | Size of Work Unit | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 4.8 | 2.311 | |
| | Geographical | 3.3 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 2.7 | 4 | 6 | 3.889 | |
| | Physical Condition | 2 | 2.8 | 4 | 2.4 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 2.8 | 2.2 | 4.6 | 3.044 | |
| Work Itself | Fascinating | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 6.111 | 6 . 0 9 |
| | Challenging | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 6.333 | |
| | Respected | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 5.667 | |
| | Useful | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 2 | 7 | 6.000 | |
| | Complex | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 6.111 | |
| | Satisfying | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 6.333 | |
| People on the Job | Predictable | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 6.111 | 4 . 4 4 |
| | Fast | 4 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 4.889 | |
| | Responsible | 4 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 4.778 | |
| | Happy | 1 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 3.333 | |
| | Ambitious | 1 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 3.444 | |
| | Respectful | 1 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 4.111 | |
| Present Pay | Adequate - Normal | 7 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 3 | | 5.125 | 3 . 7 5 |
| | Expenses | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Satisfactory | 7 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | | 4.625 | |
| | Fair | 1 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 3 | | 3.500 | |
| | Overpaid | 1 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | | 2.750 | |
| | High | 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 2 | | 2.750 | |
| Supervision | Active | 1 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 2 | | 5 | 3 | | 3.571 | 4 . 0 2 |
| | Polite | 1 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 7 | | 5 | 3 | | 4.143 | |
| | Effective | 1 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 1 | | 3 | 1 | | 3.000 | |
| | Clear Instructions | 1 | 1 | 7 | 6 | 4 | | 7 | 1 | | 3.857 | |
| | Knows Job Well | 1 | 7 | 7 | 2 | 7 | | 7 | 3 | | 4.857 | |
| | Fair | 1 | 7 | 1 | 6 | 6 | | 1 | 6 | | 4.000 | |
| | Intelligent | 1 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 4 | | 5 | 7 | | 4.714 | |
| Opportunity for Promotion | Good | 1 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | | 6 | 2.875 | 2 . 8 2 5 |
| | Regular | 1 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 6 | | 5 | 3.250 | |
| | Based on Ability | 1 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | | 5 | 2.750 | |
| | Frequent | 1 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 1 | | 3 | 3.375 | |
| | Endless | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | | 5 | 1.875 | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |

FIGURE 7

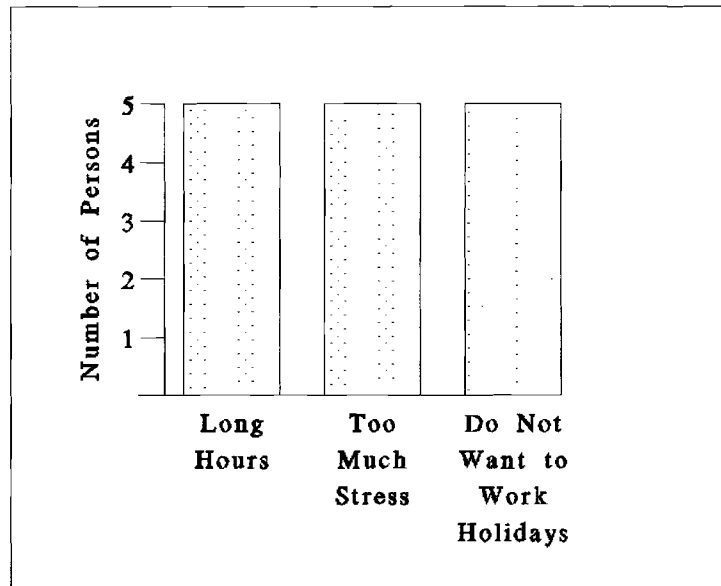
IV. Supervision was seen as "bad," "doesn't tell me where I stand," "never around when needed," "doesn't praise good work," and "annoying."

V. Pay was seen as "underpaid," with the comment, "for the responsibility" added in one case, and whether or not pay provided for luxuries was clearly decided in the negative, though, again, there is no indication that this factor has any relationship with job dissatisfaction.

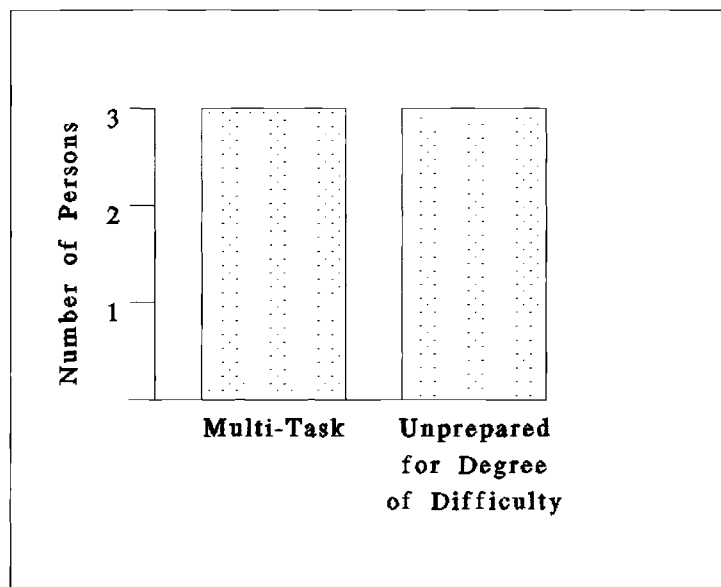
VI. Promotion opportunities were rated as "bad," "arbitrary," "infrequent," "limited," "dead end," and the most clearly selected answer on the questionnaire, "restricted."

As previously noted, all factors in the "Hours of Work" category received neutral mean scores because individual responses differed markedly. Some people liked the hours very much and some people disliked them very much. This situation was also the case on 12 of the questions in Section IV, related to supervision. As shown in Figure 5, one respondent found the supervision to be very "dull," and three rated their supervisor very "intelligent." Two rated their supervision "lazy," while one rated his/her supervision "active." Three "bad," one "good," one very "polite," one very "impolite," one very "up to date," one very "out of date." Three chose the highest score for their supervisor in terms of effectiveness, while one rated

