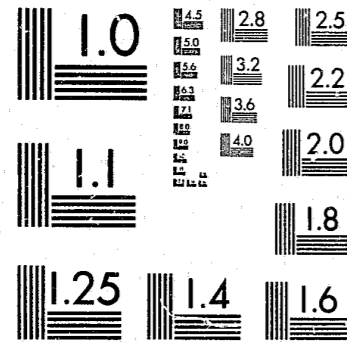National Criminal Justice Reference Service

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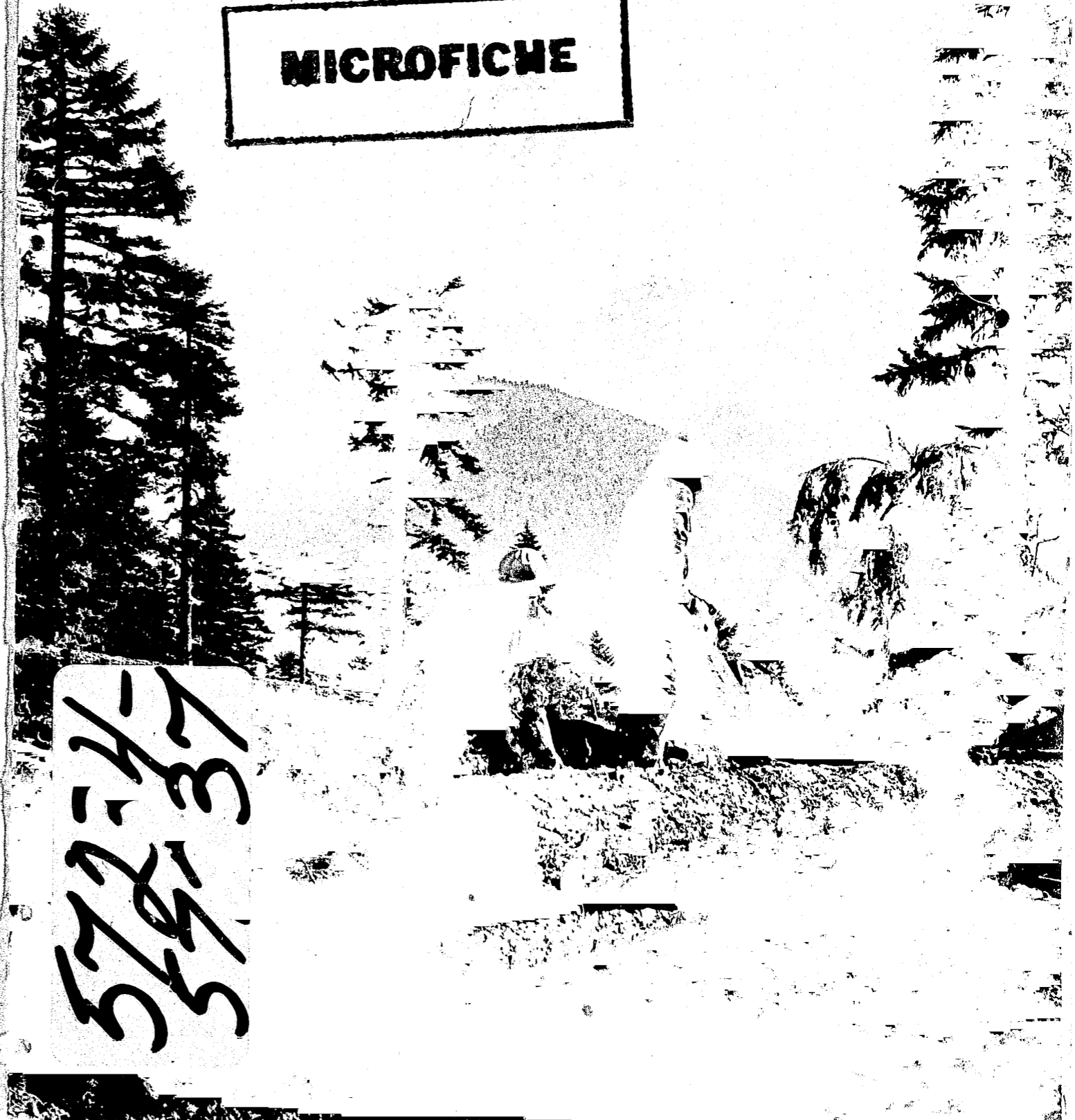the standards set forth in 41CFR 101-11.504.

