

The Challenges of Moving into Middle Management: Responses from Police Officers

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Abstract The role of the middle manager is crucial to a police organization. Despite this, little research exists concerning the characteristics of effective police managers, or the role that the promotional process and/or training plays in identifying and developing effective managers. To examine these issues, 328 Canadian police officers were surveyed and interviews were conducted with an additional 50 police professionals. The results highlight: (1) the importance of management in achieving organizational goals, (2) key characteristics of effective managers and common mistakes managers make, and (3) concerns surrounding the promotional process and the lack of managerial training. The implications of these findings are discussed.

Keywords Policing · Middle management · Management skills · Management training · Promotions · Survey

The role of the middle manager is complex, challenging, and of the utmost importance in policing. Even more so than in the past, it is becoming essential to have the right people in middle management positions and to have adequate training in place to ensure that these individuals reach their full potential. Despite this, the role of the middle manager in Canadian policing has rarely been studied, and we know little about the effectiveness of management

selection and training strategies. This study represents an initial step towards examining current management issues within Canadian police agencies by surveying and interviewing Canadian police officers about the challenges of moving into middle management.

The Complexities and Importance of Middle Management

While there is no one definition of what constitutes management within the police service, Kingshott (2006) describes it as, “the process of motivating, directing, or controlling the endeavor of others to achieve a result which is consistent with the purpose of the organization” (p. 127). As already stated, being a middle manager is challenging, and arguably the most difficult role within a police agency (Peak et al. 1999). In large part, this is because these individuals have to balance the needs of upper management on the one hand, and those of front-line officers on the other (Engel 2000). Accomplishing this task is rarely easy given that the concerns, expectations, and interests of these two groups can conflict.

In fact, Reuss-Ianni (1983) describe two distinct police cultures: the ‘street cop’ and the ‘management cop’. According to Peak et al. (1999), these two cultures often conflict with one another because subordinates generally expect their managers “to be understanding, to protect them from management’s unreasonable expectations...and to represent their interests” (p. 38), whereas management “expects supervisors to keep employees in line and to represent management’s and the overall organization’s interests” (p. 38).

Complicating this situation further is the fact that police middle managers will typically be in their first managerial

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position, and have most likely been promoted from within the ranks (Charman et al. 1999; Peak et al. 1999). Not only will these individuals go through a transition phase where a massive amount of new knowledge must be rapidly acquired, they will also suddenly find themselves in charge of their former peers, which will require the ability to handle a range of difficult situations (e.g., expectations for preferential treatment). This will undoubtedly put relationships under stress, which may lead to feelings of role dissonance (Schultz and Schultz 2001). In addition to potential personal and professional conflicts, this new role also carries a significant workload, which may further increase stress (McConville 2006).

Not only is the role of the middle manager challenging, but it is also believed to be one of the most important roles in policing (Adams and Beck 2001; Kingshott 2006; Walker 2006). For example, Kouzes and Posner (2003) remark that the most important leader in an organization is the one to whom the employees report directly. Given that it is front-line officers who perform the “hands-on” duties of policing, and they report directly to middle management, these managers are in a key leadership role (Brunetto and Farr-Wharton 2003). In addition to this, it is likely that police reform will be extremely difficult to achieve without the involvement of middle management (Murphy and Drodge 2003). Indeed, Charrier (2004) contends that organizational renewal in policing may be led by upper management, but without the emotional commitment to, or ownership of, the new vision by middle managers a compelling rationale for change cannot be delivered to front-line officers who are in charge of bringing the organization’s vision to life.

A number of empirical studies have demonstrated the importance of the manager’s role in policing. For example, studies have demonstrated that different supervisory “styles” exist and that these styles can have a direct influence on subordinate behaviour (e.g., Engel 2000, 2001, 2002). Engel (2000) found that “active” supervisors (i.e., those that lead by example) can have either a positive (e.g., causing an increase in proactive policing) or negative (e.g., causing an increase in use of force) influence on the behaviour of subordinates depending on what example the supervisor sets (see Terrill 2001). In particular, the role of effective management for reducing police misconduct has attracted a lot of attention and is supported by research in the US (e.g., Davis and Mateu-Gelabert 1999), the UK (e.g., Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary 2004), and Canada (e.g., Ferguson 2003).

The Canadian Situation

Arguably, the role of the middle manager is even more challenging and important in Canada given the current

situation facing many Canadian police agencies. As in other Canadian employment sectors, Canadian police agencies are bracing for, or are already in the midst of, a large-scale turnover of employees due to mass retirements. For example, the Police Sector Council (PSC 2008) has estimated that 40–50% of senior officers in Canadian police agencies will retire within the next 5 years, and reports of a staffing crisis in Canadian police agencies are commonplace in the national news media (e.g., CBC News 2007, 2008).