Figure 8



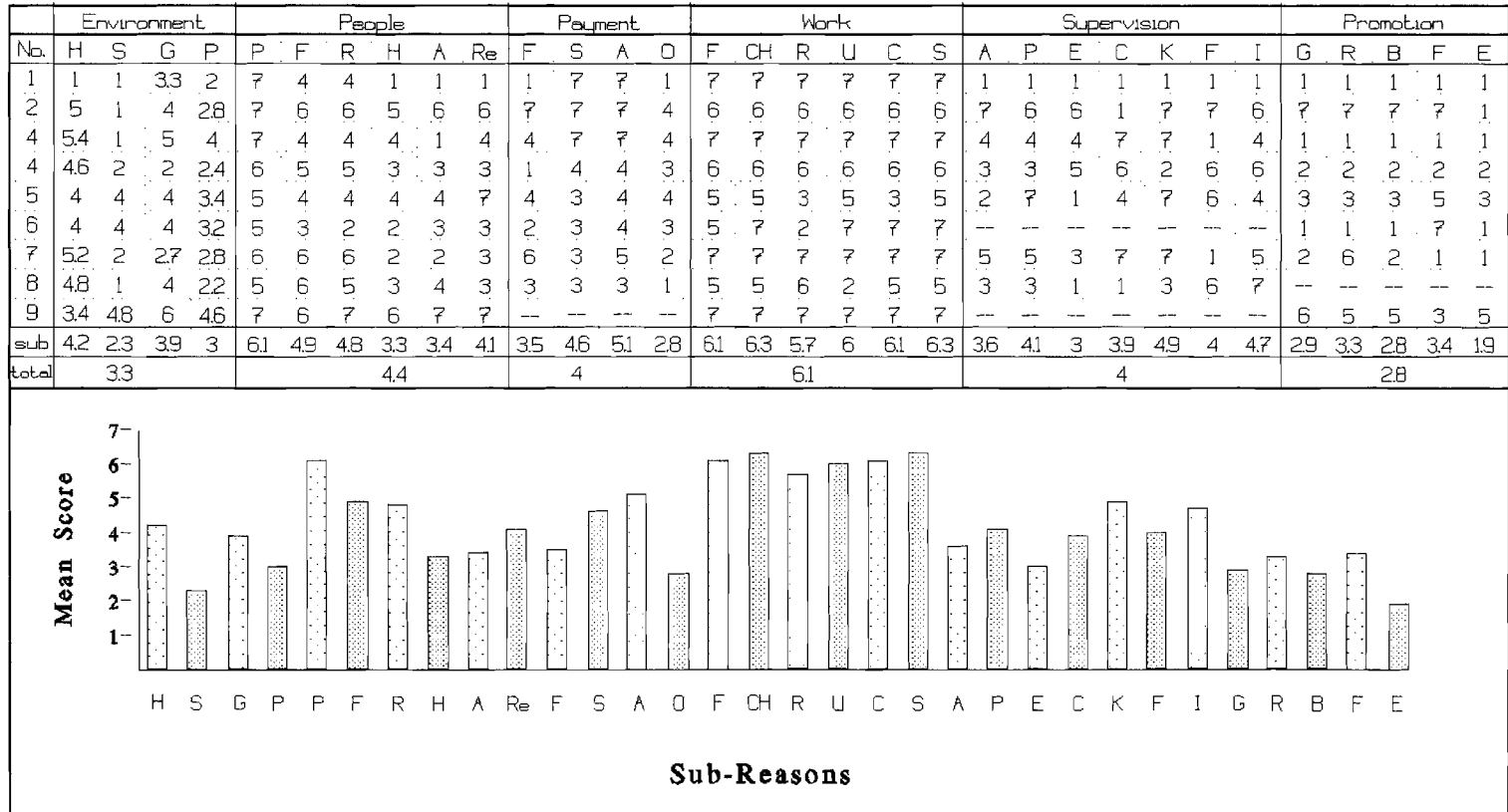
Major Reasons Cited by Former Dispatchers for Transferring Out of Dispatch



Major Reasons Cited by Former Trainees for Dropping Out

Figure 9

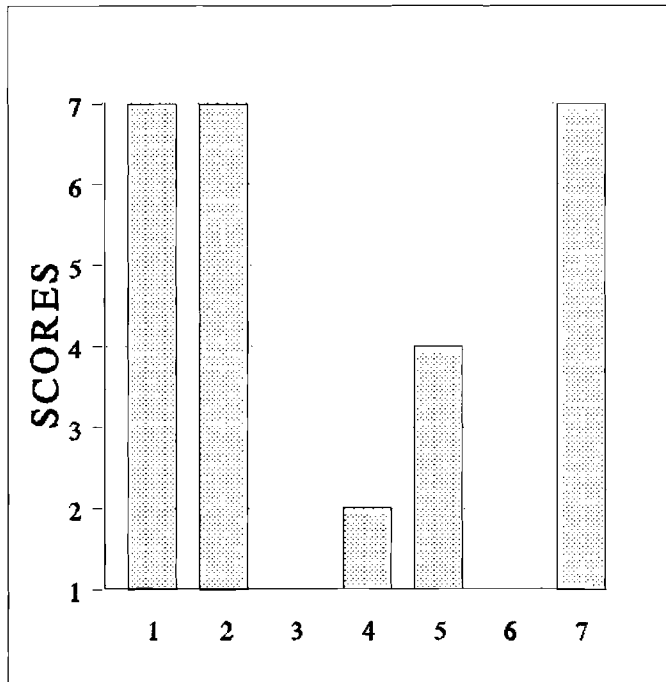
Figure 10
Individual Responses of Eight Dispatchers and One Transferee on the JDS;
Mean Scores for Each Item (SUB) and Average Scores for Each Section



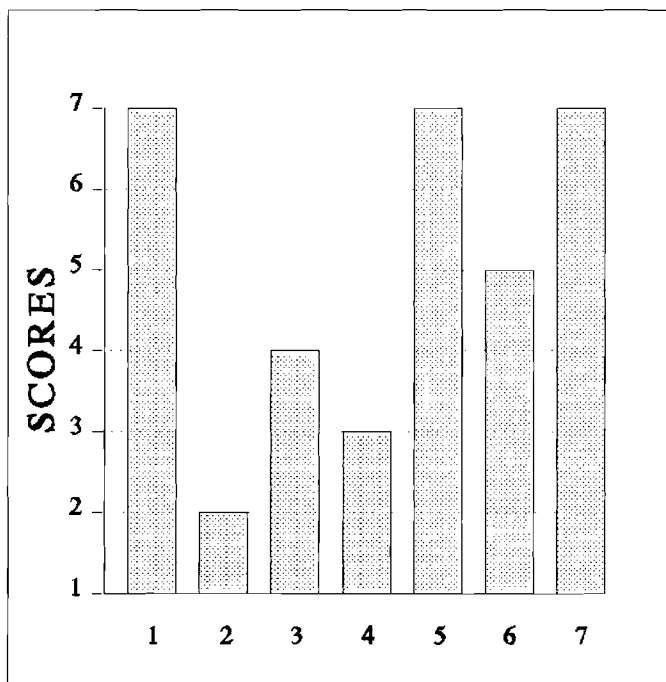
Average Scores for Each Item on the Job Dimension Survey (JDS) in Graphic Form

