

ACADEMY TRAINING TO RETIREMENT: PERMEATING LEADERSHIP IN POLICE ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Many police organizations across the United States promote leadership training to those individuals that are first line supervisor positions. Many departments, however, do not have a true command structure in place. This in turn introduces the basic patrol officer to many leadership situations. Recent research has shown those not of rank do not receive leadership training. One specific issue is with increasing the patrol officers leadership abilities or behavior for situations that face often. Other research uncovers issues relating to the lack of leadership training for not only aspiring first line supervisors but basic patrol as well. First line supervisors have been traditionally viewed as managers rather than leaders. This meta-analysis offers insight to the improvement of police leadership training beginning with the basic police academy curriculum. By doing so, it may improve the overall organizational leadership, but also aid in succession planning as well.

Keywords: Leadership, Police leadership, basic academy training, succession planning.

INTRODUCTION

Police organizations and their design appear to be like no other organizations. Usually they are closely compared to that of the military. According to Toch (2008), when describing police organizations he refers to them as “hyper-bureaucratic military organizational attributes-those of formal rank, formal hierarchy, and a chain of unquestioned and unquestioning command” (2008, p. 62). Only until a few years the term “police management” was used to describe what police believed to be leadership. It was perceived that this “police management” displayed what is currently known as leadership. This concept was designated for only those who held a title. Members of these police organizations believe strongly in the

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maintaining of this design. The top down design of communication, coupled with the centralization of decision-making, is what many in the field believe sets them apart. However, more recent years have shown that managers are not necessarily leaders. Rather, people placed into managerial roles should possess leadership skills, behaviors and knowledge. By employing such a process it could improve an officer's connection with his/her department. It would also aid in succession planning when promoting future leaders within the department.

So do basic patrol officers hold a police leadership position and what is done to measure their leadership behavior and skills? Should these individuals receive basic leadership training given the many situations they encounter from a patrol standpoint? Why do humans naturally follow certain people within given situations? And is this leadership? Police research for the past few decades have dealt with topics, such as leadership styles of those already in positions of authority (Dentsen, 2003; Kuykendall and Unsinger, 1982; and Schwarzwald et al, 2001). Others focused on studying leadership as it pertains to gaining organizational commitment (Eisenberger et al, 1990, Maertz et al, 2007; and Rhoades and Eisenberger; 2002). There has been little research studying the basic academy curriculum and how it can impact organizational leadership and commitment. Police corruption is being seen more frequently, especially from those in chiefs' and front line supervisory positions. There appears to be a need to research and create changes to both the design of these agencies, as well as the training and education available to these "Street level" leaders. There are studies that support and discuss these very concepts.

This article will explore the current lack of leadership training to the basic patrol officer. It will further discuss leadership education and its availability and applicability to basic patrol officers starting from academy training. The last portion draws a connection between leadership education and training from the basic academy could ultimately increase leadership throughout the entire department increasing effective succession planning.

THE PARAMILITARY DESIGN

When focusing specifically on organizational design, police organizations are very structured. Their chart is well defined as well as the roles that accompany those titles. Communication inside these agencies is very top down. It has been debated that this design is needed because the severe situations these men and women encounter. To further that, the liability that accompanies those situations is also great. These organizations and their design do lack wanted items by the officers. Among these are better communication networks, more participation, better decision-making, and better ethical leadership. It is through these officers requesting change that organizational commitment may increase. Jermier and Berkes (1979) write "participative role clarification improved organizational commitment." (p.17). Inside of a militaristic designed organization the levels of rank in management and their importance are often over simplified. Many times they are seen as mere conduit of communication having no real influence on those they manage. It is further argued by Jermier and Berkes (1979) that "obedience socialization and military command supervision across the hierarchal levels appears to distort the nature of police work." (p. 17). Police organizations face change and a changing environment at a faster than normal pace. If this were the case, then the structure must be flexible enough to handle such situations. It must also have the flowing

communication and leadership structure firmly embedded into its design. Looking at most police structures the ranks would transcend from Chief, Deputy Chief, Captain, Lieutenant, Sergeant, Corporal, and patrol officer. These levels are seen more in a larger metropolitan or county level department. This is mainly due to the amount of officers employed by the agency. However, in some states, such as Pennsylvania, department size does not allow for such rank design making the levels of sergeant and patrol officer more open to leadership situations. In the most recent (2009) statistics released by the Municipal Police Officers Education and Training Commission of Pennsylvania, there are 1,135 total local departments across the state (Young, 2009). The report further notes among those departments there are

Number of Police Departments by size and the total number of officers:

	# of PDs	# of Officers
1-5 Officers	292	887
6-10 Officers	296	2374
11-30 Officers	447	7522 (Young, 2009, p. 1)

After seeing such statistics it would appear that most departments have a very limited or so command structure at all. It ultimately is then the patrol officer who is thrust situationally into the leadership role. The term “police situational leadership” will be suggested later. In the 1979 study by Jermier and Berkes it is said the “quasi military model makes no provision for the situational effects of a leaders behavior.” (p. 17). Miller, Watson, and Webb (2009) echo this by suggesting:

Although many agencies appear to rely on military arrangements in terms of structure, rank, and hierarchies, this model may not effectively serve police leaders and their respective organizations. Replacing the military model of leadership development with behavioral competency development may be more effectual in leadership and agency performance. (p. 51)

Many in the police arena believe that police organizations differ greatly from their counterparts in the private arena. In a Miller et al study (2009) they compared the scores of police leaders on the California Personality Inventory (CPI) with those from the business world. They found “results indicate very similar scores.”(p. 58). Is there truly a difference in how leadership is applied between the policing and business worlds? Some in the police world will argue at their basic cores the two arenas differ in followers, motivation, wanted leadership styles. When the word “entrepreneur” is spoken, many people associate it with the world of business. In a 2008 study by Robert Smith, he introduces the concept of “Entrepreneurial policing” (p. 210). The basis behind such a term is to show that the leadership concepts in policing do not differ greatly from that of business. He suggests:

Entrepreneurial policing is an open style of management linked to, but transcending, individual leadership styles because it can be practiced by everyone within the police service irrespective of rank. This link between the rubrics of entrepreneurship and leadership is vital because for a practical theory of entrepreneurial policing to develop, policing requires the active participation of future generations of police leaders. (2008, p. 212)

This concept not only intertwines the business world with policing, but it also is an example that leadership should be seen at all levels within the police organization. To further support this Smith connects entrepreneurship and policing by reporting it “is action-orientated cognitive human ability, which guides policing as an everyday practice and paradoxically links managerialism and conformity to risk-taking behaviour.” (p. 212). Whereas Smith’s style is the most recently introduced, other studies (Huberts, Kaptein and Lasthuizen, 2007, Jermier and Berkes, 1979, Krimmel, and Lindenmuth, 2001, Murphy, 2007, and Toch, 2008) have reported other perceived leadership styles versus the most sought and practiced by officers. The styles reported were gathered from the perceptions of officers. Some common themes emerged from these studies. The reported findings in Krimmel and Lindenmuth (2001) found the Machiavellian and bureaucratic styles (p. 484). Jermier and Berkes (1979) attached task to the style utilized. Among the tasks “directive” (p. 4) was perceived, however, “support and “participation were positively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment” (p.13). Other research such as Huberts et al, (2007) studied how perceived leadership styles effect officer integrity violations. The three styles identified were “openness”, “role model”, and “strictness” (p. 596). They also concluded “All three aspects of leadership, role modeling, strictness and openness, have a significant effect on the frequency with which corruption occurs.” (p. 596). In a 2007 study completed by Murphy he found the most effective perceived style “admired” by officers to be “transformational leadership” (p. 176). Research conducted in 2008 by Toch focused on officers as the “change agents” (p. 60) in police organizations. He argues, “police departments could be well advised to encourage participatory involvement as a vehicle for organizational reform.” (p. 61).

As seen above, many studies have researched and identified styles. The patrol officer themselves should be trained and educated in these styles as well. It appears through employing these styles officers may have stronger organizational commitment. By supervisors and officers engaging in these styles it may strengthen integrity and ethical behavior of the organization. It appears by strengthening leadership among every officer within the department, would of great benefit for many police organizations and their followers. If police organizations need more flexibility and incorporate leadership at all ranks, what then should change, and who should be involved in that change? Further questions that need to be researched further would be; are the basic police academy curriculums teaching cadets these styles, and if not how can that process be improved to do so? Given the many situations officers face on patrol should they receive situational leadership training making them more effective?

BASIC POLICE ACADEMY TRAINING

In this section the questions previously mentioned in the last section will be discussed. For the purpose of this research, the term “police situational leadership” first needs to be defined. “Police situational leadership” is the art of having fellow officers following your plan on how to handle a given situation without a supervisor on-scene. Situational leadership theory as defined by Northouse (2006) as “different situations demand different kinds of leadership... to be an effective leader requires that a person adapt his or her style to the demands of different situations” (p. 91). It is no great secret that in the world of police patrol,

officers face an infinite amount of situations. How then do officers deploy for a situation, but no leadership to carry it out quickly.

Police academies nation-wide are not providing the tools to police cadets on how to recognize and develop leadership qualities in themselves or fellow officers. When discussing basic police academy training the word standardization is often associated. All 50 states have created, by legislation, Police Officer Standards and Training commissions (P.O.S.T). It is these commissions that create, implement, and deliver the training they agree is necessary for an officer to succeed upon graduation. Walker and Katz (2002) claimed “this formal training includes both technical skills, such as self defense and use of weapons, as well as knowledge, such as criminal and constitutional law and community policing” (ctd, White, 2008, p. 31). After researching the basic police academy training curriculums for all 50 P.O.S.T.’s nation wide, it was found only four provide initial leadership training module to police cadets. All other academies provide leadership courses to veteran officers usually of rank only. In research conducted by Lowry (1997) and most currently Miller, Watson, and Webb (2009) leadership training was the focus. In the Miller et al study, promotional candidates in Texas attending leadership training in were given the California Psychological Inventory (p. 1). Researchers gave both a pretest and posttest. Researchers here confirm “ results indicate that the CPI-260 can be utilized to assess change through training and that, in this case, the training seemed effective at helping the law enforcement executives develop their leadership skills, awareness, and abilities.” (Miller, et al, 2009, p.58). In the current processes many candidates never attend, nor are given the opportunity to attend, any of the leadership training prior to testing. Some attributing factors may be; cost, shift coverage, availability of training, or simply not viewed as needed. By taking this a step further to basic police academy training leadership development can begin to be fostered in the cadet.