One result of this high rate of turn-over is the creation of many promotional opportunities into management (including middle management) positions. While this may be a blessing for those in a position to compete for promotion, it has the potential for long-lasting negative effects on the organization. For example, Dick and Metcalfe (2001) found that ineffective middle managers can affect the level of employee commitment to the organization. Likewise, Pozzobon (2009) has found that those in the middle management role can actually have an impact on how long front-line officers choose to remain within the police service, and whether or not they remain motivated to adopt the police services’ vision and values.

Also of concern are the unprecedented numbers of inexperienced officers stepping into front-line positions. For example, in the Calgary Police Service the average years of experience for patrol officers in 1989 was 10 years, but this has since dropped to 3.5 years experience in 2008 (Pozzobon 2009). Likewise, in Canada’s largest province, Ontario, it is estimated that over one third of serving police officers have been on the job for less than 6 years (Morris 2004). A similar state of affairs exists in the rest of Canada (PSC 2008). The management implications of this large cohort of relatively inexperienced officers are considerable and the situation raises important questions that have yet to be adequately addressed. For example, how will having so many new employees working together impact their professional development? And more importantly, for our purposes at least, how can these officers be effectively managed?

The changing profile of the new Canadian police officer will also undoubtedly pose serious challenges for management/supervision. For example, the average age of police recruits is increasing significantly in Canada (Morris 2004; PSC 2008). Perhaps not surprisingly, educational attainment levels are also at historically high levels, with many police officers having already received a university or college degree by the time they enter policing, and more new recruits are coming into the profession with diverse life experiences (e.g., marriage, children, travel, etc.) (Anderson 2006; Morris 2004; PSC 2008). What this means for police agencies, and most directly for middle managers, is that there is a new type of employee in their midst who may have different ideas about a whole range of issues.

For example, given that many of these officers will have had prior work experience, and thus exposure to management practices in private and/or other public sector organizations, it seems unlikely they will be unaware of poor management practices or deficient supervision in their new workplace. This group's career expectations (e.g., demands for personal fulfilment through work, professional advancement opportunities, a desire for work-life balance, etc.) are also likely to differ from past generations of employees (Tulgan 2000).

Of course, the challenges anticipated by Canadian police agencies are certainly not unique to Canada. Indeed, police agencies in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and several other countries are also preparing for mass retirement, an influx of newly promoted officers, and the hiring of a new generation of employees (Butterfield et al. 2005; O'Malley and Hutchinson 2007). Research efforts to tackle these various issues are also not restricted to Canada. For example, law enforcement officers attending the FBI National Academy were recently surveyed about their view on effective police leadership (Schafer 2009). Similarly, Casey and Mitchell (2007) have reported on the requirements of police managers within Australian police agencies and research is currently being conducted in the London Metropolitan Police Service to examine the mandatory retirement age for police constables (Flynn 2010). While the focus of the current study is on Canadian police officers, and the Canadian policing situation, it could very well be the case that the research findings reported here can inform policy and practice in other police jurisdictions.

The Current Study

In summary, the role of middle management in any organization is complex and full of challenges (McConville 2006; Newell and Dopson 1996). This may be even more the case for middle management within police agencies, especially when one considers the retirement/hiring situation that many police agencies are currently facing. While this type of mass employee turnover can be refreshing for the middle management of an organization, since this change can broaden expertise, bring forward novel ideas, and provide a renewed sense of energy (Keen and Scase 1996), these types of changes can also leave an organization vulnerable, if new employees are placed into positions without the proper skills and training (Virtanen 2000).

While a vast amount of literature exists on issues related to effective management (e.g., leadership styles, supervisory structure, etc.), relatively little is known about the role that middle managers play in a policing context. Therefore, the current study explores several issues related to middle

management in policing, including the characteristics of effective managers, the promotional process into management positions, and the type of training that is available for managers. To examine these issues we surveyed a diverse group of Canadian police officers and conducted numerous semi-structured interviews.

Method

Participants

The sample of officers that was surveyed included 328 active Canadian police officers (254 males, 71 females, and 3 not stated) from 22 different agencies. The age range of the officers was 23 years to 64 years ($M=43.2$; $SD=7.8$) and the amount of police experience the officers possessed ranged from 2 years to 41 years ($M=16$; $SD=8.6$). The education level of the sampled officers varied considerably, but a large portion had either a university degree (25.9%) or a diploma from a community college or trade school (22.9%). The sample consisted of constables (58.8%), non-commissioned officers (37.2%), and senior officers (2.7%). The sample was almost evenly split regarding previous experience in a management position (Yes=43.9%; No=55.5%), although 75.5% of the sample reported that they had previously taken a course in management.