Figure 11

Figure 12



**Dissatisfaction Scores of the Seven Samples for
Supervision's Instructions on the Clear/Confusion Continuum**



**Dissatisfaction Scores of the Seven Samples for
Supervision's Efficiency**

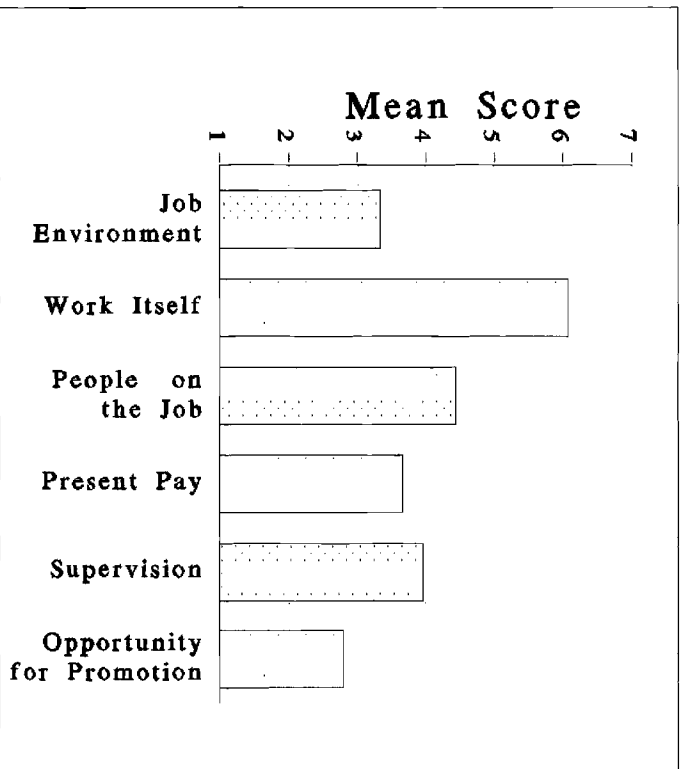
Figure 13

the supervisor just one step away from totally "ineffective," and so on, as can be seen, on the continuum related to knowledge of the job, "helpful" versus "annoying," "awkward" versus "tactful," "nervous" versus "relaxed," "wise" versus "foolish," and "fair" versus "unfair."

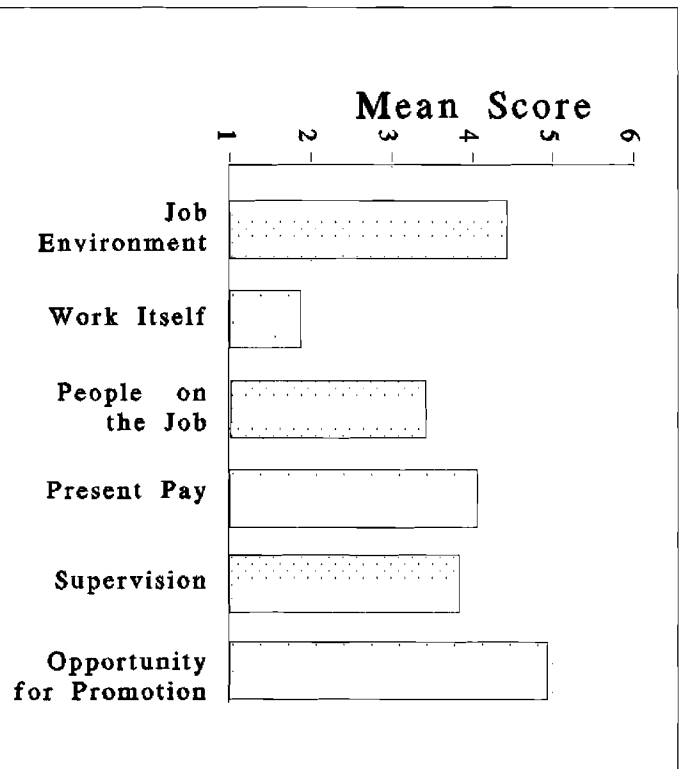
Figure 11 shows each individual's average score for each factor grouping in the JDS as well as the mean scores for each factor group and the mean score for each major category. In this computation, one survey responded to by a transferee was also figured into the computations except on questions which clearly related to her past job outside dispatching. It should be noted that due to the confidentiality requirements this respondent is not necessarily labeled as number 9 on any of the tables or charts. Scores have been reversed on items in the JDS in which low numbers describe positive values like "Fair," "convenient," and "good," e.g. a score of 3 was computed as a 5, so that all low scores reflected negative job characteristics.

In Figure 11 illustrates, in graphic form the mean scores on each factor group. By examining the shortest bars, it may be observed that those factor groupings revealing the most dissatisfaction were two factors in the Job Environment Section, "S" for Size of Work Unit, and "P," Physical Conditions. In the Payment Section, "O" stands for

Figure 14A



Histogram of Reasons for Job Satisfaction by Mean Score on the JDS



Histogram of Reasons for Job Dissatisfaction by Mean Scores on the JDS

Figure 14B

"overpaid." In the Supervision category, the shortest bar is under "E" for "Effective." In the Promotion section, the lowest bar is marked "E" for "Endless." Refer to the Job Dimension Survey on pages 13 - 15 and Appendix I for the full descriptive phrase indicated in Figure 11 by an initial.

The tallest bars indicate the areas of greatest satisfaction. In the "people" section, the tallest bar, labeled "P," stands for "predictable," and all the items in the category rating the work itself received high average scores.

In Figure 7, Survey Data of Reasons for Job Satisfaction, according to JDS, the factors labeled by an initial in Figures 10 and 11 are spelled out. It should be pointed out that in the Hours of Work section individual scores on the continuum, "Too Long" to "Too Short," three individual scores exhibited extreme dissatisfaction with "too long" hours.

In Figure 7, "Survey Data of Reasons for Job Satisfaction according to JDS," the factors labeled by an initial in Figures 10 and 11 are spelled out. High scores indicate high satisfaction. It should be noted that in the "hours of Work" section individual scores on the continuum, "Too Long" to "Too Short," three individual scores exhibited extreme dissatisfaction with "Too Long" hours.

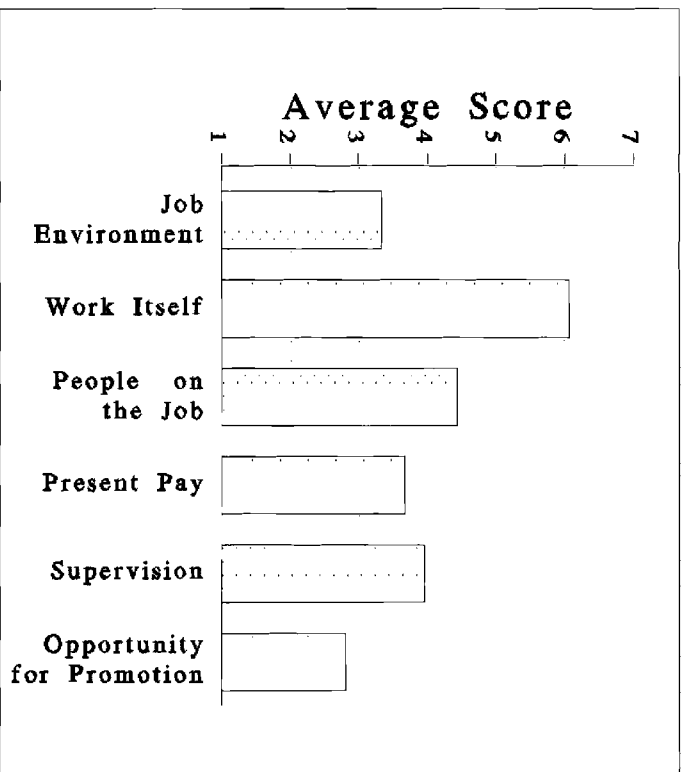
In Figure 16, "Histogram of Sub-Reasons for Job Dissatisfaction by Average Score on the JDS," the criteria

from JDS correspond to those criteria stated in Figure 14A. only every third criteria is labeled due to shortage of space. In this chart, problem areas are indicated by the long bars, i.e., the scores indicated in Figure 14A are reversed to show high scores for dissatisfaction. In Figure 14A, mean scores are broken down into the main categories; with tall bars showing dissatisfaction and Figure 14B shows the same thing except that the tall bars depict job satisfaction rather than dissatisfaction.

