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THE CRUCIAL LINK: FRONT-LINE SUPERVISION (CORPORAL RANK) IN THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

By

RUBY BURNS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
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We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

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ABSTRACT

This action research study examined front-line supervision by corporals in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and asked, "What organizational practices can be implemented to support learning for front-line supervisors?" In response, the researcher used semi-structured interviews and a focus group session with eight front-line supervisors located in Prince Edward Island to gather qualitative data.

The data analysis resulted in the following recommendations: Ensure all front-line supervisors (corporal rank) create a developmental plan for themselves, improve the content of the supervisors' course, offer more acting opportunities to promotable constables, establish a mentoring and coaching program for front-line supervisors, establish standards and create a standards booklet for newly promoted corporals, and finally, hold full- or half-day monthly meetings for front-line supervisors.

All these recommendations are attainable and cost-effective to implement. The implementation of any or all of them should contribute to the learning of front-line corporal supervisors in the RCMP.

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I first wish to acknowledge and thank the participants who made this research possible simply through their participation. Without their participation, my research project would be like a sandwich without any filling. These participants were extremely cooperative and keen to discuss the issue. They readily shared their knowledge, experiences, and ideas with me. They gave me their valuable time, away from their regular duties, to meet with me while I conducted a 2- to 3-hour interview with each participant and a further 3-hour session with the focus group.

Thank you as well goes to Chief Superintendent Tom Bennett, my sponsor; Dr. Brigitte Harris, my faculty advisor; and Sue McManus, my editor; you all exhibited tons of patience with my drafts. Thank you to my friends and colleagues who took time to discuss this research project with me. A special thank you goes to my peer partner, Gary Lima, who inspired and encouraged me all the way through this journey. I appreciated everyone's thoughts, flexibility, and direction. Thank you to my co-learners in the MALT program. Thank you to everyone at Royal Roads. Thank you to MALT. Finally, a big thank you goes to my parents, my heroes, who taught me many valuable lessons, but perseverance was number one for this project.

My leadership journey continues.

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CHAPTER 1—FOCUS AND FRAMING

Introduction

Enabling our members to conduct investigations of a consistently high quality should be of paramount concern for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) because investigations are our raison d'être. However, this quality of investigation cannot happen overnight. All members simply cannot learn all the techniques of conducting and solving simple to complex investigations by themselves or acquire the skills necessary to advance to the next level of development without constant exposure to quality supervision. The corollary would equate to sending a child to school every day for years without having a teacher for the classroom.

The Conference Board of Canada report, *Repositioning for the Future: Case Study of the RCMP Change Experience 1989-2000* (Gibson, 2000), claims that "in survey after survey, employees report that they look to their immediate supervisors as their primary source of information, that that is the message they trust" (p. 33). It is the front-line supervisors (corporals) who have daily and constant interaction with the members (constables), and it is these corporals whom the members turn to for advice and guidance. It is the front-line supervisors who are the crucial link for maintaining and establishing the quality of investigations and the future development of the RCMP's members.

From 1999 to 2003, I was the Officer in Charge of Atlantic Region Audit. Over the span of these 4 years, my unit conducted several reviews of the quality of investigations, and consequently I know first-hand that, during this period, the quality of investigations conducted by the constable level in the Atlantic Region required improvement. The reviews also indicated

that, for the specific files that were not satisfactorily investigated, supervision was the missing component (Royal Canadian Mounted Police [RCMP], 2001, 2002).

The RCMP is presently in the midst of reviewing and renewing all its provincial contracts that are due in the year 2012. The RCMP provincial policing agreements (provincial contracts) are renewable every 20 years. The Force has approximately 750 detachments across Canada. By this study focusing on improving front-line supervision, the quality of investigations should improve. This commitment and accountability will demonstrate to the RCMP's clients across Canada its dedication to being "an organization of excellence" (RCMP, 2003c, p. 10). This commitment hopefully will reaffirm with the RCMP's partners that it is indeed an organization of excellence, and this reaffirmation may assist the Force indirectly in renewing its provincial contracts.

In the summer of 2004, I became the Human Resources Officer for the Atlantic Region. One of the major portfolios of the Human Resources Officer is Learning and Development. There are approximately 2,500 regular members posted in the Atlantic Region. I am responsible for providing the necessary and essential training to our members at the appropriate times during their career. In my research study, I want to assure myself that our members are receiving instruction and guidance in a timely fashion while they conduct their investigations and thus deliver the best service to all communities in Atlantic Canada.

Supervisory training and skills development for the front-line supervisors will be foremost, as I believe this is the most important and crucial area in which to concentrate to improve the quality of investigations, develop our young members, and maintain the confidence of our clients in the years to come. By my concentrating on this area of front-line supervision in my research, our members should be better prepared to handle complex investigations as they

gain experience and build on their basic skills. They should be ready to take on further responsibilities and become future supervisors and managers in our organization.

Therefore, this research asks: "What organizational practices can be implemented to support learning for front-line supervisors?" The sub-questions are, "What core competencies are required by front-line supervisors to support their leadership learning?" and "What support is needed from the organization to incorporate these practices?"

The Opportunity

In my experience acquired while working in Atlantic Region Audit in 1999–2003, I saw first-hand the results of several reviews—for example, on Independent File Management, or IFM (RCMP, 2000) and on quality of investigations (RCMP, 2001). These studies were conducted in the Atlantic Region and concerned the quality of investigations and the lack of supervision and guidance pertaining to a sampling of investigative files.

Independent File Management was introduced in the RCMP in the late 1980s and early 1990s. IFM was noted as a risk management principle that permitted the constable on the road to make all the decisions on low-risk (break and enters, theft under, and wilful damage) investigations. The concept of IFM was to give more autonomy to RCMP supervisors and members and to create an environment allowing supervisors and members more time on the road than in the office performing administrative tasks. It was thought that experienced members with proven track records should require less supervision than those with less experience. IFM was the total investigation and handling of the investigative file from the beginning of an investigation to its conclusion by the member, without any guidance or supervision. It included statistical scoring of the investigation, all the steps taken in the matter, the preparation of court

briefs and search warrants, and the creation of any correspondence to internal or external agencies. There were basically no checks or balances in place at that time to monitor the quality of investigations as a result of implementing IFM.

A national policy was never developed for IFM, and eventually each supervisor and member interpreted IFM in a multitude of ways. Everyone was using IFM regardless of the number of years of service or investigative ability. As a consequence, a supervisor during this era probably never read many of the daily investigative reports. Further, there was no supervision by supervisors during this period. Supervisors conducted investigations just like constables and did not perform supervisory duties.

In 2000, Atlantic Region Audit conducted a review, *Atlantic Region ("L" Division) Audit Report—Independent File Management* (RCMP, 2000), on the Independent File Management process that was in place in the Atlantic region. A number of interviews were conducted with various members and supervisors practising IFM. These interviews raised concerns that the quality of investigations as a result of implementing IFM might be in jeopardy. As a result of this study, Atlantic Region Audit decided to undertake a review of the quality of investigations in the Atlantic Region.

In 2001, a review of the quality of investigations, *Atlantic Region ("L" Division) Audit Report—Quality of Investigations* (RCMP, 2001), was conducted, and one of the findings generated by the review was that "the quality of investigations, particularly low-risk files and statement taking, are currently at an unacceptable level in the Atlantic Region" (p. 9). One of the recommendations of this report noted that a strong emphasis by both members and supervisors must be placed on the quality of investigations, and that a year later a second review should be conducted on this same issue to determine whether or not the quality had improved.

A further review, titled *Atlantic Region ("L" Division) Audit Report—Quality of Investigations and Supervision* (RCMP, 2002), was completed by Atlantic Region Audit in 2002, and it determined that there had been further slippage in the quality of investigations since the first review completed in 2001.

Further, I know of 16 management reviews that were conducted at various detachments in the Atlantic Region during the calendar year of 2002. As a part of these reviews, the quality of investigations was verified using the same methodology and research tools as the two major reviews on quality of investigations (RCMP, 2001, 2002). The 16 management reviews were conducted at locations not included in the two previous major reviews, thus providing a larger sample of detachments in the studies. The same findings were determined concerning the poor quality of investigations in the management reviews as were determined in the major reviews.