A semi-structured interview was also conducted using a different sample of police professionals (none of these individuals overlapped with the individuals who took part in the survey). This sample was comprised of 50 individuals (38 males and 12 females) from 11 police services across 8 provinces. The age range of interviewees was 37 years to 57 years ($M=45.8$, $SD=4.9$) and the amount of police experience the interviewees possessed ranged from 4 years to 33 years ($M=22.5$, $SD=6.5$). The education level of the interviewees varied considerably, but a large portion had either a university degree (30%) or a diploma from a community college or trade school (38%). The sample consisted of constables (12%), non-commissioned officers (48%), senior officers (26%), a police commissioner/chief (2%), and civilians (12%). Twenty-four percent of the sample had worked as a manager before entering the police field and 92% had taken a course in management, supervision, or leadership.

For the purposes of both the survey and the interviews, the ranks of corporal, sergeant and staff sergeant were considered to be middle managers, as appropriate to each responding officer's particular police service. This definition attempts to recognize variations in organizational structure and size across the many different agencies which were sampled.

Procedure

The survey was developed by the first author. It included 40 questions that dealt with a range of issues related to management. The major themes running throughout the survey included:

- The role of police management,
- The effectiveness of police management,
- The promotional process for police management positions, and;
- The availability and adequacy of training for police managers.

The survey consisted of both closed- and open-ended questions (30 of the 40 questions were close-ended). The closed-ended questions were formatted in a variety of ways (e.g., Likert scales, yes–no, forced-choice). All responses were anonymous, confidential, and returned to the first author without any identifiers. A copy of the survey can be obtained by contacting the first author.

The survey was sent to Canadian police agencies who distributed it to their members. When deciding what agencies to target, an attempt was made to ensure that respondent agencies would be broadly representative of the Canadian police community as a whole. Consideration was given to the location of the police service, its size, and whether the service was municipal, provincial, or federal. A French language version of the survey was also created for distribution so that police agencies in Québec (where the official language is French) would be represented. To ensure an adequate sample size, 450 surveys were distributed to 22 separate police services. Three hundred and twenty eight of these surveys were returned (response rate: 72.88%). The completed surveys were returned from all 22 agencies targeted, which included federal, provincial, regional, municipal, and First Nations services. Responses came from individuals representing all ten provinces and three territories, including 29 surveys in French from Québec officers.

In addition to the survey responses from officers, semi-structured interviews were conducted with an independent sample of active police professionals. The semi-structured interview was developed and carried out by the first author. It included 24 open-ended questions that the interviewees were asked to reflect on. The questions dealt with a range of issues related to management (the majority of questions related to issues that were also targeted in the survey in order to build upon, elucidate, and perhaps challenge the survey results). The interviews were conducted face-to-face in the police agency where the interviewee worked. The interviews were voluntary and the interviewees (and their agencies) were promised strict confidentiality. The interviews were audio taped (hand written notes were also

taken), and transcribed verbatim for the purpose of analyzing responses.

Analysis

The majority of the data obtained from the surveys (i.e., from close-ended questions) will be presented in raw form, with important trends highlighted. The open-ended questions on the survey needed to be content analyzed, so that trends could be extracted from the responses. To accomplish this, a content dictionary was developed for each of the open-ended survey questions by the third author. After all of the authors agreed that the content dictionary captured the most important information, multiple coders who were trained in the use of the content dictionary content analyzed the open-ended survey questions so that measures of inter-reliability could be calculated.

The resulting item-level average Kappa values indicated that the responses to the majority of open-ended survey questions could be reliably coded using the content dictionary ($\kappa=.67$ to $.81$). There were two exceptions to this (both questions related to how effective various police ranks were at providing positive leadership to front-line officers and preventing police corruption). Because of the low level of inter-rater reliability achieved for these two questions they were omitted from all subsequent analyses.

Our analysis of the semi-structured interviews did not involve content analysis. Instead, we attempted to extract relevant themes that emerged from the interviews, taking care, as others have suggested, “to ensure that the concepts developed and illustrations provided typified the most common pattern [in the interviewees’ responses]” (Miller and White 2003, p. 1217). We accept that it is not possible to establish the reliability or validity of this analytical method in the same way that it sometimes is with quantitative analysis, nor do we argue that the results from the interviews reported here will necessarily generalize to other police officers or agencies that were not sampled in this study. Instead of being overly concerned with these issues, our sole objective was to add to the survey responses using the perspectives of our interviewees, in hopes of furthering our understanding of middle management in Canadian police agencies.