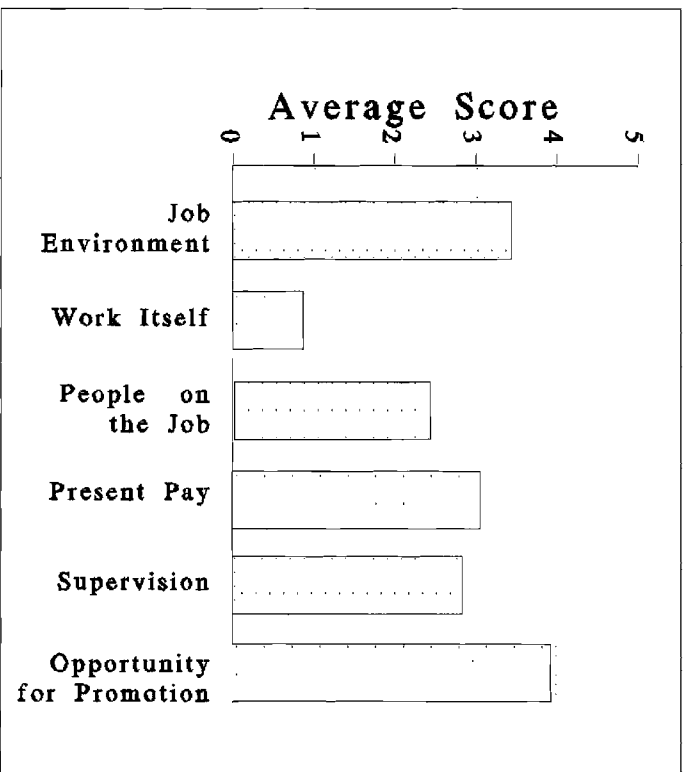
Figure 2 shows the average score for the Work Unit (Physical Conditions) section of the JDS, broken down into individual scores and displayed in terms of dissatisfaction.

Figure 13 shows seven respondents' rankings of their supervisor's efficiency, with high scores indicating high dissatisfaction. Note that the respondents' ratings of their supervisor's efficiency vary widely. One explanation for this is that a supervisor is not present at all times during all shifts.

Figure 15A



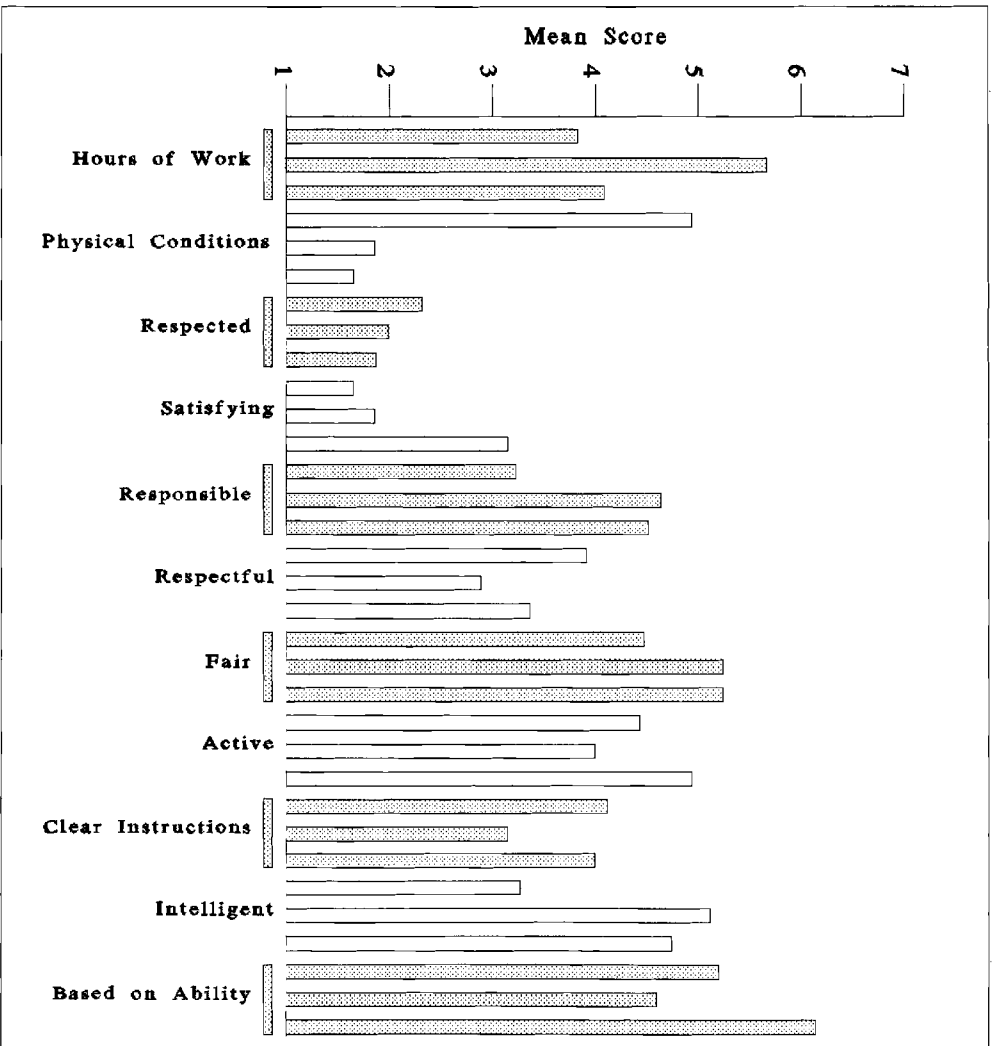
Histogram of Reasons for Job Satisfaction by Average Score on the JDS



Histogram of Reasons for Job Dissatisfaction by Average Scores on the JDS

Figure 15B

Figure 16



Histogram of Sub-Reasons for Job Dissatisfaction
by Average Score on the JDS

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The complexity of all the pro's and con's are mapped out in Figure 17 (page 48) which illustrates the problem areas in all three groups. Dispatchers have voiced concerns along with the transferees and trainees.

This study was developed to delve into areas that would help answer police department officials' questions related to a high turnover in the Stillwater Police Dispatch Department. The primary purpose of this research study was to determine what factors contributed to this problem.

This research was directed into several avenues, including the number of hours and the shift a dispatcher is required to work, stress, supervision, work environment, special talents required for the job, and factors related to trainee drop-out. A graphic representation of factors which contributed significantly to job satisfaction/dissatisfaction and job turnover may be seen in Figure 17.

Conclusions

The dispatchers who are presently working in the department, three to eleven year veterans, have apparently learned to manage their jobs and their stress. However, it should be noted that four of the eight veterans answered "No" to the question in the Demographic Questionnaire, "Do

you plan to stay in your present position as a career?" One of those who answered "No" to this question gave as the reasons, in order of importance,: 1) "better salary," 2) "more control over work environment," 3) "better work schedule;" and the second cited "better opportunity." The third cited, in order of importance: 1) "better salary," 2) "better benefits," 3) "more control over work environment," 4) "better work schedule," 5) "more job satisfaction," 6) "lack of opportunity for advancement." The fourth did not give a reason.