All these studies and reviews demonstrate that the supervision by front-line supervisors may be the missing and essential link relating to the poor quality of investigations. The RCMP went through a 5-year period where supervision was non-existent. Subordinates during this period were not accustomed to having their files read or receiving any type of guidance or feedback on their investigations. The role model of what a supervisor was during the 5 years of IFM was not the role model that the RCMP now wishes portrayed. During the IFM era, the image of a supervisor was one of abdication of responsibility and one who conducted as many, if not more, investigations than their subordinates did. Supervisors rarely commented on the work of their subordinates or provided any type of guidance or suggestions.

This research gave me the opportunity to focus on the roles, responsibilities, and abilities of front-line supervisors and to identify gaps in the competencies of these members. The RCMP (2003a) defines competency as "an observable and measurable knowledge, skill, ability or

personal characteristic defined in terms of behaviours required by employees to achieve output/outcome needs of the organization of excellence" (p. 4). With these gaps identified, training strategies (coaching, courses, learning opportunities) can and will be created and implemented, and they in turn should lead to the improvement of the members' supervisory skills.

This issue of poor or no supervision is important to me, as I am now responsible for the management of all the Human Resources in the Atlantic Region. Learning and Development is an important unit within my branch. I recall vividly the timely and appropriate supervision and guidance I received when I was a young constable and which continued throughout most of my career. I strongly believe it was this solid, consistent guidance and supervision that has greatly contributed to my career. I was able to develop and build on the primary building blocks, and I mastered the skills necessary to handle complex investigations.

In my present role, I would like to assure myself that our members are receiving instruction and guidance in a timely fashion from their supervisors and thus deliver the best possible police service to all the communities in Atlantic Canada. The potential end result to be gained from quality supervision will be thorough investigations, highly skilled investigators, and excellent and consistent service delivery to our communities. Should the RCMP implement the recommendations from this research, the results will lead to enhanced skills and abilities of both supervisors and their subordinates. Their skills and abilities will be improved. They will be well prepared to handle further complex investigations as they gain experience and fortify their basic skills. They will also be ready to be the future supervisors and managers in our organization. This research will greatly assist our organization through the anticipated and predicted improvements to quality supervision down the line and should lead to quality investigations.

Significance of the Opportunity

There are two reasons for this opportunity being significant. First, how can we become or remain "an organization of excellence" (RCMP, 2003c, p. 10) without quality supervisors? Second, we owe it to our members to provide them with the best possible learning and developmental opportunities, and we also owe it to the communities at large that we serve across Canada to provide them with the best policing service possible.

The RCMP's *Directional Statement*, which was for the 2004-2005 year, states that "our goal is operational excellence. Our credibility, our resources and the trust that the Canadian public place in us, increasingly depend on our success in this endeavour" (RCMP, 2004, para. 11). Our quality of service to our clients is at stake, and the front-line supervisors are the key to improving this situation. They are crucial in making a difference to the improvement of the quality of investigations and to the development of the supervisors' subordinates, and thus contributing positively to the betterment of the organization.

As an organization of excellence, we must address the competency gaps of our immediate front-line supervisors, who will then be accountable and responsible for the quality of investigations. To continue down the same path without addressing this issue would be irresponsible. As an organization, we have a commitment and responsibility to our members to provide them with opportunities to improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities. This improvement in turn should assist us in fortifying the trust of the communities through the quality service we deliver and also in ensuring the future of the organization.

> One of the primary police functions is to conduct investigations and ascertain who, what, where, when, why and how of an incident. In essence, this core function is a barometer which reflects how well the organization is doing, and [is] often regarded by our clients as how well we perform our job. (RCMP, 2002, p. 4)

This core function (who, what, where, when, why, and how) is attained by using and mastering the basic core competencies. These core competencies are essential in being successful in our investigations. The quality of investigations and supervision affects all the personnel of the organization, at all levels. The poor supervision and thus the poor quality of investigations could inhibit the development of basic investigator skills, which could eventually translate in our organization as an inability to investigate major (homicides, arsons) files.

Poor supervision leading to the poor quality of investigations could project an unprofessional impression of the work of the RCMP. For example, when complaints received by the police concerning minor offences (e.g., a broken window) are not given sufficient attention by the police, the offenders committing these minor offences could interpret that their actions are "acceptable behaviour." In both the offender and the public's mind, the police failed to act. We have to shore up our basic quality of investigations in order to maintain the public's confidence in the RCMP. By improving the quality of investigations through improving our quality of supervisors, we will see our overall professionalism grow.

As with everything, we should always start at the beginning, and it is here we find our basic building blocks: our investigative ability. Most of our positions in the RCMP are built upon our basic investigative skills and knowledge of law enforcement. These can be compared to the ABCs of policing. One can almost compare our basic police skills to the grounding we receive early in our school years. When we receive a solid grounding in reading, writing, and arithmetic, we have the foundation to move on through grade school and eventually on to graduate school. Similarly, in the police universe the basic investigative skills provide the keys to several doors of advancement. At least 5 years of solid operational police experience is a prerequisite for most regular member positions in our Force prior to being considered for a transfer to any specialized

section. Consequently, a solid operational background is a must and will serve members well as they advance in their career. With solid and basic investigative skills, our investigators can advance to handling more complex investigations and at the same time gain self-esteem from their successes. It is only through key quality supervision that we will improve our quality of investigations.

Without this research (the identification of core competencies of front-line supervisors and the practices and support required from the organization) and the implementation of some of the recommendations, the quality of investigations will probably not improve, the front-line supervisors will not develop, and in turn they will be unable to develop their subordinates. Communities and courts may lose faith in us if we do poor investigations, and perhaps our contracts with the provinces for the year 2012 will not be renewed.

Systems Analysis of the Opportunity

For the past 15 years, our organization has experienced tremendous change. It has evolved from a command-and-control era to shared leadership. For the first time ever in the history of the RCMP, approximately 10 years ago members began to write promotional examinations rather than being promoted solely on seniority. The philosophy of Community Policing was introduced, which also helped take us from the traditional command-and-control era to an empowerment era. We have also become more reflective of the community in terms of representation and diverse perspectives where possible. Budgets were also greatly reduced, and over the past 10 years much classroom training was eliminated. With this reduction in budgets came fewer transfers, which in the past served as a form of quasi-training, with members learning from each other as they moved around the country.

The age of technology also arrived, and every day we needed to make more changes to keep up with these advancements. With the age of technology came a new medium for crime. High-technology equipment is increasingly available to counterfeiters and forgers for the production of high-quality travel documents and foreign currency. Encryption techniques, satellite communications, and digital telephones are some developments where we have had to direct some of our investigative skills to staying ahead of crime trends. Children are now being exploited and lured via the Internet. There are computer frauds and viruses we must contend with daily. With these technological advancements came the advancement of legal issues and then the advancement of police investigative techniques. The RCMP has to be ready for these types of investigations and cannot be stalled struggling at the basic building-block stage. Consequently, in these areas we must ensure that we have good quality supervision to get us there.

Due to globalization and technological advancements, partnerships around the world are crucial for all police services to help each other and work together. Credit-card fraud, the smuggling of aliens, and the drug trade make it essential for us to maintain and establish international connections with other international police agencies. Sophisticated organized crime groups do not even recognize country boundaries. They operate from all points of the world, which again makes it crucial for us to establish and maintain close cooperation and contact with domestic and foreign enforcement agencies.

Being a national police force, the RCMP is committed to assisting the Canadian government with peacekeeping efforts, international training, and police monitoring initiatives. Three of our five strategic priorities are organized crime, terrorism, and international policing. On September 30, 2002, the Speech from the Throne reinforced the relevance of the RCMP's strategic priorities (Government of Canada, 2002). Organized crime groups pose a threat

nationally and internationally to public safety and security everywhere. The threat of terrorism in society is continually changing and always presenting an intelligence challenge to governments, military, and police services around the world. These terrorist groups are highly sophisticated and are difficult to recognize and impede. Technology is allowing terrorists to operate world-wide. Our law enforcement agencies have to be as sophisticated and knowledgeable as these terrorists groups to be able to keep up with them or outsmart them. Consequently, our organization has to be ready with highly skilled investigators being developed at the grassroots level and progressing naturally from the basic entrenched skills to more advanced techniques. This necessity for highly skilled investigators is another reason for strengthening the quality of supervision and quality of investigations.