Results

The Role of Police Management

As can be seen in Table 1, most officers responding to the survey believed that the management of police services is significantly different than management in other professions. In addition, police officers believed strongly that

Table 1 The role of police management

Statement	Very strongly agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Very strongly disagree
Management of police services is significantly different from management in other professions.	14.3	29.3	34.1	5.2	13.7	2.7	0.3
Good management has been important to the achievement of your service's goals and objectives.	33.2	34.5	19.2	7.0	3.7	1.8	0.6
Good management has been important to you in fulfilling your daily policing responsibilities.	20.7	39.6	20.7	8.8	6.7	3.0	0.3

Modal responses are in bold

sound police management is very important for achieving the goals and objectives of the police agency as a whole and for fulfilling their daily policing responsibilities. When asked which rank has the greatest ability to provide positive leadership to front-line officers and prevent misconduct, a significant number of respondents selected the rank of sergeant (46.6% and 64.9% of respondents, respectively, for these two questions). When queried about why proper police management is important, the most common response was that it ensures that public trust in the service is maintained (68%). Other common responses to this question were that proper police management ensures that: an agency's goals and objectives are achieved (60.1%), good employee morale is maintained (53.4%), assignments/investigations are successfully carried out (46.6%), and police officers display professional conduct at all times (32%).

Similar results were found in the interview data. For example, when interviewees were asked about the importance of middle managers for the success of their service, the following responses were very typical:

...the sergeants are the ones that make the organization click, and that's to me the most important rank, right from the Commissioner on down, is the sergeant rank. Because they're out there 24 h a day, day and night, crappy weather, good weather, whatever the case is, leading the troops, and I stand by that 100%... I don't see that changing. (Participant g4)

I think it's vital. I think they're the strength of the organization. If you don't have a strong core of sergeants and staff sergeants your organization will just crumble because they're the link between the people that get the work done and those that need to hear about what's needed to get the work done... (Participant i3)

Given these views, it is clearly important that police managers are effective, that the right people are promoted into these positions, and that adequate training is provided to these individuals so that they might reach their full potential.

The Effectiveness of Police Management

Despite the fact that most officers responding to the survey did not feel that police managers are adequately trained, they did feel that the managers they have worked for have been effective and have made the transition from a 'rank and file' officer to middle management well (see Table 2). When respondents reflected on police managers they know, most agreed that these managers have been able to separate themselves from those they supervise and that these managers demonstrate behaviours that are appropriate to their rank. When asked specifically about their own services, a large percentage of respondents felt that the quality of overall management over the last 5 years had remained relatively stable (36.6%). A smaller percentage of respondents believed that the quality of overall management had increased (30.5%) or decreased (32%) over this time period. With respect to the quality of middle management specifically over the last 5 years, 50% of respondents believed that it had remained stable, while 26.5% expressed that it had increased and 22.3% expressed that it had decreased.

As indicated in Table 3, there was little agreement amongst respondents about the key challenges faced by officers moving into management positions, but there was slightly more agreement when they were asked about factors related to effective and ineffective police managers. For example, a majority of respondents indicated that front-line experience is the most important criteria for success as a manager (79.3%), followed by an ability to motivate others (58.5%), showing respect to fellow officers (55.5%), being a good role model (48.8%), and management training (28%). When asked what factors contribute to a smooth transition from a 'rank and file' officer to a manager, the most common response was personal maturity (62.2%), followed by prior career experience that provided good preparation for the new job (57.0%), an ability to feel comfortable being in charge of friends and peers (34.5%), an ability to separate oneself from previous roles (28.7%), and clear role expectations for their new position (20.7%). According to survey respondents, the top three characteristics that set effective

Table 2 The effectiveness of police management

Statement	Very strongly agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Very strongly disagree
Most police managers have been well trained.	0.9	7.0	26.5	21.3	33.5	8.5	1.8
Most police managers you have worked for have been effective.	1.5	9.5	41.8	18.6	22.9	4.9	0.9
In your experience, most managers make the transition from the 'rank and file' to middle management well.	0.6	7.6	50.3	27.1	12.5	0.9	0.3
Most police managers have the ability to separate themselves from those they supervise.	2.4	9.1	43.6	20.4	18.9	4.6	0.9
Most police managers demonstrate behaviour appropriate to their rank.	1.5	15.9	49.7	16.5	12.8	2.4	1.2

Modal responses are in bold

police managers apart from ineffective managers are professionalism (51.1%), interpersonal skills (46.2%), and managerial training/education/experience (44.6%).