Based on this information, combined with 320 hours of observation of Stillwater Police Dispatchers in action, indepth interviews with working dispatchers, former dispatchers, and former dispatch trainees who dropped out of the program, the following conclusions are drawn:

1) Due to the "dead end" nature of dispatching as it currently fits into the police department organization, even those who are able to master the difficult job may not consider dispatching to be a lifetime career choice.

2) Individuals vary radically in terms of their choice of working hours, shift work, overtime, and holidays.

3) Work-space and size of crew are seen as problems by nearly all dispatchers.

4) The current situation regarding supervision is very disturbing to some dispatchers.

Factors Significantly Related to Dispatch Tenure

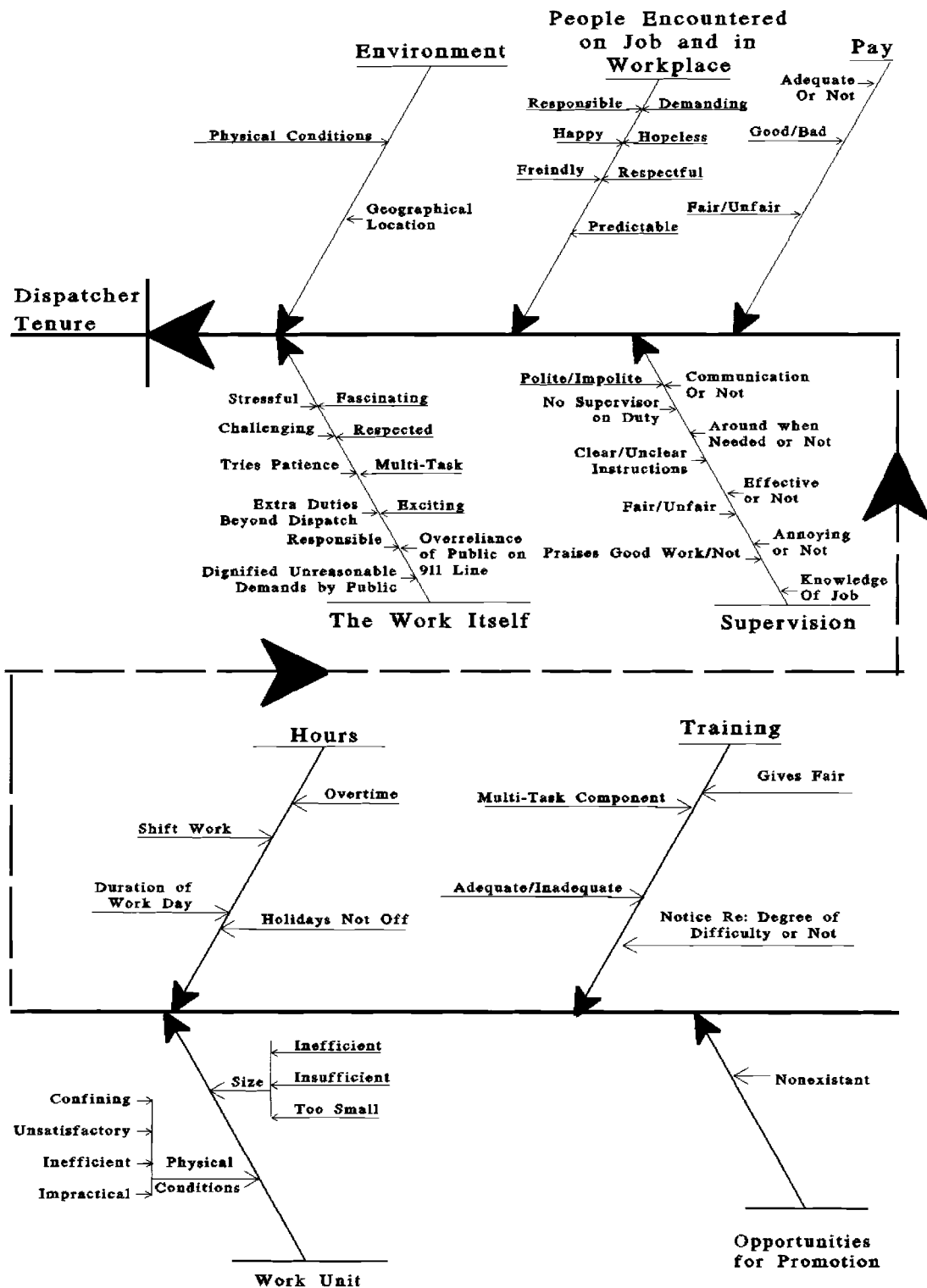


Figure 17

5) Dispatching is a job for "the proud and few." Many will realize they do not want to be dispatchers as soon as they fully realize what the job entails.

6) Veteran dispatchers who are successfully performing a high stress job, making executive decisions, and dealing with a multitude of citizens often in crisis situations find it inappropriate and demeaning to be asked to perform menial tasks outside their job description like phoning police officers' wives and inserting dog tapes.

7) Low pay was scored as a high-ranking problem on the job satisfaction questionnaire and also as the main reason two dispatchers intend leaving their jobs. Although it would be difficult to find a public servant who did not feel that way about his/her pay, the pay-scale for dispatchers does bear looking at.

8) The number of tasks which dispatchers must perform per unit of time is a serious problem, especially as now performed for ten to twelve hours duration each day.

9) The work area is a problem. The physical environment limits the number of dispatchers who can work at any given time to two. As Stillwater grows, it is obvious that this work-area will have to be adjusted to accommodate more dispatchers.

10) Small rewards or inducements should be offered such as job titles with small increases in pay. Females

often times are happier with job titles which differentiates them from other workers.

11) Male dispatchers experience less verbal abuse from supervisors, officers, and the public. This may be an indication of gender issues that need to be addressed. Female dispatchers have little control over their work, environment, and interaction with supervisors and public. Female dispatchers' complaints were thought of as unimportant whereas the males' complaints were addressed more quickly and taken more seriously.

Recommendations to the Stillwater Police Supervisors

Based on the preceding research and conclusions, it is apparent that four major problems, if addressed, would make the Stillwater Police Dispatcher job an easier job, a "better job," and a job leading to less burnout.

1. Working Hours
2. Opportunities for Promotion and Better Pay
3. Supervision
4. Tasks Per Unit of Time

It is the recommendation of this researcher that:

- 1) Two dispatch operators be promoted to a new position, that of "Acting Supervisor" or "Shift Supervisor" and receive a raise in salary.

- 2) Stress Management Training classes be offered and required of all Dispatch Department personnel.
- 3) The Stress Management Specialist consult with the department regarding the optimum frequency and duration of breaks dispatchers should take in a working day.
- 4) Female dispatchers be provided with the same consideration from management as enjoyed by male dispatchers.

By increasing the number of dispatch supervisors to adequately man all shifts, dispatch operators can be relieved for breaks as per Stress Management Specialist's recommendations and veteran dispatchers will have a promotion opportunity. Dispatchers will benefit by having a supervisor available at all times. Tripling the number of supervisors will allow time for the supervisors to be designated handlers of all special requests like inserting the dog tapes and doing personal favors for policemen or allow the supervisor to pitch hit for the dispatcher while he/she takes care of these extra matters.