Organizational Context

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) is Canada's national police service and has been in existence for over 130 years. It now falls under the newly created Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. The RCMP is unique since it is a national, federal, provincial, and municipal policing body. Its mandate is as follows:

> The mandate of the RCMP is multi-faceted. It is to prevent and investigate crime, maintain order, enforce laws on matters as diverse as health and the protection of government revenues, to contribute to national security, ensure the safety of state officials, visiting dignitaries and foreign missions and provide vital operational support services to other police and law enforcement agencies. (RCMP, 1998, p. 1)

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police has five business lines—Federal Policing Services, Contract Policing Services, National Policing Services, Internal Services, and Peacekeeping Services—that contribute to the overall objective of having "safe homes, safe communities" (RCMP, 2003d, p. 2). It is a diverse police workforce comprising approximately 22,000 regular members and civilian and public service employees. In 1996, the RCMP implemented a regional

management model. Four regions were created—Pacific, North-West, Central, and Atlantic—and they are under the direction of deputy commissioners. This model was implemented to move the deputy commissioners to the four regions instead of locating them in Ottawa, with the aim of ensuring greater involvement in decision making, especially in matters related to front-line policing.

Across Canada, there are approximately 750 detachments that provide daily operational policing service to a number of communities, under contract to eight provinces, three territories, more than 200 municipalities, 65 Aboriginal communities, and three international airports, plus numerous smaller airports. Additionally, as part of our federal mandate we target organized crime, terrorism, specific crimes relating to the illicit drug trade, economic crime such as counterfeiting and credit-card fraud, and offences that threaten the integrity of our borders. In addition to protecting Canada and our communities, we protect key people, including the Prime Minister and foreign dignitaries, and provide the Government of Canada with a full range of physical and computer-based security services (RCMP, 2003b, p. 3).

The first front-line supervision at detachments is at the rank of corporal, and corporals are the first line of supervision for constables. In other words, a constable usually reports to a corporal. There are other corporals in the Force who perform other duties—for example, in media relations, drug sections, and commercial crime sections, and at the RCMP Training Academy. These corporals possess special skills to have gained entry into these specialized units, and they would not concurrently supervise members on the front line. They have usually been selected for these specialized duties because of the standard of their work and their excellent work ethics. This research was not directed at the specialist corporals but at corporals at the immediate front-line level in general-duty detachments.

Project Sponsor

I selected Chief Superintendent Tom Bennett, who is the Criminal Operations officer for Nova Scotia, as my sponsor for this major research project. Each division (province) in the RCMP has a Criminal Operations officer, and consequently in the Atlantic Region there are four of these officers. These four Criminal Operations officers meet every 3 months and conduct weekly teleconferences to discuss similar operational concerns and issues. The quality of supervision and investigations is a regularly discussed topic. Consequently, the knowledge of this research and recommendations by Chief Superintendent Bennett, as my sponsor, may assist in facilitating and implementing some or all recommendations throughout the Atlantic region.

CHAPTER 2—LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Quality investigations are the RCMP's raison d'être, and it is the organization's front-line supervisors who are the crucial link in establishing and maintaining the quality of investigations and the future development of its members. In this study a number of front-line supervisors were engaged in action research and interviewed in hopes that solutions could be found and recommendations implemented that would improve the supervisors' knowledge, skills, and abilities. This chapter contains the literature review pertaining to supervision and also several sub-topics that are closely associated with quality supervision.

The first portion of this literature review defines supervision, outlines what supervisors do, and discusses the consequences of poor or no police supervision, before ending with the problems of recent supervision. The second segment of this literature review deals with definitions of leadership and good leadership practices. This section links leadership and supervision before moving on to discuss learning organizations.

The third section, training and learning, explains the importance of training in today's organizations and businesses and then flows into a study by McManus (1995) who has identified 12 knowledge, skills, and abilities that he considers are essential for supervisors. The section is completed with a short overview of androgogy (adult learning principles) and, most importantly, the necessity of having an evaluation phase for all training and programs. The fourth and final segment talks about organizational practices that have been successfully employed in other organizations. These practices could be useful to the RCMP's members and its organization.

Some of these organizational practices should be used further in the RCMP, especially at the front-line supervisory level, in hopes that they enhance the supervisors' knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Supervision

What is a supervisor? "Successful supervisors realize that employees are an organization's most important asset—their skills and abilities, their performance on the job and their productivity determine the company's growth and bottom line" (Hollingworth, 2000, p. 1-1). Therefore, supervisors should ensure they devote their time to developing each employee to the best of his or her ability. Employees' growth, development, and performance can determine the company or organization's life span. Hollingworth (2000) defines supervision as an "ability to make things happen by challenging others and obtaining their commitment to meet work group objectives" (p. 1-1).

McManus' (1995) definition of supervisor is apparent in his description of what supervisors are expected to do. He suggests that the key responsibilities of a supervisor are planning, implementing, motivating employees, evaluating training needs, multiplying productivity of employees, inspiring people to act, completing performance appraisals and giving verbal feedback, and being innovative (p. 22). Similarly, Alfred Kadushin (1992) groups what supervisors do into three aspects: administrative (promotion of good work standards), educational (development of each individual worker), and supportive (maintenance of harmonious working relationships). Although Kadushin's discussion of supervision was in the field of social work, his three-aspect model applies to the current role of immediate front-line supervisors in the RCMP.

In addition to Kadushin's (1992) three aspects of supervision, supervision in a police service has associated legal ramifications. Consideration must be given to this legal aspect when reflecting on the quality of supervision and the necessity to improve and to maintain a high standard of quality investigations. With supervision comes significant responsibility as supervisors provide guidance and direction to their subordinates' criminal investigations. "The complex nature of the police occupation and the dynamic changes that move through our society frequently make the job of policing extremely difficult and perhaps prone to civil litigation" (Ross, 2000, p. 169). The trend of suing police departments and specific managers and supervisors within the organization is not unique to the United States. For example, I have personal knowledge that a civil suit was lodged against the RCMP, in the late 1990s, by the family of a deceased member as a result of a diving fatality in the Atlantic region. The civil suit pertained to the accountability of supervision and training issues.

Across Canada there have been widely publicized flawed investigations by various law enforcement agencies. These investigations include the Guy Paul Morin, Thomas Sophonow, Donald Marshall, Jr., and David Milgaard cases, and as a result of these wrongful convictions, millions of dollars have been awarded to the wrongfully accused as compensation. "Three of the cases also led to commissions of inquiry. The inquiries consistently revealed major systemic problems, including questionable conduct by prosecutors and defence counsel, failure to disclose information, and flawed investigation by law enforcement agencies" (*Achieving Investigative Excellence*, 2004, p. 11).

Although the research does not specify which case or cases contained flawed investigation, there was definitely at least one flawed investigation. The next logical question to

be asked should be, What was the level of the supervisory involvement in the case? Again, the art of supervision comes to the forefront.

This discussion paper (*Achieving Investigative Excellence*, 2004) explains new approaches that can help address the problems facing criminal investigation and suggests that "investigation standards improve with better supervision and more strategic approaches to crime, such as hiring and working with people from the community" (p. 11). In his research, Ross (2000) advises that "training of police personnel is a critical managerial responsibility and is no longer observed as a luxury" (p. 170).

Both the supervisor and the supervisee have a responsibility to their community and organization. The supervisor has a responsibility to provide the best service, and the supervisee has a responsibility for his or her interaction with clients. Consequently, both can be held accountable for the quality of service they provide.

McNamara's (1999c) definition of supervision outlines the extensive range of duties of a supervisor and consequently indicates what supervisors can be held accountable for:

> Supervision often includes conducting basic management skill (decision making, problem solving, planning, delegation and meeting management), organizing teams, noticing the need for and designing new job roles in the group, hiring new employees, training new employees, employee performance management (setting goals, observing and giving feedback, addressing performance issues, firing employees, etc.) and ensuring conformance to personnel policies and other internal regulations. (para. 1)

Police work has become highly sophisticated. The detection and use of DNA samples as evidence has evolved markedly during the past 10 years; as a result, evidence collection at crime scenes has also evolved to ensure proper care is taken when seizing samples. A supervisor reviewing police investigations now has to be knowledgeable and up to date in crime-scene handling techniques and has to be aware of all the changes to the Criminal Code of Canada, especially those pertaining to search warrants and arrests.