Most of the interviewees agreed with these characteristics. When asked about what makes an effective police manager, the following statements were typical:

Well I think dedication. I think a general willingness to work at it and to do well. If there's a genuine desire to do well with your squad and to do well in that position. So there's a work ethic there...And I think sometimes... if they can see that you're honestly there to try to serve, you're 90% home. (Participant f1)

Number one you've got to be a people person, the ability to deal with people on different levels...Keep it personal, I mean I became a police officer to help people, it's no different than when you're a sergeant. Like don't elevate yourself to a level where you think you're better than those people. (Participant d2)

I think past experiences, nine times out of 10 past experiences. What they've seen from their previous supervisors, what they've seen that worked and didn't work. (Participant h2)

When the survey respondents were asked what factors contribute to problematic promotions from a 'rank and file' officer to a manager, the most common response was lack of personal maturity (45.7%), followed by a lack of prior career experience that provided good preparation for the new job (34.8%), being promoted too early in one's career (33.2%), lack of previous management/leadership experience (31.7%), and an inability to feel comfortable being in charge of friends and peers (26.8%). According to survey respondents, the top three characteristics that set ineffective police managers apart from effective managers are a lack of authoritative skills (49.5%), a lack of professionalism (45%), and a lack of managerial training/education/experience (33.6%).

Once again, the survey responses were supported by responses from the one-on-one interviews. When officers were asked about the characteristics of ineffective managers, the following statements were made:

Lack of preparation on their part in terms of knowing you're going to a certain position and not bothering to figure out what goes on there before you get there. (Participant f2)

It's an attitude problem. Attitude problem big time. Taking the rank for more than what it is. It's positional abuse. It's arrogance. It's old-school thinking... (Participant a2)

And one is just, well how to put this politically correct, he's just as dumb as a post, can't make a decision to save his life. I swear to God it probably takes him a half an hour to figure out which sock to put on first in the morning. (Participant b1)

There was little consensus amongst survey respondents when they were asked about mistakes made by new managers (see Table 3). When asked about the most *common* mistakes made, role conflict/confusion was raised as an issue most often (38.2%). This was also a theme mentioned in the interviews. For example, one respondent stated:

You're a constable one day, you get your hooks and the next day you're a supervisor and you're still really feeling that you're amongst your peers and you're now the one that's approving time off, assigning zones, or assigning files and nobody really sits you down and says "okay, this is the divide". (Participant j5)

Following role conflict/confusion, the next most common mistakes included the inappropriate use of disciplinary discretion (22.3%), and a tendency to micromanage (9.5%). When asked about the most *serious* mistakes made, inappropriate use of disciplinary discretion was raised most

Table 3 The effectiveness of police management

Statements	Frequency	Percentage
What do you feel are some of the challenges faced by officers moving from the 'rank and file' into management positions?		
Lack of managerial training/education/experience	157	48.0%
Experiencing role conflict/confusion	139	42.5%
Difficulty managing human resources	39	11.9%
Disciplinary discretion	36	11.0%
Lack of departmental support	36	11.0%
Which is most necessary for success as a police manager:		
Front-line experience	260	79.3%
Being able to motivate others	192	58.5%
Being respected by fellow officers	182	55.5%
Being a good role model	160	48.8%
Management training	92	28.0%
When managers made the transition into management well, which of the following contributed to their success?		
Personal maturity	204	62.2%
Prior career experience provided good preparation	187	57.0%
Comfortable being in charge of friends and peers	113	34.5%
Able to separate self from previous role	94	28.7%
Clear role expectations for new position	68	20.7%
List 3 things about the most effective police manager you have known that set her or him apart from other managers.		
Professionalism	167	51.1%
Interpersonal skills	151	46.2%
Managerial training/education/experience	146	44.6%
Authoritative	124	37.9%
Communication skills	107	32.7%
In your opinion, what are the attributes of a successful manager that set him or her apart from less successful managers?		
Professionalism	156	47.7%
Managerial training/education/experience	127	38.8%
Interpersonal skills	120	36.7%
Communication skills	99	30.3%
Proactive approach	40	12.2%
In your opinion, what behaviours, actions, personal characteristics or attributes make a manager a good role model for other officers?		
Professionalism	265	81.0%
Interpersonal skills	187	57.2%
Communication skills	151	46.2%
Authoritative	124	37.9%
Proactive approach	95	29.1%
When managers did not make the transition into management well, which of the following contributed to their lack of success?		
Lack of personal maturity	150	45.7%
Prior career experience did not provide good preparation	114	34.8%
Promoted too early in career	109	33.2%
Lack of previous management/leadership experience	104	31.7%
Uncomfortable being in charge of friends and peers	88	26.8%
List 3 things about the least effective police manager you have known that set him or her apart from other managers.		
Lacks authoritative skills	162	49.5%
Unprofessional	147	45.0%
Lacks managerial training/education/experience	110	33.6%
Lacks interpersonal skills	86	26.3%
Poor communicator	78	23.9%
In your opinion, what is the most <i>common</i> mistake new managers make?		