Since the physical work unit cannot accommodate another dispatcher, adding a supervisor to the shifts which do not now have supervisors is the only way to ease the work load.

In order to reduce job dissatisfaction and turnover, a group effort is needed to reduce the stressors. Improvements in working conditions should be made with

dispatchers and their supervisors contributing ideas. Male officers should be made aware of female dispatcher responsibilities and personal tasks should be the ownership of each male officer and not the requirement of female dispatchers.

Hours

Long hours should be an agreement between the dispatchers and supervisors. Some dispatchers appreciate the overtime and would not want a reduction in hours. However, there are others that would want fewer working hours especially after a grueling day. There is a certain sense of control when an employee gets to choose his hours.

Stress Management

Training in personal stress management should be introduced as a helpful tool to be used when needed. Most personnel appreciate being understood and given guidelines they can use effectively. Most dispatchers would not admit being unable to handle stress but one has only to listen to their complaints to soon realize stress is difficult to reduce. If training is introduced to everyone then no stigma is put on any one dispatcher. In helping professions, people are reluctant to admit they may ever need help.

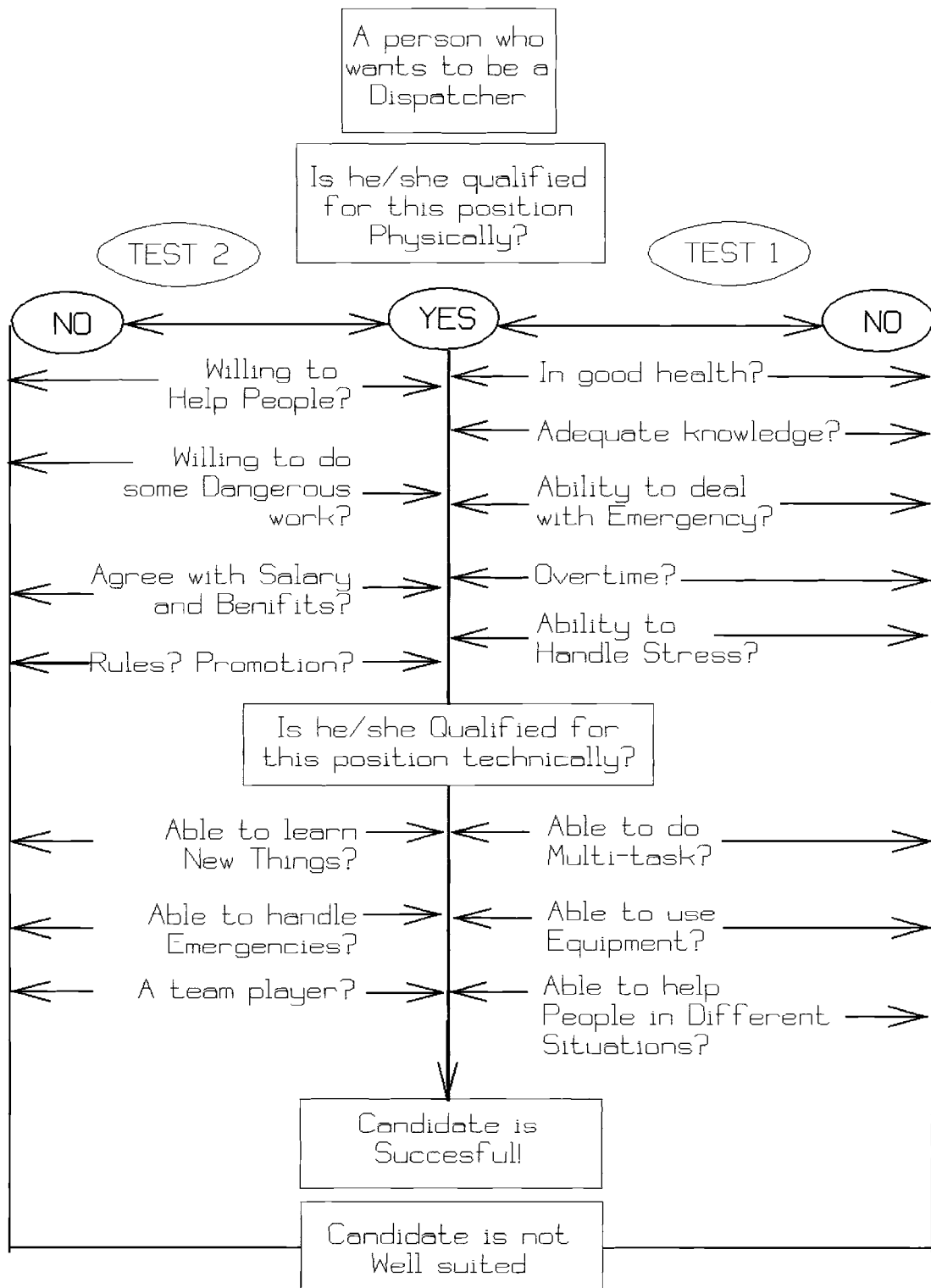
Prerequisites to Training

Two factors influence dispatcher trainee and rookie drop-out:

- 1) Ability to handle multi-task and
- 2) Realistic understanding of the difficulty and demands of the job. Under the presumption that training costs of the department will be lower for the drop-out who quits early-on, the two critical factors, ability to do multi-task and full realization of the difficulty of the job, should be utilized as preliminary screening devices of potential trainees. Some possible ways of accomplishing the goal of prompting trainees who are going to drop out to drop out near the beginning of training instead of at the end.

- 1) The requirement that trainees complete a certain number of hours of observation of dispatchers in action prior to their training: or
- 2) Development of a training film emphasizing the demands, difficulties and challenges of dispatching, which film is to be shown prior to training.
- 3) Development and employment of one or more screening instrument(s) that would test an individual's ability to handle multi-task and meet other criteria needed to qualify for training (see Figure 18).

Figure 18
Criteria for Trainee Qualifications



Future Research

Additional research is needed to develop an instrument to determine an individual's talent for multi-task. An instrument used as a screening device prior to dispatcher training would save some time and money in terms of the training phase, in as much as those shown by the instrument to be without talent for multi-task would not be selected for training. The trainee could be given a series of mock situations such as 911 calls along with a Domestic Violence complaint. The trainee could be dispatching these important calls when the regular police department phone could be ringing. This would be a good measurement of the multi-task abilities of the trainee and the trainer could observe how the trainee handles the tasks.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ACCESS LETTER

ACCESS LETTER

Lt. Ronald Thrasher
Stillwater Police Department
723 S. Lewis
Stillwater, OK 74074

RE: Research - Entry

Dear Lt. Thrasher;

I am a graduate student at Oklahoma State university with the Sociology Department pursuing a Master's Degree in Corrections.

I am conducting a research project involving the Dispatch Department to investigate why some people leave and others transfer out of the department into other divisions.

This case study will consist of interviews with current dispatch personnel, persons who have transferred out of the department, and others who have quit during training sessions. The questionnaire will consist of basic information followed by more indepth questions which may shed some light into the high turnover rate experienced in this department.