Several authors discuss the direct results of lack of adequate supervision in their respective services. For example, Harrison (2000) claims his police department in Brighton, England took financial shortcuts and eliminated many of the supervisory sergeant ranks. They permitted acting sergeants (constables) to perform the supervisory duties. As a result of the experience in Brighton, Harrison advises that if police organizations do not properly supervise their young constables, the organizations will pay a high price in the end in terms of corruption and poor development of police skills. Harrison's statements are similar to the findings identified in a Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) study in 2000. The LAPD permitted acting sergeants (constables) to perform the supervisory duties. Harrison (2000) describes this situation as "let's have the illusion of supervision, without the cost and without the substance" (p. 13). In the report *Board of Inquiry into the Rampart Area Corruption Incident* (Los Angeles Police Department, 2000), Chief Bernard Parks stated: "Our failure to carefully review reports, our failure to examine events closely to identify patterns, our failure to provide effective oversight and auditing created the opportunity for this cancer to grow" (p. i). The inquiry pointed out two areas of concern: (1) the rapid recruiting procedures implemented by the LAPD during the past 10-15 years, and (2) the lack of or weakness of first-line supervisors.

Although the LAPD did not have an Independent File Management (IFM) program—i.e., a program used by the RCMP in the late 1990s where constables were empowered to conduct their investigations from beginning to end without a supervisor reviewing any part of the investigation—operating at the time of its inquiry, the changes that both the LAPD and the RCMP experienced in the preceding 15 years have some similarities. At the time of this inquiry, the LAPD had used civilian members as front-line supervisors rather than regular sworn police

officers. The civilian members did not have any police experience, and it was therefore difficult, if not impossible, for them to provide guidance and direction on criminal matters.

In addition, although a civilian supervisor was cheaper than a trained police officer, in the end it unfortunately proved to be a costly adventure for the LADP. The civilians knew the process to be followed but were unfamiliar with the content. Again, this situation can be compared to the RCMP situation where new corporals are being promoted, having little experience, and perhaps also missing out again because of the lack of timely and essential training for the newly promoted supervisor. Sometimes, these newly promoted members wait 3 years before being offered the basic supervisors' course.

The Brighton PD (Harrison, 2000) and the LAPD conclusions (Los Angeles Police Department, 2000) have disturbing implications for the RCMP. Additionally, the results of two reviews conducted by Atlantic Region Audit (RCMP, 2001, 2002) reveal a poor standard of both investigative work and supervision, which should serve as warning signs to the organization. Given the consequences of cost cutting elsewhere, the lack of supervision must be addressed immediately. That is the aim of this study.

In the two studies conducted by Atlantic Region Audit (RCMP, 2001, 2002), lack of supervision was noted as a finding on samplings of investigative files in both reviews. There was a "lack or comments provided by the supervisors and very little direction noted on the files from the supervisor" (RCMP, 2002, p. 12). These findings support the research of McManus (1995) in terms of a supervisor not fulfilling his or her key responsibilities. This lack of direction from supervisors demonstrates that the supervisors at the time of the study were not fulfilling their key responsibilities. The question that now begs an answer is "Why?" and my research aimed to discover the answer.

Leadership

It is important to review leadership literature in this research project, as leadership can impact development in organizations. Yukl (2002) states that "most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over the other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization" (p. 2). John Maxwell (1995), however, is more specific and discusses the three elements he considers necessary to be a good leader: creating a great environment, nurturing people, and equipping them (p. 107). By nurturing, Maxwell means caring, helping, and addressing the needs of the individual. Equipping refers to training for work, focusing on the task, teaching, and being skills oriented. However, the three elements alone will not make a good leader. An individual has to be both willing and motivated to use these skills and abilities to actually influence another person.

Kouzes and Posner (2002) say it is not enough to know the definition of a leader and what leaders do; one should also be familiar with what good leaders practise. They summarize that good leaders have a five-part practice: modelling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart. Modelling the way is simply modelling the behaviour that a leader expects from everyone, and from that behaviour should come respect. Leaders should model the behaviour they expect from others. Inspiring a vision is not only to have a vision, but as a leader also to ignite this vision in others so that the vision spreads and turns into a reality. Leaders are people who take calculated risks by seeking opportunities to innovate, grow, and improve. Leaders constantly enable others to act, and by doing so, they foster team building and collaboration and build trust. Encouraging the heart is

when a good leader continually shows appreciation for people's contribution and hard work and celebrates success when possible (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 22).

Stogdill (1948) did much research work concerning traits associated with good leaders and named some of the traits as tolerance of stress, decisiveness, adaptability, alertness to social systems, ambitiousness, assertiveness, cooperativeness, dependability, energetic approach, persistence, self-confidence, and willingness to assume more responsibilities. It is interesting to note that these traits are what one would also want from a good supervisor.

Equally important is Bender's (2002) explanation of "leaders from without" (p. 18) and "leaders from within" (p. 19). Bender explains the leader from without is the person who is driven by inner and outer forces. Inner may be not having enough power, respect, or money, and outer may be the pressure from demanding clients. On the other hand, the leader from within is moved by an inner direction and purpose. There is "a desire to help, foster, and grow" (p. 19). Bender cautions us that there are both these types of leaders in all of us, and the important issue is that we have to decide which one to follow.

Mahoney (2000) argues that leadership should be present at all levels in an organization and that the senior executive of an organization has a significant role to play in executing this concept. Without this leadership at all levels, it is not a learning organization. A learning organization is defined in the next section. "Directors and senior managers who find reasons for not valuing their staff and colleagues and not creating a learning environment are in my view going the way of the dinosaur, to extinction" (Mahoney, 2000, p. 241). Similarly to Mahoney (2000), Lloyd (1994) states that "leadership is thus seen as everyone being committed to this vision and its implementation and execution" (p. 19). In addition, "more recently, research and thinking has [*sic*] focused less on the characteristics and behaviour of individuals in leadership

positions, and more on leadership that is dispersed or distributed across teams and organizations—where everyone potentially is a leader" (Bennett, 2004, p. 4). Dobby, Anscombe, and Tuffin (2004) advise that "the ultimate focus for leadership is to bring about improved performance and since this performance has to be delivered through subordinates, leadership has to achieve its success through influencing subordinates to perform 'better'" (p. 2).

Kouzes and Posner (2002) and Maxwell (1995) use practices to define leadership, and the three practices described by Maxwell are similar to three of five practices named by Kouzes and Posner (2002). Yukl (2002) names influence on an individual as a key to leadership, and Stogdill (1948) explained leadership through identifying 12 traits. Lloyd (1994) and Dobby et al. (2004) advise that leadership is seen as accomplishment of tasks. I look at leadership in terms of tasks or accomplishments, but I am also cautious of judging one's leadership by the number of accomplished tasks, especially in a police organization, which is a paramilitary organization. Sometimes, through rank (power, subliminal or covert) accomplishments can be made, but has there really been a display of leadership? These accomplishments may not necessarily be the result of leadership but more the result of command and power from one's rank.

Stogdill (1974) claimed, "A person does not become a leader by virtue of the possession of some combination of traits ... the pattern of personal characteristics of the leader must bear some relevant relationship to the characteristics, activities and goals of the followers" (p. 55). In other words, a person may possess many or all the traits that researchers agree characterize a leader, but unless these traits are linked to activities or goals, that person is not necessarily a leader.

As noted earlier in this literature review, Hollingworth (2000) defines a supervisor as a person who has "an ability to make things happen by challenging others and obtaining their

commitment to meet work group objectives" (p. 1-1). Similarly, Yukl's (2002) definition of leadership is a "process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over the other people to guide, structure and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization" (p. 2). The definitions of supervision and leadership are very similar. Consequently, I believe that good supervisors are essentially leaders.

As well as being leaders, supervisors fulfill a management role. There are both differences and similarities between leadership and management. Nobody claims that they are equivalent, although researchers do claim there is a point of overlap, but where is the point of disagreement? Yukl (2002) claims:

> Managers are concerned about how things get done, and then they try to get people to perform better. Leaders are concerned about what things mean to people and then try to get people to agree about the most important things to be right and leaders are people who do the right things. (p. 5)

In contrast, Bennis and Goldsmith (2003) draw a more distinct line between the two, as they state there is a profound difference between management and leadership. They claim that to manage means to bring about change and accomplishment, but to lead is to guide and direct. Bennis and Goldsmith also claim that every organization needs both roles of manager and leader (p. 8). It could be argued that Bennis and Goldsmith's definition of management lacks a humanitarian approach and can be seen in terms of control, while their definition of leadership can be seen more as a coaching and relationship-building experience. It is possible to be a manager and not a leader, and the reverse is true as well.

There has been much research concerning the differences between management and leadership, and there will be more research in years to come on this issue; however, I believe that both supervisors and managers require leadership skills to accomplish their goals. In this study, the front-line supervisors manage a small team in that they require order and consistency for

certain tasks from their subordinates; at other times, the supervisors must demonstrate their leadership abilities by giving meaningful direction and inspiring and motivating others to perform.