Table 3 (continued)

Statements	Frequency	Percentage
Experiencing role conflict/confusion	125	38.2%
Disciplinary discretion	73	22.3%
Temptation to micromanage	31	9.5%
Lack of managerial training/education/experience	28	8.6%
Change within the department	23	7.0%
In your opinion, what is the most <i>serious</i> mistake new managers make?		
Disciplinary discretion	84	25.7%
Experiencing role conflict/confusion	68	20.8%
Lack of managerial training/education/experience	35	10.7%
Difficulty making decisions	32	9.8%
Difficulty managing human resources	29	8.9%

often (25.7%), followed by role conflict/confusion (20.8%), and a lack of managerial training/education/experience (10.7%).

The Promotional Process for Police Management Positions

As illustrated in Table 4, most police officers agreed that promotion to a management position is sought after by many officers in their agency. When asked why this is the case, most respondents indicated that promotions were sought in order to get better pay (61%). Other common responses for why police officers seek out management promotions included: ambition (44.8%), better pension (39.9%), personal growth and development (37.8%), and a desire to be a “boss” (16.2%).

Despite the fact that promotions are often sought, a number of areas of concern were raised by the sampled police officers. In particular, the results in Table 4 indicate that many officers felt that the promotional process in their agency was unfair and not well understood. In addition, many officers did not believe that the promotional process in their agency resulted in capable and competent people being promoted.

The examination of the interview data revealed a spectrum of opinions about the promotional process, with some responses being positive. For instance:

It appears in general to work pretty well. It’s the best I’ve seen in my 25 years here. (Participant e1)

While others felt that the promotional process was working anywhere from moderately well to very poorly. For example:

It works relatively well. I’ll go back and qualify that because you can never take the human aspect out of promotions, you know “I know this guy, he’s a good guy, I like him, he’s worked for me before, I want this guy to get bumped”. (Participant a4)

The promotional process does not identify those people who are the informal leaders on a platoon. The ability to write an exam and do an oral interview is more important than being a leader. (Participant d2)

Furthermore, while most officers thought it would be beneficial to post newly promoted officers to geographical and operational areas with which they were familiar, the majority of officers seemed unsure as to whether this was the practice in their agency.

The Availability and Adequacy of Training for Police Managers

Regarding the availability and adequacy of training for police managers, a number of results emerged from the survey that should be cause for concern (see Table 5). For example, most officers (56.7%) indicated that their agency provides management training to officers who have been promoted, but once promoted, few agencies appear to provide any on-going mentoring or training to managers (despite the fact that, in most agencies, promotions are subject to a period of probation where the promotion is dependent on achieving a particular level of performance). There also appears to be a significant lack of pre-promotional training or mentoring in order to prepare officers for possible future management responsibilities, potentially contributing to the finding that most respondents (72.6%) felt that their agency does not adequately prepare officers for promotion to middle management positions, or allow officers to develop to their full potential (80.5%).

In support of these findings, interviewees provided the following responses on the topic of training for police managers:

...we don’t really prepare people I don’t think in advance of the position, even in terms of the formal

Table 4 The promotional process for management positions

Statement	Very strongly agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Very strongly disagree
Promotion to a management position is sought after by many officers in your service.	9.1	31.4	42.1	7.6	7.6	0.9	0.9
The promotional process in your service is fair and well understood.	0.3	11.0	21.6	17.7	29.9	12.2	7.3
The promotional process in your service results in capable, competent people being promoted.	0.9	7.9	25.0	16.5	29.6	11.6	8.5
Posting newly-promoted officers to geographical/operational areas with which they are familiar would assist them in making the transition to management.	6.1	23.2	42.1	16.8	7.3	1.5	0.9
To what extent does your service encourage newly-promoted officers to work in geographical areas with which they are familiar?	2.8	7.3	15.0	49.5	15.3	5.5	0.6
To what extent does your service encourage newly-promoted officers to work in operational areas with which they are familiar?	1.5	7.9	23.8	45.1	14.0	3.4	1.5