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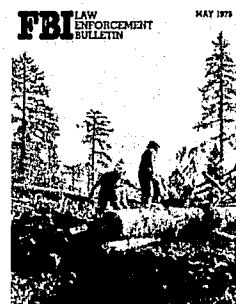
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Designing Inservice Training
A Better Approach

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The purpose of police training programs is to help the officer develop the "operational knowledge, physical and communication skills, and habits which relate to the performance"[1] of job-specific tasks. While the importance of well-developed inservice training programs might seem obvious, it must be admitted that training is often a low priority activity. Because there is insufficient time to meet the heavy demands of the public, many police departments do not have the time to conduct the training which should be provided.

One partial answer to this problem is to make the training more efficient. To increase the efficiency of a training program, most approaches would involve adjustments in scheduling. Without minimizing the value of scheduling, emphasis can also be placed in making those hours spent in training more productive.

To increase the productivity of the adult learners in our training sessions, we must examine our basic approach to police inservice training which generally has been based on the traditional methods used to educate children. Most teachers of adults, including police instructors, learned "how" to teach based on their experience as students. However, there are many differences between adult and child learners, with a corresponding contrast in the methods used to teach adults and children. This statement is hardly shocking. But how many police instructors consider these differences when planning or teaching an inservice class? Instructors would not consider speaking to a fellow officer during a normal conversation as if the officer was 9 years old. Therefore, it is not logical to approach the training of police officers as if they were children.

Andragogy v. Pedagogy

Differences between children and adults as learners have been examined by Malcolm S. Knowles, a well-known adult educator. Knowles introduced the term *andragogy* to describe the process of adapting teaching methods to adults.[2] The term is derived from the Greek word "anter," which may be translated as "man." Andragogy is contrasted with "pedagogy," which has traditionally been defined as the art and science of teaching. Pedagogy, which is derived from the Greek word "paeda" meaning "child," usually dealt with teaching children. Thus, Knowles suggests the use of different terms to contrast adult and child learners. Research has corroborated Knowles'

view and has suggested several specific areas in which one may anticipate significant differences between learners who are adults and those who are children.[3]

For example, when children come to a learning situation, they typically have a different self-image than do adults. They tend to be submissive toward the teacher and expect the teacher to be the authority. Adults, however, have usually become less dependent as they matured. Most adults are used to coping with various problems and are neither desirous of, nor comfortable with, a submissive, dependent role.[4]

Also involved in the relationship between instructors and students is the student's general level of knowledge and experience in the subject area.[5] A child usually has had little experience or previous exposure to a subject he is to be taught. The instructor must supply the expertise for the learning experience. An adult, however, has probably experienced a wide variety of situations which are related to the topic being presented. This experience may be used by the instructor as a learning resource to provide additional information and insight into the topic.

Another difference between adults and children is in their time perception. Children generally are not willing to postpone a reward.[6] For example, a child might prefer to be given 25 cents now rather than get $5 next week. Adults conversely are more accustomed to waiting for a reward. For instance, an adult often would be willing to save enough money to purchase a specific make and model of motorcycle rather than buying the first one he could afford. But in rating the value of education or training, the roles are reversed. Children are generally willing to learn material that does not seem the least bit important today. They have faith that someday the importance of the material will seem clear to them. However, most adults look for short term personal value or importance in the material being taught. If the average adult does not see immediate value of the material, he is likely to consider the class a waste of time.

Motivational Differences

Since this discussion suggests that adult learners are unique in terms of self-image, experience, and desire for immediate application, one might surmise the reasons underlying motivation of adult learning are also different. This is true. Children go to school because it is expected of them. Their learning is motivated by a series of external rewards and punishments such as grades, extra TV time, or being "grounded." Adults who learn are primarily motivated by internal factors.

> ## "If the average adult does not see immediate value of the material, he is likely to consider the class a waste of time."

Houle[7] divided adult learners involved in continuing education programs into three major categories based on their motivation for attending class. The categories are not mutually exclusive and it is possible for an adult learner to fall into more than one category. According to Houle, some adult learners are primarily motivated by a desire to reach some goal. Such persons use education as a means of obtaining a specific personal goal, such as a promotion. While this situation has some similarity to activity motivated by external rewards, there is a difference. In the case of an adult, he has set his own goal and determined for himself that the training will help to reach this goal. Whereas the child has both his activity (school) and his reward (grade) established by someone other than himself. Other adults participate in programs for the purpose of increasing their knowledge. They enjoy learning in and of

itself. When not engaged in a formal learning experience, such persons are likely to read a wide variety of books. The third group of adult learners participate in classes for the enjoyment of social interaction. The subject matter is not most important to such a person. Rather, it is the opportunity to meet with fellow classmates that is most significant. Police officers would most likely fall into one of the first two categories, since it would be anticipated that they desire to learn more about law enforcement techniques.