The Learning Organization

Yukl (2002) states that leaders are needed in all organizations and at every level so that they will increase learning in the organization by encouraging innovation, experimentation, reflection, diffusion of knowledge, information sharing, and improvement of mental models (p. 179). Commissioner Zaccardelli (2003) advises that "we [the RCMP] define ourselves as a continuous learning organization" (p. 4). Pedler (1995) summarizes a learning organization as one "that facilitates learning for all its members and continually transforms itself" (p. 21). What makes an organization a learning organization is both the continuous learning and development of all its members and the resulting development of the organization. My research project supports the RCMP as a learning organization because it addresses both supervisors and supervisees' learning and organizational development promoting excellence.

Hitt (1995) states: "Sights must be raised to the level of excellence, because otherwise an organization will not even be allowed on the playing field" (p. 17). It is important not only to know and learn the theory, but also to fully embrace the knowledge and practise it continually. Organizations are always changing because environments are changing constantly, and with such change must come the flexibility of employees to adapt to new situations and tasks and to continually learn. The job one occupies today may not be the same one in 5 years' time. A continually changing environment supports the necessity to be a learning organization. The RCMP will be able to keep up with changes by continuing to be a learning organization and will be ready for future ongoing changes and challenges.

The RCMP's (2003b) organizational vision is "Safe homes, Safe communities" (p. 3), and this vision can be achieved through regular investigations of solid quality. To reach that destination, supervisors must be ready to actively supervise (give feedback, guidance, direction, and suggestions) and hold members accountable for their investigations. "To reach such level of performance, links between the environment, the vision of the organization, its leadership and learning processes are essential" (Appelbaum, St. Pierre, & Glavas, 1998, p. 300).

To me a learning organization is one that stays ahead of the curve. One is always monitoring the environment and horizon to see what is coming down the track. Once a decision (vision) is made to go in a certain direction, people have to be focused in that direction and given some direction and training to fulfill the vision. The end result of this change is greater effectiveness and survival of the organization. Learning must occur at all levels in the organization. Many researchers (Appelbaum et al., 1998; Hitt, 1995; Pedler, 1995; Yukl, 2002) are in accord with the concept of a learning organization. "In a turbulent and hostile environment, survival will depend on a rapid response to threats and opportunities" (Yukl, 2002, p. 174).

The concept of being a learning organization is extremely important to the RCMP, because it is not the only police service in Canada. Police services are no different than other services available to communities. Communities want the most efficient and effective service possible, and to remain the service operating in most communities across Canada, the RCMP has to be effective and efficient. Being a learning organization will assist the RCMP with this endeavour. Improving the quality of supervision throughout the organization should result in more efficiencies and effectiveness.

We have to start at the beginning, as with everything else, and the beginning of providing supervisors with skills and abilities to perform their duties will create a strong foundation to continue throughout the organization. From the front-line supervisors, the next level will follow automatically if the vision is there and if it is embraced and nurtured. Senge (1990) wrote: "Organizations learn only through individuals who learn. Individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning. But without it no organizational learning occurs" (p. 139).

Training and Learning

What do we mean by training? "Training involves an expert working with learners to transfer to them certain areas of knowledge or skills to improve their current jobs" (McNamara, 1999b, para. 1). Sergeant Della (2004) of the Annapolis, Maryland, US Police Department states that "training is the most significant human resource function undertaken by law enforcement agencies" (p. 1). Similarly, Wills (1994) advises that "companies that are successful take the training of their people very seriously" (p. 4). However, Wills also advises that good training alone may not necessarily equate to or guarantee results. He suggests that training accounts for approximately 10% of a person's development and the other 90% comes from experience. Similarly, Plunkett (1994) advises that "the best way to teach a skill is to involve the learner as quickly as possible in doing or performing the skill" (p. 411). I also believe that experience plays a significant part in shaping the development of our supervisors, especially when they work closely with good role models.

Della (2004) explains that most police training focuses on cognitive (factual) outcomes and not affective (emotional) outcomes, and if one concentrates on the affective outcomes, attitudes, motivation to learn, and customer service orientation, an employee's attitude toward

the organization and its mission may become more positive. "Training is only effective if the knowledge, skills and behaviours are transferred to practice. Management must not only support training but verify that officers have opportunities to apply the learning" (Della, 2004, p. 7).

McManus' (1995) study helped supervisors "identify the knowledge, skills and abilities [KSAs] they will require for the twenty-first century" (p. 20). McManus states that 12 KSAs are necessary in helping the employee to make significant organizational contribution; the KSAs should also help the supervisor to remain employable. The 12 KSAs are inspiring change, facilitating teams, training, process planning and improvement, satisfying customers, problem solving in groups, promoting quality and participation, designing involvement systems, using statistics, involving unions, assessing quality systems, and auditing. As the supervisors' KSAs are determined, a gap analysis for these is also being determined. This is turn provides each supervisor with a road map to follow. Once the gaps are identified, a 3-year learning plan is prepared and is complete with due dates for attaining certain goals (McManus, 1995, p. 22). This identification and gap analysis of the 12 KSAs for supervisors by McManus seems like an excellent starting place for the RCMP's front-line supervisors, prior to embarking on a long-term plan of development.

On the other hand, McNamara (1999c) advises one should not get too caught up in what exact competencies are needed by supervisors. To be an effective supervisor there are a wide range of competencies that supervisors have to be knowledgeable about and on which they are able to provide guidance and development to their subordinates. Since the workplace is constantly changing, so too may the competencies for supervisors. Some organizations and companies emphasize self-managed teams or diversity management. Consequently, this type of

training may be necessary for a supervisor employed in a company having a strong emphasis in these categories (McNamara, 1999a).

Kur and Bunning (2002) report that learning organizations should have a plan to nurture their future leaders, and they claim the plan can be addressed through their Three Track Leadership (TTL) model, which serves as a way to foster permanent leadership development in an organization. The TTL model integrates three aspects of leadership development. Track one is the understanding of the total organization, which includes units and functions, while track two is the understanding and performing of leadership as a set of skills. The third track is the understanding and continuous development of oneself. The TTL model appears to be an excellent and exciting approach for our organization to consider adopting for the long term.

The *Atlantic Region ("L" Division) Audit Report—Quality of Investigations and Supervision* (RCMP, 2002) notes that "supervisory training was next to non-existent" (p. 12). As a result of this review and also recognition by senior management that training in this area was desperately lacking, Deputy Commissioner Harper Boucher of the Atlantic Region was instrumental in sponsoring a pilot course titled "An Introduction to Management and Supervision," and the intended audience was "newly appointed or acting employees who supervise one or more people while running an office" (J. G. H. Boucher, personal communication, August 1, 2003).

How do you teach police officers? Many researchers (Birzer, 2003; Brown & Posner, 2001; Della, 2004) advocate that to teach police officers, androgogy is the preferred model, as police officers are adults. "Androgogy offers principles that can be applied specifically to the teaching of adults" (Cheetham & Chivers, 2001, p. 254). Knowles (1980) is the writer most often associated with the term androgogy. The principles behind androgogy can be summarized as

follows: Mature adults learn best through experiential methods, are more self-directed, are aware of their own specific needs, have a need to apply their newly acquired skills to immediate situations, see themselves as partners with teachers, and finally, their own experiences serve as a resource (Knowles, 1980, p. 43).

"By accentuating the importance of learning and establishing a context where employees want to and are able to learn, leaders will be more capable of strengthening their organizations for future challenges and increasing competitive and innovative abilities" (Brown & Posner, 2001, p. 279). I believe that the RCMP's front-line supervisors want to learn and are anxious for these opportunities to happen, and the results of any new learning will automatically strengthen the organization for the future. "Organizations must not only provide training, but also ensure that it is the 'right' training for the 'right' people at the 'right' time" (Reeve, 1994, p. 32). The RCMP should not select anyone to attend a supervisors' course 3 after he or she has been in a supervisory position for 3 years. It has to do a better job of providing learning opportunities to its front-line supervisors. Good planning and the use of several effective developmental tools are significant factors in the development of front-line supervisors.

Organizational Practices

So how can the RCMP improve the skills of its front-line supervisors? The literature supports personal and team development (Bennett, 2004; Birzer, 2003) to develop the leaders of tomorrow. Practices such as coaching, mentoring, learning contracts, and performance agreements are mentioned in this literature review for two reasons: (1) They are practices that have been deemed by researchers as being effective developmental tools, and (2) I believe they can be key cornerstones for developing front-line supervisors; I include them in my

recommendations later in this report. These practices are viewed as key strategies for training and developing employees.