Smith (2009) said it correctly that “Leadership is a behavioural quality which has to be demonstrated in everyday contexts.”(p.221). By further investing time into creating a better leadership training into the basic police academy curriculum’s, law enforcement agencies would be improving their organizational design and internal leadership. Ultimately, they would be permeating leadership into every officer of the department. This would be especially beneficial for those smaller departments discussed earlier. It would also be a positive step into planning for the future for many agencies. The concept of succession planning is not often considered of in law enforcement organizations.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The last question to be investigated would be how do police organizations plan and train future leaders of their departments? The training issue has already been discussed briefly. Many departments do not invest time or money into sending officers to leadership trainings. This could be at a federal, state, or local level. On a federal level the FBI maintains The Leadership Development Institute. Some states may also have some type of leadership seminars or classes. For example, Pennsylvania, through the Penn State Justice and Safety Institute, offers leadership development courses. They offer nine courses in all. (Penn State Justice and Safety Institute) Of these courses seven require the officer must be a rank of lieutenant or higher, one course requires the officer is in the promotional process or promoted,

and one course has nothing noted about who may attend. This concept in offering leadership training does not appear to be in line with the concept of succession planning. Instead of supplying training to those choosing or aspiring to be leaders, the training occurs after the officer is chosen from a list of eligible candidates. By educating in that manner it appears to be “placing the cart before the horse.” As mentioned earlier officers are seeking certain styles from those that lead them. Rowe (2006) suggests “the quality of police leadership could be improved by more effective methods to identify officers in the middle rankings posts who had the potential to become chief officers” (p.759). He supports that succession planning can increase overall police leadership and it can be done through training all officers. His research sought to “modernise the police workforce, enhancing training and career progression to improve leadership and management skills at all levels of the service.” (Rowe, 2006. p.759). This very point seems to contradict the requirements to attend police leadership trainings as well as to those it is offered.

Another issue in succession planning might be that not enough individuals want to be involved. This could be for various reasons such as, satisfaction with the current assignment, monetary loss, lack of support of motivation, poor test taking ability, disconnect with current administration values. In the 2005 study by Murphy officers perceived their promotional process as “not picking the best police officers” and “the testing and selection method” (p. 256). Whatever the reason may be this does not suggest that there is a lack of those that can lead given the right tools and education. Sometimes as stated in 2001 study by Whetstone officers have the “perception that promotions are not based on merit and reflect a hidden administrative agenda.”(p.153). However, in the same study “black test takers indicate leadership as a prominent concern.”(Whetstone, 2001, p.152). While this is a positive sign of those focusing on leadership, this very notion needs to be permeated through all in the organization. Through proper succession planning this can be possible. According to Murphy (2005), Kesner and Sebor (1994) they agreed on “the importance of creating a seamless continuity in leadership development and succession planning.” (p. 254). By law enforcement changing the admission and availability of currently offered leadership training, simultaneously with the basic police academy curriculum, police organizations can begin to assure leadership beginning the moment the officer’s graduate from basic training.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper is to open a dialogue on the concept of increasing police leadership to improve succession planning. It attempted to show connectivity of the research of many. Research has shown that the current design of police organizations does not support change easily. However, research also suggests change is wanted by officers. They state how future leaders are chosen, as well the style they wish them to exhibit needs to be improved. Without the systematic approach to recognize new leaders and having a system in place to cultivate their interests or demonstrative talent in this field we will continue to down this path of inaction to the point of no return. The partnership of police recruit training in leadership traits and awareness, coupled with departments having programming and personnel development tracks in place will encourage and stretch new officers to look within themselves for development. In the end this leaves the agency stronger and on firm footing

for the future. Police academies' nation-wide are not providing the tools to police cadets on how to recognize and develop leadership qualities in themselves or fellow officers. This critical area of patrol response needs to be addressed at the academy level as patrol officers need to have the tools to develop as their time on the job increases. Without the tools to recognize these traits, police organizations are wasting a vast resource of truly outstanding leaders.

Further research could be warranted, specifically focusing on the leadership trainings offered from states. It also can be built into the organizations overall succession planning of police organizations improving their overall leadership throughout the organization. In this day and age where police corruption is increasing, especially among administration, these changes seemed warranted. Future research could focus solely of succession planning and if in fact it is successful for police agencies who utilize it. As Ian Blair (2003) states about policing in the 21st century “ ‘our job now is to go out and garner learning from wherever it exists and increase the richness of our leadership culture . . . Police leadership is not essentially different’ from all other forms of leadership.” (ctd, Ginger, 2003, p. 112).

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