The above classification system was based on studies of persons voluntarily involved in an adult learning situation. However, participation in police training is often mandatory. Therefore, motivation may be lacking for officers attending a training class. This problem of possible lack of motivation will be probed later. For now it will suffice to recognize that the *successful* adult learner is primarily interested in learning for his own personal reasons—due not to external rewards or punishments. Accordingly, police trainers should be aware of possible sources of participant motivation in order to help motivate the students.

In pondering the factors underlying internal motivation, Maslow[8] theorized that once the lower order needs, such as food and safety, are sufficiently filled, there remain the needs of esteem and self-actualization. These needs partially center around self-esteem and developing a person's true potential. Therefore, successful adult learners are internally motivated by such higher order needs.

Educational Techniques for Police Training

The above discussion suggests four important considerations which should be taken into account when designing police training. These considerations, in turn, will lead to discussion of several specific methods for implementing andragogical police in-service training.

"...the _successful_ adult learner is primarily interested in learning for his own personal reasons—due not to external rewards or punishments."

The first consideration is based on the self-image an adult brings to the learning situation. Since the adult is an adult, he expects to be treated as one. The officer does not want to be treated as if he is still sitting in a third grade classroom. An adult prefers to examine the objectives of a class and then determine for himself his weaknesses in the subject area. Therefore, the learning objectives of a class should be immediately recognizable.[9] In this way the officer is encouraged to be independent and self-directing. He is able to determine the extent of knowledge he should possess based on examination of the learning objectives. Then, he is able to compare himself to the standard and determine the areas in which he needs improvement. This first consideration also suggests that the

climate of the class should be fairly informal. This setting is contrasted with a highly formal setting in which the instructor is "the authority." One must avoid treating comments or questions from the class in a negative manner. There is no need to "put down" students in order to build up the ego of the instructor.

At this point, note that there are not necessarily absolute differences between andragogy and pedagogy. For example, an instructor in a formal setting can show respect for the students. Rather, the comments made are to show the extremes which could exist between the two approaches. In fact, some of the methods of andragogy have been a part of good traditional

pedagogical methods when teaching children or adults. Having made this observation, let us examine some additional considerations.

As noted above, adult learners want to make immediate use of the material being presented to them. Police inservice training is not likely to deal in areas that do not have immediate application for the officers. So the most obvious consideration is met. But, one must wonder if there are other topics which the officers feel should be discussed. The officers themselves would be another excellent source from which to determine the training needs of the department. After all, they are acutely aware of problems to be faced on the streets. Classes can be developed which are centered around these problem areas.

The third consideration due to adults' greater personal experience is simply to make use of that experience

as a learning resource. This seems especially important to inservice police classes, since such classes often have a number of members knowledgeable of a given topic. In fact, it is a distinct possibility that some of the students may have more firsthand knowledge of the class topic than the instructor. In many cases, the sum total of knowledge held by all the class members may be equal to or greater than the knowledge of the instructor. One might be tempted to feel that if the police officers are so knowledgeable, there is little need for the class or the instructor. This is not true. The significance of the observation regarding the level of officers' knowledge is that in any inservice class there are likely one or two persons who know the topic well, several persons who have some knowledge of the topic, and a group of officers who have had some exposure to it. These persons are able to help provide more thorough coverage of a topic than can be provided by the instructor alone.

Using the officers' knowledge, the instructor facilitates the group's learning. In fact, some educators now prefer to use the term facilitator in lieu of instructor.[10] The term "facilitator" implies that the leader of the class is encouraging maximum input from the students and is guiding the class as opposed to dominating it. Thus, the knowledge that a class possesses about a topic does not mean there is no need for an instructor. Such knowledge should merely suggest that the instructor would be wise to adopt a role as a facilitator instead of, or in addition to, the role of an expert.