In an era when organizations are looking for independence, flexibility, creativity, and entrepreneurship, the traditional "talk and chalk" learning may not always be the best learning methodology (Sanderlands, 1997, p. 111). Lessons can be learned from furniture chain store IKEA, which encourages its managers to use their brains and their heart. The company trains its executives in "cultural weeks," which are simply a series of one-week sessions in which they learn about the organizational culture. IKEA uses education and role models to instill its required values (Sanderlands, 1997, p. 111). Decentralization, communication, and learning are key features of IKEA's success. "Learning of course, enables individual employees to develop and enhances job satisfaction" (Sanderlands, 1997, p. 112). Exchanges and secondments with other police services or with companies as junior managers would be similar to IKEA's cultural weeks, and again the RCMP could benefit significantly by sending a young front-line supervisor to another agency for development.

Equally important as an organizational developmental tool is mentoring. Mentoring is usually offered by someone at a higher level, either inside or outside the organization. This person has the experience and knowledge of the organization and knows who's who, what's what, and how things are done within the organization (Gay, 1994, p. 4). Much is accomplished simply through building a relationship, and all is structured around the needs of the protégé. There is usually not a direct reporting relationship. Through conversations and meetings, the protégé learns from the mentor about the culture, mission, and vision of the organization.

The mentorship is a one-on-one relationship, and the matching of mentor and protégé is key for the mentorship to work. The protégé must feel comfortable enough with the mentor to

ask questions concerning the organization and its culture, and the mentor must be willing to assist and share his or her valuable knowledge with the protégé (Forret, 1996, pp. 27-29). The RCMP has an informal mentoring program, but the true idea of it and its benefits are not yet widespread or fully understood by all. Further, I believe senior managers should learn more about mentoring, and from there they could encourage others to implement it more throughout the organization.

A mentorship program has many advantages: for example, "the protégé learns the work culture of the organization faster, [with] increased commitment to the organization, low cost but high relevant learning and better cross functional knowledge" (Veale, 1996, p. 18). The organization gains from the mentor–protégé relationship, as the mentor gives and the protégé receives; the organization also benefits when the protégé benefits from the encouragement and role modelling. Employee satisfaction is probably enhanced and organizational learning is improved, and as more and more of the mentor–protégé dyads develop, the organization becomes well positioned in terms of its replacement planning. These benefits in turn can lead to a stronger, smoother internal transition in positions where there are openings (Veale, 1996).

Some pitfalls to watch for in the mentorship program are that protégés can be the focus of jealousy and gossip in the organization, they may develop unrealistic expectations about their potential, and they may not take responsibility for their own development.

"Leader-supported mentoring is a process which views mentoring as a necessary leadership process" (Scandura, Tejeda, Werther, & Lankau, 1996, p. 54). Mentoring may occur spontaneously in any organization, but leader-supported mentoring is simply mentorship acknowledged by the leaders in an organization, and numerous opportunities are provided to employees to enter a mentorship program. The organization hopes that by supporting,

encouraging, and creating an awareness of this mentorship, employee satisfaction will be enhanced, turnover will be reduced, and employees will have more of a voice in matters. Overall, the managers believe the organization will benefit greatly from leader-supported mentorship. The key to all mentorship relationships, whether informal or formal, is that they are voluntary, as this process cannot be forced on anyone (Scandura et al., 1996, p. 54). Kur and Bunning (2002) suggest that spontaneous programs work best because they are based on trust and personal chemistry. Yukl (2002) agrees with this idea. He also suggests that a formal mentoring program can be more successful if participation is voluntary (p. 202). The RCMP is embarking on a leader-supported mentorship program later in 2005, and my hope is that the organization implements the selection of a mentor, and even the idea of having a mentor, as a voluntary activity and not a compulsory one.

Another tool similar to mentoring is coaching. Coaching is an interaction between people with a specific goal to enhance performance, and it can be compared to athletic coaching. One of the main differences that distinguish it from mentoring is that mentoring is usually based on a one-on-one relationship only, usually with someone distant or higher up in the organization. Mentoring, however, can also use coaching techniques to assist the protégé with learning (Veale, 1996, p. 23).

"Since coaching usually involves goal setting and feedback, an environment is created which enhances continual and purposeful learning" (Veale, 1996, p. 22). An agreement can and should be in place for accomplishing and completing these tasks. "The expected results from coaching are more highly skilled people who perform better and have better working relationships" (Veale, 1996, p. 18). Sometimes, the results are seen immediately because the techniques are applied immediately. The downside of using coaching as a learning technique is

that if you do not have a good match, in terms of the style of coach, with the employees, the results can actually deteriorate performance and relationships. Sometimes employees fail to adapt well to being coached and they may view feedback as a type of punishment. This type of learner may have a preference for indirect feedback (Veale, 1996, p. 23). The RCMP uses coaching in some instances; however, it could expand the coaching into other areas. Coaching presently occurs in our organization in the cadet field training program. The coaching begins when cadets arrive from training in Regina to their first posting. They are paired with experienced constables who coach and guide them through their first 6 months. However, care should be taken to use coaches who have excellent coaching and interpersonal skills, and the purpose of having a coach should be well explained to each party.

Coaching and mentoring both involve a one-on-one relationship. Mentoring can last for a long period, and can cover both short- and long-term career advice to the protégé. Coaching, on the other hand, can be set up for attaining a specific goal and therefore can be of shorter duration than mentoring.

Performance Agreements and Learning Contracts

Much of the literature (e.g., Tonks & Flanagan, 1994) on performance agreements ties production and salary together and ties service users and clients and service providers into monetary contracts. Covey (1991) describes the performance agreement as "a clear, mutual understanding and commitment regarding expectations surrounding roles and goals" (p. 205). Learning agreements are a type of contract that also holds both parties named in the agreement accountable for attaining the objectives. Garavan and Sweeney (1994) define a learning contract as "a written agreement between a supervisor, his/her manager and a training detailing what is going to be learned; how the learning is going to be applied at the workplace; details of

evaluation and progress review" (p. 18). Further, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to assist learners in their learning. Goleman (2000) states that "to sustain an individual change takes significant coaching and practice within a learning plan that's relevant to a person's vision for their whole life" (p. 3). I see learning contracts as a positive approach to learning, with assistance and guidance being agreed on with one's supervisor, and a performance agreement as a road map and contract for performance, agreed on between a supervisor and a subordinate.

Drodge and Murphy (2002) advise that there must be a strong system in place to support learning plans. They state that

> It is common for organizations to spend considerable amounts of time and money developing learning plans that languish because of resource shortages, poor coordination, turf battles between competing groups, or the failure of the organization to provide individuals with time away from their regular duties to participate in developmental activities. (p. 15)

I believe there has to be commitment when embarking on new initiatives and putting evaluation plans in place, to ensure everyone is fulfilling his or her part.

Chapter Summary

In order to identify organizational practices that can be implemented to support learning and development of front-line supervisors at the corporal rank in the RCMP, I undertook a review of existing literature on relevant topics. Leadership and supervision theories were reviewed in this chapter, as well as theories about learning organizations and about training and learning. Finally, it was essential to conduct a review of the existing literature on organizational practices. The information gleaned from this review was integrated with the knowledge gathered from the research component of the project. This integration of information led to the creation of recommendations that should assist the RCMP in implementing specific practices to support the

learning and development of its front-line supervisors. The next chapter explains in detail the research methodology used in this research project.

CHAPTER 3—CONDUCT OF ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

Research Approach

Rationale for Action Research

The aim of this project is to gather information from the front-line supervisors in "L" Division for the purpose of learning what organizational practices, if any, can be implemented to support their learning and development. The desired outcome in this project is to identify organizational practices to support learning and development, and affordable recommendations and solutions to be implemented shortly after the study has concluded. Conducting research is an activity that takes place "in a specific time and place and is engaged in by a specifically located individual, with a specific background, in a specific situation, for a particular series of ends" (Said, 1981, p. 156).

Action research is the research approach for my major research project. Dick (2000) describes action research as cyclic, participative, qualitative, and reflective. It is cyclical because its steps tend to repeat in similar sequences. In action research, the participants in the study have a definite stake in and knowledge about what is being studied. Qualitative data collection is a type of data collection usually associated with action research. "Qualitative research methods were developed in the social sciences to enable researchers to study social and cultural phenomena" (Myers, 1997, para. 7). Reflectivity is a major component of the action research process, and it is a crucial step, as it is usually the product of this stage that gets put into action (Dick, 2000). Stringer (1999) explains action research routines in terms of being cyclical and containing three interconnected activities: "look, think and act" (p. 19). I equate the "reflectivity"

from Dick (2000) and the "think" from Stringer (1999) as being the same important components of action research.