I can assure you that my intentions are only directed toward research. I will not in any way interfere with the actions of Dispatch personnel and all information that is gathered will be kept confidential and private.

If you or any other official have any questions concerning this study, I can be available at (405) 372-1238 during 8 am to 4 pm. If you would like to consult with my research advisor, you can call Dr. Harjit Sandhu at Oklahoma State University at (405) 744-6104.

I appreciate the kindness you have shown me and your consideration for letting me into the department to conduct this research and I do appreciate your introducing me to other department officials for further approval.

Sincerely,

Jan E. Honeyman, Graduate Student

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

PARTICIPANT LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

To: Law Enforcement Professionals
From: Jan E. Honeyman - Graduate Student
Subject: Internship and Thesis
Date: Fall, 1994

I am at the present time attending Oklahoma State University working on my Master's Degree in Corrections. With the suggestion of my advisors, Dr. H. Sandhu and Dr. Larry Hynson, to contact Lt. Ronald Thrasher for advice and direction of any immediate problems that a research assistant could delve into investigation that has come to the attention of the Stillwater Police Department.

I have been granted permission by Lt. Ronald Thrasher to observe various shifts of Dispatch with the Stillwater Police Department. After speaking with several officials at the Stillwater Police Department, a concern was made about the rapid turnover in the Dispatch Department. With the permission of these officials and staff members, I would appreciate the acceptance of the Department members to let me simply observe and question members when the occasion arises.

If any member of the Stillwater Police Department has any questions or concerns for privacy or confidential matters, please set those concerns aside. I am here only for research. My concerns are those of office policy, staff adjustment, and departmental stress. I am not here to judge or criticize any personnel but here as a researcher to determine the problem of high turnover in this department.

If any person would like to know more about this research, I would be more than happy to discuss this concern with them. My office phone number is (405) 372-1238 from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm.

If, for some reason this is not acceptable, my professor, Dr. Larry Hynson could be contacted by leaving a message at Oklahoma State University at (405) 744-6123.

I appreciate very much the opportunity to be able to observe the Dispatch Department in action and able to complete my Internship and my Master's Thesis in the process.

Sincerely,

Jan E. Honeyman, Graduate Student

APPENDIX C

COVER LETTER

COVER LETTER

December 15, 1994

Jan E. Honeyman
1925 N. Briarwood
Stillwater, OK 74075

To: Dispatch Personnel

I have finished my observation of your department and all the duties connected with the job. I am in the second phase of my research which consists of questionnaires and face-to-face interviews.

I realize that your department is very busy and allows little time to discuss concerns in the Dispatch Department. I would appreciate being able to leave questionnaires with you and later picking them up.

At a later date, I would request that I interview dispatchers about their jobs and what concerns they have and what they would like to change.

No dispatcher is under any obligation to answer any questions they do not want to or even to be interviewed by this researcher. This research is only a project for Oklahoma State University measuring stresses that occur in the dispatch department. No personnel is under any obligation with the Stillwater Police Department to speak with this researcher or answer the questionnaire if they choose not to. I realize this research is infringing upon the department's time and the dispatchers' time. I do not, in any way, want to create any problem or add extra stress.

Also, I would not be offended if a dispatcher did not choose to participate with the research. This project is strictly voluntary and up to each individual dispatcher.

No names will be used or published.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please call me at (405) 372-1238 or (405) 743-1630 and I would be happy to answer any questions about the project.

Sincerely,

Jan E. Honeyman

APPENDIX D

FOLLOW-UP LETTER

FOLLOW-UP LETTER

January 2, 1995

Jan E. Honeyman
1925 N. Briarwood Drive
Stillwater, OK 74075
(405) 743-1630

To: Dispatch Personnel

I hope that each and every one of you had a happy holiday. After all the Christmas and New Year's excitement has died down, I want to express my appreciation to those dispatchers that took the time and effort to complete my demographic instrument that I left in your department before the holidays. For those of you that could not find the time to complete the questionnaire, I would appreciate your review of the questions and ask that you complete them in a timely fashion.

As a bit of a reminder, I am doing research in your department to measure dispatcher stress and perhaps learn, through your guidance, how improvements could be made to reduce stress. After each questionnaire is completed on demographics, I will ask for a face-to-face interview at each dispatcher's convenience. I do not want in any way interfere with your duties or cause any uneasiness within the department.

Again, I would like to remind you that participation in this research is on a voluntary basis. The answers will be held in strictest of confidence and no names will be used on any questionnaire or in phase II of this study.

Would you please take some time off your busy schedule to complete this three page instrument. I will be coming by this department in a day or two to pick up the completed questionnaires.

This research is a scientific study, therefore, each respondent is treated with respect to their input. If, for some reason, you wish not to participate, please let this researcher know immediately and I will not disturb you further.

I wish to thank those who have answered the questionnaire and those in the future who will complete the same.

Sincerely,

Jan E. Honeyman

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

GROUP I

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GROUP I

1. What does management expect from a dispatcher?
2. In what ways do you fulfill this expectation?
3. What are some of the demands the community seeks from the dispatcher?
4. What are some of the complaints the police officers voice in your department?
5. How is this job different from other jobs in the department?
6. In what ways is your job a challenge?
7. Can you describe some of the 911 calls that you thought were silly?
8. How would you change the present operation of the dispatch department?
9. What role does a supervisor play in generating changes?
10. Could you explain the hierarchy within the department?
11. Would you explain the problems with other co-workers in the department?
12. Is there an outstanding person that overshadows other workers? If yes, in what ways?
13. Have you developed strategies for reducing stress during working hours? What are they?
14. Can you explain why you stay working in dispatch?
15. What do you dislike most about the job?
16. What do you dislike most about co-workers' attitudes?
17. What do you appreciate most about the job?
18. What are some of the other ways co-workers adjust to the stress?
19. What is the most important value you have learned while working here?
20. What calls to the police department from the community do you consider unimportant or unnecessary?

21. What advice would you give to new applicants on working conditions?
22. What are the pitfalls others should be aware of?
23. Explain the hardest part of the job?
24. In what ways would a dispatcher adjust to problems that crop up?
25. Are there any questions or comments you would like to make?

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

GROUP II

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GROUP II

1. Could you explain the reasons why you transferred out of dispatch into this department?
2. What problems did you experience with co-workers when you were a dispatcher?
3. Can you describe some of the problems that come with the dispatcher's job?
4. Tell me about a typical night during dispatch?
5. What were some of the funny things that happened during the night shift?
6. When you hear others complain about the job, what are they describing?
7. Can you describe some of the officers that you dispatched out in the field?
8. What were some of the problems with the officers?
9. In what ways did you develop to handle stressful situations?
10. Were there any embarrassing moments you would like to tell me about?
11. Do you remember any event that you were afraid? Explain in what way?
12. What factors built up that made you make that final move out of the dispatch department?
13. Describe to me what kind of person it takes to make a good dispatcher?
14. In what ways do most dispatchers handle the day-to-day stress of the job?
15. In what ways did you feel inadequate?
16. in what ways did you feel you made a difference?
17. What makes a good dispatcher?
18. What advice would you give a new applicant?
19. Can you describe any 911 calls that you feel were unnecessary?