A fourth consideration is student motivation. The adult learner is not as often motivated by external rewards, such as grades, as by internal incentives, such as the self-satisfaction of accomplishment. Therefore, motivation is most likely higher if the classes are presented as a means of increasing the officers' professional ability. This means, among other things, the learner should be encouraged to view the class as an episode in his continued learning. A list of resource materials, such as books, government pamphlets, or course offerings at local colleges, should be available for officers

In the problem-solving approach, the officers, either individually or by small groups, decide what actions should be taken.
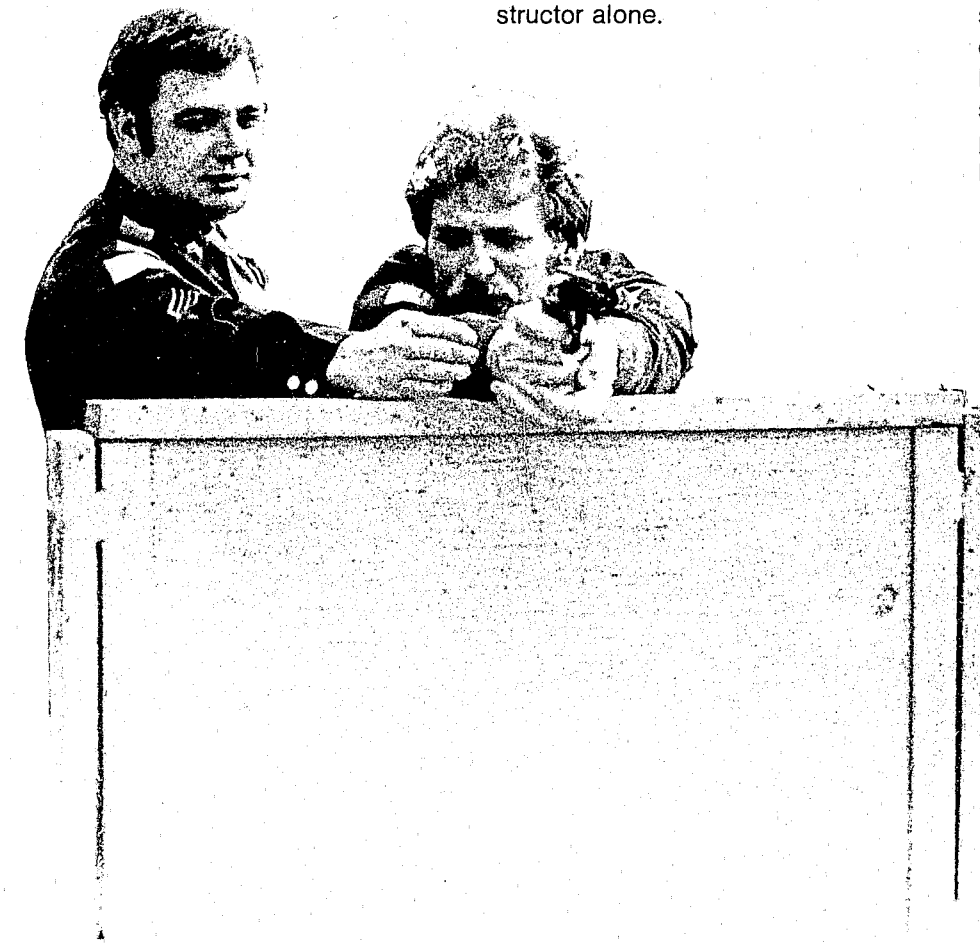
Your department is probably using an andragogical approach to teach at least one subject—firearms training.

who want to improve their knowledge of a subject. It would be desirable if resource material owned by the department were maintained in a single location so the items could be borrowed by the officers.

If law enforcement is to become more professional, the individual officer must be encouraged to expand his knowledge of the field. However, many police departments do not have an organized, comprehensive program to aid officers in professional development. One may find a department that has several classes in a week, but then has no more instruction for a year or more. Such a schedule does not communicate the importance of training to the officers. And, the attending officers are expected to be present for the instruction during off-duty time. Officers required to come to work on an offday or attend class after working for 8 or 10 hours may have less motivation to learn. This lack of motivation is not only unfortunate, it may be disastrous. An officer may be forced to attend class at an inconvenient time, but the officer cannot be forced to be interested or to learn! Holding a class for a group of tired officers who would rather be home with their families is likely to be largely a waste of time and money. The desire for increased professionalism also demands that police managers refrain from wasting resources through a haphazard training program. When management and instructors together provide reasonable learning conditions, the police officers are usually quite interested in training. Most officers are mature individuals who view law enforcement as a serious task and approach training with the same serious outlook.[11]

If a training program is developed which has a supportive class climate, has relevant classes, and seeks officers' input to the planning and training process, the officers' motivation and level of learning should increase. Besides these adjustments to the learning environment, there are several specific methods instructors may employ to increase learning. These methods encourage greater student participation since research has indicated that students actively engaged in a learning activity tend to learn more than students who are sitting waiting to be taught.[12] There are other methods which could be used, but the concept of the active participant can be demonstrated with the following methods.