Parsons and Servage (2004) note that action research "is viewed as a cyclical or spiral process that moves from reflection to action and back to reflection again" (p. 39). Kurt Lewin (1947) claimed that action research is action-oriented, to introduce change. Stringer (1999) advises that the modernized version of action research should include participation and should view the researcher as a "facilitator" who engages the participants in the research project. In this way, a "buy-in" is initiated right from the start of the research project, and consequently the facilitator and participants have ownership of and help with the creation of the solution. "Researchers increase their effectiveness when they immerse themselves in the richness of group life, talking with people about general events and activities, sharing a birthday cake, participating in formal or leisure activities, telling jokes and so on" (Stringer, 1999, p. 61).

A participatory action research approach in my major project fits with the RCMP organization. The participants in this research had direct input into the study, and their concerns and ideas were foremost. Parsons and Servage (2004) advise that the "[action] research approach helps stakeholders gain feelings of personal efficacy and community in workplaces" (p. 18). The RCMP welcomes this action research because of the participatory aspect and because the solutions come from the bottom up. In this way, they are the participants' solutions and not imposed by management from the top down. Consequently, there should be more buy-in from the participants because they are part of the solution. I was actively engaged as an interviewer and facilitator during this research study, and the participants were also fully engaged as they offered their insights on the research question. The participants are the experts in this study, as

their knowledge and experience are invaluable. Together we worked to find a solution. This collaborative approach is the heart of the action research process.

The cyclical and reflective nature of action research was suitable for this project. From the results of past studies on the quality of investigations and the quality of supervision, there appeared to be gaps in the level of supervision. From the interviews with front-line supervisors and the data analyzed, both I and the participants had a chance to reflect on what they believe has either hindered or helped them in their development. Further discussion then took place at the focus group to solidify their responses and clarify their ideas. Further action could be taken at a later time to review the quality of supervision, and again the process could be repeated to refine and constantly improve the quality of supervision.

The research question that I chose for my major research project resonated deeply with me, as I have witnessed first-hand the deterioration of basic investigative skills that are not being developed. Further, I have witnessed the acceptance of poor-quality work by front-line supervisors. With this observation comes my fear that the RCMP's reputation will be tarnished and diminished in future years if a remedy is not put in place in the near future. As a leader within this organization, I have a responsibility to seek solutions to this dilemma. Consequently, this major study using participatory action research as the methodology can significantly benefit the RCMP.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

I used a qualitative approach for gathering data and conducting the analysis in my research. Qualitative data were collected though face-to-face interviews and a focus group. I selected a qualitative research approach because it allowed me to become directly involved with participants, a "hands on" approach, during the research project. This direct involvement

provided a strong bond between me as the researcher and the participants. The direct involvement also provided me with the courage to continue and further strengthened my passion for the project. A positive side of using qualitative research is that the researcher is dealing with participants who have actual experience with the topic; the participants in this project have both the knowledge and the experience (Palys, 2003). I greatly enjoyed the human factor that was present during the research project as data emerged from the face-to-face interviews and the focus group.

I fully support this participatory style of research, as it allowed me to develop a strong rapport with the participants. Stringer (1999) explains qualitative research as "ways of knowing and understanding implicit in the experience of particular social groups" (p. 205). The individual interviews provided me the time to connect with each participant, and I had further connection with them throughout the project as I verified the transcripts of interviews, posed follow-up questions to several interviewees and to the focus group participants, and verified the transcript of the focus group session. Based on my previous duties as the Audit Officer in the Atlantic Region and then as the Criminal Operations Officer in the province of Prince Edward Island, I had a good understanding of what front-line supervisors experience during their work hours. I like this type of research, as it permitted me to immerse myself in the research and have direct involvement with the participants.

Project Participants

The project participants for this research project were the front-line corporal supervisors who volunteered to participate in this research and were stationed in Prince Edward Island at the time of the research. A letter was sent to all 10 front-line supervisors in Prince Edward Island

early in September 2004, briefly explaining my research project and requesting their participation in the study. I also enclosed a copy of the questions I would be asking the participants during the interviews. I knew all these potential participants as a result of my work with them over the previous 5 years in my capacity as, first, the Audit Officer for the Atlantic Region, and second, the Criminal Operations Officer for the province of Prince Edward Island. Consequently, I had already developed some trust and familiarity with these members.

My initial contact with these supervisors through my introductory letter demonstrated a fair and unbiased approach to soliciting some or all of the present supervisors to participate in my study. Shortly after sending out this letter, I received e-mails accepting the offer to participate in this research. Nine out of 10 responded yes to participating in the research, while the 10th supervisor did not reply to any of my correspondence.

Although nine supervisors volunteered for this project, only seven were interviewed owing to time constraints encountered by both the researcher and the participants. The participants ranged in service length from 1 month to 33 years in this rank. Participation in this project was voluntarily, and I fully explained to each participant my research project, my commitment to maintain confidentiality, and their ability to withdraw from the project at any time. The participants signed consent forms once they agreed to participate.

Once ethical approval was received from Royal Roads University, I began the interviews. I conducted six face-to-face interviews between October and November 2004. While beginning an analysis of the interview data, I discovered that all the participants were from two of three districts in Prince Edward Island. To make the sample all-inclusive, I interviewed a seventh participant via telephone. Neither of our schedules was compatible for a face-to-face interview to be held.

The success of this research project depended on the corporals' participation, because they are the people who could provide the information concerning the research question. They were able to tell me what training, formal or informal, and support they believed contributed to their effectiveness and efficiency as front-line supervisors.

My research team consisted of me as the major project researcher and my major project sponsor, Chief Superintendent Tom Bennett. Dr. Brigitte Harris was my faculty advisor. As well, the front-line supervisors who participated in this research were a vital part of the team.

Research Methods and Tools

Semi-Structured Interviews and a Focus Group

The methods used for gathering data for this research project were semi-structured interviews and a focus group. These methods allowed me to speak with the participants face to face. The interviews facilitated personal connection with the participants, while the focus group allowed the participants to come together as a group to collaborate and provide their individual thoughts and ideas. The focus group also served as a means of verifying the data that were already gathered during the face-to-face interviews and provided a means of gathering new information relating to the research question.

The focus group was held after the individual interviews, and the time in between the interviews and the focus group setting was deliberate in that it allowed participants more time to digest the conversation during the face-to-face interviews. Once the participants were back at the work site, their actual work experiences prompted some of them to come up with more ideas on the topic. I received confirmation that ideas concerning improving supervisory skills came to two

of the participants by way of personal conversation with these participants during the focus group.

I enjoy speaking with people, and I sought to create a relaxing environment where participants felt free to talk and explain their ideas and situations. This atmosphere assisted me as well, as I had the opportunity to listen carefully to what the participants were saying and could probe them on anything I needed explained in more detail.

In August 2004, I devised a semi-structured interview format and located three corporal supervisors in the Atlantic Region who consented to having interviews with me using the proposed questions. These participants were newly promoted corporals who occupied specialized and front-line corporal positions. The three interviews served as a pilot for my questions. I used mainly open-ended questions, because I wanted to know what the front-line supervisors believed about their opportunities for development and learning; by using open-ended questions, I would obtain more detail and depth on the subject (Palys, 2003, p. 160). Palys (2003) also suggests that open-ended questions "are clearly superior if the researcher is interested in hearing respondents' opinions in their own words" (p. 176). After piloting these questions with the three participants, I was satisfied that my questions were adequate and appropriate for this research project. Futrell and Willard (1994) state that "the wise researcher will thus emphasize prior planning and reflective self-monitoring during and after the interview" (p. 85). These questions are appended as Appendix A.

There are pros and cons associated with all research tools, and interviews are not unique. The advantages of using interviews are that the researcher has input into the questions being asked, can guide the depth of explanation, can ask for clarity, and can control any probing. The downside of interviews is that they are time consuming in terms of transcription and validation

and the time expended by participant and researcher (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1981). A second downside of interviewing is the cost associated with transcribing statements and transportation costs for either the participant or the researcher to meet for the interview.