20. In what ways did you handle hostile callers to the police department?
21. Describe any memorable encounters that you might have had with prisoners?
22. Do you have any anecdotes that you would like to share about searching prisoners?
23. Can you describe any situations that you felt afraid?
24. What is the hardest part of the dispatcher's job?
25. What is the most rewarding part of the job?

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

GROUP III

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GROUP III

1. Describe the training you received for the dispatcher's job?
2. Before entering the training, what preconceived notions did you have about the job?
3. Why did you apply for the job of dispatcher?
4. What were some of the reasons why you quit during training?
5. Describe to me your training?
6. At what point did you feel that you were not going to continue?
7. Describe a trainer to me?
8. What were some of the other applicants like?
9. What was expected of you?
10. What is expected of a dispatcher?
11. What do officers expect out of a dispatcher?
12. In what ways did you qualify as a good applicant?
13. Describe any problems you had with fellow trainees?
14. Do you have any advice for future applicants?
15. What are some areas of training that you would change?
16. What advice would you give to a trainer that is supervising new applicants?
17. What would you change about the dispatch job?
18. Explain the setting under which you trained?
19. If you applied for the position again, what would you do differently?
20. Describe a typical day of training.
21. What was the most important information you obtained during training?
22. What information that was presented to you that was unnecessary or stupid?

23. In what ways would you change the present system?
24. Any other comments you would like to make?

APPENDIX H

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

GROUP I

GROUP II

GROUP III

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Age _____
 2. M _____ F _____
 3. Married _____ Single _____ Divorced _____ Separated _____
 4. Work Setting
Metropolitan _____
Rural _____
 5. Position

 6. Annual Income
\$12,000 - \$15,000 _____
\$15,000 - \$17,000 _____
\$17,000 - \$19,000 _____
\$19,000 - \$20,000 _____
\$20,000 - \$21,000 _____
 7. Number of years employed at present position _____
 8. Number of years employed with City of Stillwater _____
 9. Full-time _____ Part-time _____
 10. Hours of time per week _____
 11. Hours of over time per week _____
 12. Education
High School _____ College BA/BS _____ PhD _____
 13. Are you currently seeking additional training or education in order to work in another field?

Yes _____ No _____
If yes, what field? _____
- On the following questions, please circle only one answer.
14. I get along with my co-workers in the dispatch unit.
Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
 15. I would like to leave dispatch but cannot afford to.
Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
 16. Do you plan to stay in your present position as a career?
Yes _____ No _____

17. If you answered no to question 16, do you plan to work in another related field?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, what? _____

18. If you answered no to question 16, please indicate below the three most important reasons for leaving the dispatch department with #1 being the most important, #2 the second most important and #3 the third most important.

_____ More status or recognition

_____ Full-time parent

_____ Lack of opportunity for advancement

_____ Better work schedule

_____ Better salary

_____ More job satisfaction

_____ Better benefits

_____ more control over work environment

19. I am satisfied with my position

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

20. Comments

APPENDIX I

JOB DIMENSION SURVEY GROUP I, GROUP II, GROUP III

JOB DIMENSION SURVEY

As a provider of service to the community of Stillwater, Oklahoma, Stillwater Police Department Dispatch, your attitudes and opinions about your job are important. The purpose of this survey is to elicit your response of candid evaluation of various dimensions of your current job. Participation in this research is strictly voluntary and anonymity is guaranteed by this researcher.

I

Think of the job environment in which you work. What is it like? Then circle the number along each scale which best represents your description of the following factors:

Hours of Work (Individual responses characterized by polarized _____ scores* resulting in neutral average scores)

Bad 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 Good

Fair 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 Unfair

Convenient 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 Inconvenient

Too Long 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 Too Short

Regular 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 Irregular

Size of work unit (number of people)

Good 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 Bad

Too Large 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 Too Small

Insufficient 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 Sufficient

Efficient 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 Inefficient

Regional Aspects (geographical location)

Good 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 Bad

Unpleasant 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 Pleasant

Isolated 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 Convenient

Work Unit (physical conditions)

Unconfining 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Confining**

Satisfactory 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Unsatisfactory**

Bad 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Good**

Practical 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Impractical**

Efficient 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Inefficient**

II

Work Itself

Think of the work that you perform. Then circle the number along each which best approximates your description of work on your present job.

Boring 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Fascinating**

Challenging 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Routine**

Satisfying 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Dissatisfying**

Good 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Bad**

Dignified 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Undignified**

Lacks Respect 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Respected**

Useless 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Useful**

Clear 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Confusing**

Complex 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Simple**

III

People on the job

Think of the majority of the people that you work with now or the people you meet in connection with your work. Then circle the number along each scale which best approximates your description of people on your present job.

Unpredictable 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Predictable**

Boring 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Stimulating**
Slow 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Fast**
Unambitious 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Ambitious**
Irresponsible 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Responsible**
Active 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Lazy**
Disloyal 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Loyal**
Unfriendly 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Friendly**
Disrespectful 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Respectful**
Happy 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Unhappy**

IV

Opportunities for promotion

Think of the opportunities for promotion that you have now.
 Then circle the number along the scale which best
 approximates your description of promotion opportunities.

Clear 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Confusing**
Bad 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Good**
Irregular 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Regular**
Arbitrary 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Based on Ability**
Infrequent 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Frequent**
Fair 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Unfair**
Unlimited 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Limited**
Unrestricted 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Restricted**
Endless 1---2---3---4---5---6---7 **Dead end**

V

Rank the following (1 through 5) in terms of the worst and best job realistically available to you. (#1 being most important in determining the worst/best job and #5 being least important in determining worst/best.

| <u>Worst</u> | <u>Best</u> |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| People _____ | People _____ |
| Pay _____ | Pay _____ |
| Promotion _____ | Promotion _____ |
| Work Load _____ | Work Load _____ |
| Supervision _____ | Supervision _____ |

In terms of your present job; Rank the following: (1 through 5) #1 representing what you like about your job most and #6 representing what you dislike about your job.

| <u>Present</u> |
|-------------------|
| People _____ |
| Pay _____ |
| Promotion _____ |
| Work Load _____ |
| Supervision _____ |

VITA

Jan Ellen Honeyman

Candidate for Degree of

Master's of Science

Thesis: REASONS FOR HIGH TURNOVER RATE OF DISPATCHERS
AT STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA, POLICE DEPARTMENT

Major Field: Corrections

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born Stillwater, Oklahoma, October 4,
1944, the daughter of Harry E. and Dorothy E.
Reichman.

Education: Graduated from C.E. Donart High School,
Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 1965;
Received Bachelor's of Science Degree in July,
1992 from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater,
Oklahoma.
Completed the Requirements for the Masters of
Science Degree at Oklahoma State University in
July, 1995.

Professional Experience: Volunteer, Stillwater Domestic
Violence, Stillwater, Oklahoma, April 1990 to May
1990.

Volunteer Home Visitor, Department of Human
Services, Stillwater, Oklahoma, January 1991 to
May 1991.

Volunteer Parole Officer, Department of
Corrections, Stillwater, Oklahoma, June 1994 to
August 1994.

Volunteer Stillwater Police Department,
Stillwater, Oklahoma, August 1994 to December
1994.

Professional Organizations: Member of Kappa Delta Pi
and Member of Omicron Nu, National Honor
Societies.