Modal responses are in bold

training...we don't go for supervisory training until after we're actually in a position... (Participant b3)

No. I'm thinking about my transition from sergeant to staff sergeant: it was "congratulations, you're now a staff sergeant". I don't see any transition there. No one ever explained what my role was, never been given a job description. (Participant b5)

We should have a mentorship program...and when I say mentorship I mean that is your transitional period where you are actually linked up with a supervisor and learn the supervisory role. (Participant a2)

Discussion

Police officers occupy a special place in society, entrusted with tremendous authority and the concomitant responsibility to use it wisely and justly. The responsibility inherent in the police manager's duty to supervise, guide, discipline, and lead other police officers is thus immense. Currently, Canadian police organizations, and others from around the world, are contending with a number of pressures (e.g., large-scale retirement of officers) that reinforce the need for management and supervision of the highest caliber. The next 5 years of policing in Canada will see an unprecedented influx of new officers, and newly-promoted officers into middle management roles. The hope is that the current study, and research that will subsequently follow, can help to inform Canadian (and other) police agencies during this challenging transition period.

Implications of the Survey and Interview Results

In line with the stated importance of middle management in the research literature (e.g. Adams and Beck 2001; Charrier 2004; Kingshott 2006; Walker 2006), the results of the survey and the interviews indicate that Canadian police officers strongly agree with one another about the importance of sound management within policing, particularly the role that police sergeants play. Not only was sound management deemed important for achieving an agency's goals and objectives (e.g., maintaining public trust in the police), it was deemed important for allowing individual officers to fulfill their daily policing responsibilities. While this must be seen as a positive result, the fact that most police officers have seen little improvement in the quality of management over the last 5 years (with many others seeing a decrease in quality) is cause for concern. Fortunately, other results from the study suggest ways to modify this state of affairs.

For example, the survey and interview results can be used to begin developing a picture of an effective (and ineffective) Canadian police manager, at least from the subjective viewpoint of other Canadian police officers. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the results suggest that an effective manager is one with front-line experience, who can motivate others, respect their fellow officers, and be a good role model for subordinates. In addition, they possess high levels of personal maturity, are professional, have good interpersonal and communication skills, and have received appropriate managerial training. Instead of experiencing role conflict or confusion, effective managers are able to separate themselves from those they manage and, perhaps because of this, they feel comfort-

Table 5 The availability and adequacy of training for police managers

Questions	Yes	No
Does your service provide specific management training to officers about to be promoted or newly promoted?	56.7	42.1
Does your service have any form of on-going mentoring or other training specifically for new managers?	21.6	72.9
Does your service conduct pre-promotional training, mentoring, or other development of officers to prepare them for possible future management responsibilities?	36.3	62.5
In your opinion, does your service adequately prepare officers for promotion to middle management ranks?	26.8	72.6
In general, is your service effective at developing the full potential of its officers?	18.6	80.5
Once made, are promotions in your service subject to a period of probation or in any other way conditional on achieving a particular level of performance?	62.2	35.1

Modal responses are in bold

able being in charge of friends and peers.¹ They use their disciplinary discretion appropriately and avoid micro-managing situations.

While some of these criteria match those found in other studies (e.g., Baltimore County Police Department & John Hopkins University 2001; Brewer 1995; Engel 2000; Gaston and King 1995), it is necessary to use caution when interpreting these results. Most importantly, one must appreciate that despite what police officers may think, these criteria may not be found to actually correlate with management or supervision effectiveness (e.g., see Stogdill 1974). However, if future research demonstrates that these criteria do relate to effectiveness, this will be valuable to Canadian police agencies in a variety of ways. For example, the identification of core competencies might allow police agencies to select candidates who would perform in a manner superior to others (Baltimore County Police Department & John Hopkins University 2001). This might go some way to reducing the feelings of unfairness and confusion that police officers appear to have towards current promotional practices in their agencies. It might also increase the probability that capable, competent people are promoted to management positions, which was another concern of many of our participants.

The identification of core management competencies will also undoubtedly have a positive impact on training, which was a problem area highlighted by this study. While there is a general consensus in the literature that training for police managers is extremely important (e.g., Doherty 2004; Irving 2001; Schafer 2009), the perception of the survey respondents and our interviewees was that many

aspects of training are inadequate, particularly during the pre-promotion phase. Given the importance of ensuring that police managers are as effective as possible, and existing research that has highlighted the importance of pre-promotion training in other contexts, this concern about the lack of pre-promotion training is alarming.