To make the examples more realistic, assume a particular class deals with the correct manner of conducting a crime scene search. One approach would be the case method. One or more case studies would be provided to the officers. The studies could be written handouts given to each officer or a study could be simultaneously displayed to all officers by an overhead projector or similar device. Each study would deal with a specific hypothetical situation in which police respond to a crime scene. The study would present, without comment, a description of the crime scene and the actions taken by the responding officers. It would then be up to each officer to analyze the data and decide which of the actions taken by the responding officers were appropriate and which were not. The student would draw on personal experience to prepare and discuss his answer. This exercise would serve as a starting point for a group discussion of the case. The instructor's position would not be that of an authority telling the officers they were right or wrong, but would rather be that of a facilitator helping the class to see the strengths and weaknesses of the various answers. Different cases could be written with preplanned "errors or omissions"

By playing the role of the crime victim, the officer develops a greater understanding of how a victim views the police.

to aid the responding officers in contrasting different factors which should be considered when conducting a crime scene search.

One variation of this method would be to divide the class into small groups of five or six officers. Each group would then separately discuss the case, and after about 5 minutes, a spokesman for each group would explain the group's analysis of the case.

Similar is a problem-solving approach. The students would be supplied with background data and a description of the crime scene, but would not be supplied with a list of actions the responding officers took. It would be up to the officers, either individually or by small groups, to decide what actions should be taken. (In addition, the above small group discussions would be an excellent method of determining what classes the officers feel should be taught.)

Yet another approach, which could be used with either the case method or the problem-solving method, would be to divide the class into small groups in which each person in a group is given time, e.g., 3 to 5 minutes, to discuss the situation. No presentation is made to the total class. The instructor circulates from group to group and is available if a group feels a need for his assistance. One advantage of such an approach is that it requires participation of all students without anyone being forced to speak before the whole class.

A different method which might be occasionally employed would be the laboratory experience. For example, officers could actually take plaster casts or conduct a mock crime scene search. If time or money does not permit such an activity, a demonstration could be held in which various class members participate.

The method of role-playing is gaining wider use in law enforcement training. It is difficult to continue with our crime scene example as a likely topic to employ role-playing. However, by playing the role of the crime victim, or a minority group member witness, the officer gains insight into how such persons view the police. This activity may

better equip the officer to deal with behavior which he might consider unusual or deviant.

Andragogy and Your Department

Some of the above ideas may not seem practical to your department. At first, an instructor may not feel comfortable using andragogy and may even feel he is not doing the job, since he is not lecturing to the officers. It is suggested the department choose those methods which seem most practical to your situation. Perhaps some adaptions would make the methods even more practical for a department. And remember, one can phase into andragogy. The lecture method may be used to start a class and to supply sufficient information to lay the groundwork. In fact, the lecture is still an excellent method when presenting material about which the officers have little or no knowledge. However, even when using the lecture method, the instructor should remember he is dealing with adults. Participants should feel the instructor is speaking with them not merely speaking to them. Members of the class should be encouraged to raise questions and to provide examples from their experience which illustrate the learning objectives of the class.

One final word about andragogy. Your department is probably using an andragogical approach to teach at least one subject. And, it is probably the officers' favorite inservice training—firearms training. If you analyze your classes on the range, you will find the students are respected and their experience is taken into account. Each officer is actively engaged in trying to determine his own weaknesses and to improve himself. An examination of your firearms program should convince you that teaching police officers as if they are adults is an efficient approach that can be effected without any new cash outlay, and it is the approach your entire training program should take.

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Footnotes

[1] Charles P. Smith, et al., *Role Performance and Criminal Justice System, Vol. I, Summary,* Anderson Publishing Co., Cincinnati, Ohio, 1976, p. 137.
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[3] Edmund de S. Brunner, et al, *An Overview of Adult Education Research,* Adult Education Association of the U.S.A., Chicago, 1959.
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