A similar issue has been raised in relation to other roles in policing, and potential solutions to the problem have been proposed. For example, in their study of what makes detectives effective, Smith and Flanagan (2000) found that many of the officers they interviewed emphasized the need for early identification of individuals with the potential to perform well as detectives. This was thought to ensure that sufficiently qualified investigators are developed and nurtured for the future. Once identified, Smith and Flanagan suggested that potential candidates undergo informal, pre-promotion training to fine tune the skills that will be necessary to effectively fulfill the requirements of their future role. A variety of different training strategies were recommended including unofficial mentoring, shadowing of detectives, and voluntary assignments to departments other than the police service (e.g., forensic identification). Given the multi-skill nature of police management, it may be worthwhile to consider whether a similar process would be useful for identifying and training future police managers. In fact, this has recently been identified as an area in need of future research (Pozzobon 2009).

Once selected, long-term training for police managers will also be very important (Kingshott 2006). Fortunately, thinking around this issue is already taking place and innovative training methods are being suggested, including mentorships, self-directed learning modules, secondment opportunities, police-University partnerships, and discussion groups in on-line police “Universities” (e.g., Doherty 2004). The content that should be focused on in management training has also been discussed and includes material on leadership, effective communication, delegation, team development, dealing with discipline, and motivation and performance appraisal (Gaston and King 1995). Within

¹ Although not related to our study results, it is worth mentioning research, which has suggested that implementing a time lag between finishing the acting duties within one rank before formally beginning the duties of the promoted rank may be helpful in reducing role conflict/confusion (Gaston and King 1995). Presumably, this allows both the newly-promoted officer and his or her peers some time to adjust to the new management structure. Of course, given the current strain on staffing in Canadian police agencies, this may not always be possible.

certain parts of Canada, this type of training is already provided for new managers who participate in certain front-line supervisor courses. However, it remains unclear the extent and availability of these types of training programs (David Murray, personal communication, March 4, 2010).

The results of the current study suggest that management training, at both the pre- and post-promotion stage, has the potential to be successful if delivered appropriately. For example, when asked to list the criteria that characterize effective managers, survey respondents did not tend to list irreversible personal characteristics or rigid personality traits, but rather specific skills sets (e.g., communication skills) or areas of knowledge (e.g., expectations of the new position) that can potentially be altered through training (Doh, 2003). Survey respondents were also able to identify key challenges that new managers face (e.g., role confusion), and common/serious mistakes that new managers make (e.g., inappropriate disciplinary discretion), which can be used to establish specific training objectives.

Limitations of the Study and Future Research Directions

There are a number of reasons to be cautious when integrating the results of this study into our understanding of police management. Two specific issues warrant further discussion and future investigation.

First, while obvious, it is important to stress that the responses from the survey and interviews simply reflect the opinions of the officers involved and there is the possibility that the officers could be wrong (or biased) in their views. For example, as we argued above, while officers believe that certain criteria relate to managerial effectiveness, this may not actually be the case. Likewise, just because police officers believe that current promotional practices do not result in competent and capable people being selected, or that adequate training opportunities do not exist for potential or current managers, may not mean that these things are necessarily true (though such perceptions are important in their own right). In the future, it will be important to supplement the research presented here with research that examines these issues in a more direct, objective, and systematic fashion (e.g., by examining whether certain characteristics relate to managerial effectiveness, or by conducting formal reviews of the type of managerial training offered by Canadian police agencies and training academies).

Second, while the survey and interview data presented in this paper allowed us to target specific, clearly defined issues that we deemed important for understanding the challenges police officers face when moving into management positions, no comparisons across Canadian police services were made. It may be beneficial for future work to examine the specific services that have had success with their promotional processes and/or training programs. If these services have

certain practices or policies in place that contribute to effective management, then other police services may be inclined to adopt such practices and policies to improve the effectiveness of their middle management.

Conclusion

The current study represents an important first step towards developing a better understanding of various middle management issues facing Canadian police officers and the agencies for which they work. Our participants painted a relatively positive picture of their experiences with current middle managers, but also highlighted potential improvements, particularly around management training. More objective reviews of existing management practices will be needed to confirm or disconfirm the views expressed by our participants. Further analysis of our data consisting of inter-agency comparisons will also shed light on potential best practices. This type of research is greatly needed in Canada, as well as other countries, entering the challenging times ahead.

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