I selected semi-structured, face-to-face interviews as a data collection tool, as I had a small sample size. Through this type of interview, I was able to ask specific questions relating to the research question and then had the opportunity to ask probing questions for further details and clarification. The most important phase in using the interview as a data collection method was the preparation phase. Care was taken to devise specific questions relating to the research question that were neutral and mainly open ended. Probes and prompts for each question were also developed. These probes helped elaborate on some of the participants' responses. Probes such as "How is that?" "In what ways?" and "Anything else?" (Maxfield & Babbie, 1998, p. 248) were used during the research project.

A semi-structured interview, asking the same set of questions to each participant, allowed for consistency in data collection. It also acted as a road map and ensured that all the questions were posed to each participant. The researcher refrained from making any personal comments during the interview, as this action could have been deemed as bias and could have influenced the participant. The researcher did not assume what was meant by the saying or phrase.

As stated earlier, two main data-gathering tools were used during my major research project: semi-structured face-to-face interviews and a focus group. A third minor data-gathering tool was used during this research project; my personal journal notes. My personal journal notes were made immediately after the interviews and the focus group. Interviews were first conducted individually with each participant, and then a focus group took place with the majority of the same participants, but only after all the interviews were summarized, validated, and themed. The

purpose of this focus group was to verify and gain further information relating to the research question. Further, the focus group allowed the participants to go to a greater depth in exploring the themes that emerged from the individual interviews. The themes from the interviews and the focus group were explored, verified, and analyzed, together with my personal journal notes. I searched for common themes from all three methods of gathering data.

Honest and open communication was exhibited by all participants during the focus group. The second part of the focus group allowed the group to examine the present processes and discuss what strategies for implementing any changes might be necessary. The focus group was facilitated by the researcher. The purpose of a focus group with the same participants was to look at the sharing of attitudes, perspectives, and viewpoints (Madriz, 2000). The focus group resulted in specific outcomes relating to strategies for improved learning and development.

Study Conduct

Face-to-face interviews were held with the first six available participants between October and November 2004. Six face-to-face interviews were a sufficient number to have interviewed, as I gleaned extensive data from the six participants and then had to analyze this information. I realized, however, that the six participants were from only two districts in Prince Edward Island. Prince Edward Island is divided into three policing districts. To ensure that there would not be anything unique or different pertaining to these two districts, I decided to include in this research project another participant from the third district. Due to time constraints and economics, I conducted this interview via telephone using the same questions. I physically relocated to Newfoundland after beginning this research project, and at that time I did not have any work requiring me to return to Prince Edward Island.

All interviews except the telephone interview were tape-recorded, and notes were also made at the time of the interview. Shortly after each interview was completed, a transcript was provided to each interviewee to verify the accurate recording of the interview. Overall themes were also generated by the researcher as a result of all the interviews, and they were also verified with each interviewee to assure accuracy. This process was continued with each interviewee until all interviewees had advised that the themes were accurate.

All electronic messages have been kept as records for this research. These face-to-face interviews were held mainly in RCMP detachments, with the exception of one that was held in a restaurant. Letters of consent were signed by participants, who were asked if the conversation could be tape-recorded. Brief notes were also taken during the interview. The interviews generally lasted 1 to 2 hours. All the data gathered have been kept in a secure location. The data will be destroyed upon publication of this report.

In late November 2004, I forwarded all front-line supervisors an electronic message inviting them to voluntarily take part in a focus group for the purpose of this research, and several dates were proposed. The majority responded to this e-mail advising of their availability and their preference for the date of December 5, 2004. All the participants who had previously volunteered for a face-to-face interview were aware of the focus group and had advised they would participate in the session as well. I opened the focus group to all 10 front-line supervisors in the event that anyone who had not taken part in the face-to-face interviews wished to now participate in the research. One new supervisor joined the focus group, as he had not been available earlier for a face-to-face interview owing to work commitments. Consequently, my sample group was all-inclusive, as I wished to interview all front-line corporal supervisors in Prince Edward Island.

In preparation for the focus group session, each candidate was advised at the beginning of the research project that they would also be invited to participate in a focus group session after all the face-to-face interviews had been held. At the end of each face-to-face interview, I reminded the interviewee of the focus group and stated that their participation in the focus group would be totally voluntary as well. I also planted the seed with them to think about my research question and sub-questions between then and the time of the focus group and, if possible, to think of solutions or ideas that might assist with the improvement of supervisory skills for front-line supervisors.

The same protocol was used during the focus group as was used for the face-to-face interviews. Consent forms were signed, and the participants were advised that at any time they could withdraw from the focus group. The participants also consented to have the focus group session tape-recorded.

The focus group was held in early December 2004, and five participants attended this session. On the day, there was a snowstorm, and two participants who had previously committed themselves to attending were unable to travel to the location—the RCMP Headquarters in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island—owing to poor road conditions. During this focus group, I acted as the facilitator and chair. I introduced the main research question, and from there the responses flowed. There was no shortage of conversation. One participant began by bringing up a particular topic, and for the next 10 to 15 minutes, most candidates in the room added to this topic. With only the words "What else?" asked to the focus group, another participant suggested another idea, and the process continued in the same fashion.

The process continued for approximately 2 hours, and at the end of that time five or six suggestions had been made. After each idea was explored, the group as a whole was asked if

there were any further ideas, and at this time, another participant spoke up with another idea. I did not specifically ask each person directly for an idea, as I did not want to put anyone on the spot. I noted, though, that all participants were contributing. Shortly after the session, a transcript and a summary of major points were sent electronically to all participants for verification. I also made notes in my personal research journal after each face-to-face interview and the focus group session, summarizing the events and noting anything of particular interest.

Realizing that the focus group was made up mainly of the core candidates who had participated in the face-to-face portion of this research, I began my focus group with a review of my research question and sub-questions, mainly to refresh participants' memory and to start the conversation. These research questions served as the catalyst for communication, and the same protocol was used during the focus group as was used during the face-to-face interviews. Shortly after the focus group was conducted, a summary document of the suggestions, themes, and ideas was forwarded to all participants, to verify the accuracy of the summation. All the data gathered during this focus group have been kept in a secure location and will be destroyed upon publication of this report.

Ethical Issues

The Royal Roads University (2004) *Ethics Policy* requires an ethics review by the Royal Roads University (RRU) Research Ethics Board whenever information is collected from living humans through using such tools as interviews and questionnaires. Consequently, an ethical review was submitted to and approved by the RRU Research Ethics Board during the fall of 2004.

The following is a summary of how the ethical considerations were addressed:

Respect for Human Dignity

Data collected from the participants could be embarrassing, and consequently confidentiality was emphasized throughout the research with each of the candidates. During the interviews and the focus group, I believe that the participants felt at ease at all times and disclosed information and stories relative to the research. All participants were treated with decency and respect throughout the research project.

Respect for Free and Informed Consent

During all stages of this research project, the participants were advised that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any stage they wished. A consent form (Appendix B) clearly outlined the participant's ability to withdraw at any time, the purpose of the project, and the right to anonymity.

Respect for Vulnerable Persons

I interpreted a "vulnerable person" to be someone of diminished capacity. My research project did not include any persons in this category.

Respect for Privacy and Confidentiality

In my role as the Human Resources Management Officer and in my past roles as the Atlantic Region Audit Officer and as the Criminal Operations Officer, I was aware of many personal and performance issues pertaining to each of the participants. I emphasized to the participants that only the information they wished to share with me would be used in this research project, and I assured them that they would not be identified by name in the final report.

Balancing Harms and Benefits

This research project did not involve any physical activity, so consequently no physical harm came to any of the participants. Positive benefits from this research project far outweigh

any harm. Participants benefited by learning from each other during the focus group and in the long run may benefit from the research if the recommendations are implemented.

Minimizing harm.

There was no risk to the participants by participating in this research project. I emphasized with the participants that the data collected were solely for the purpose of this research project. I also verified the data with each participant. In addition, participants were made aware of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Maximizing benefit.

The implementing of the recommendations should enhance the growth and development of front-line supervisors. The participants interviewed during this research project are likely to benefit if they have not retired prior to some of the recommendations being implemented, and in years to come, future front-line supervisors should benefit from the implementation of some of the recommendations. Constables should also benefit by having more efficient and effective supervisors. Every effort will be made to share the findings of this research with other senior executives of the RCMP and with the organization's local and national training units.

Data Analysis

Seven interviews and one focus group were conducted during this research. Each interview lasted a minimum of one hour, and the focus group lasted 2 hours. All interviews and the focus group discussions were transcribed, and notes were made of the interviews and the focus group discussion. To verify the accuracy of the data, copies of the transcripts were sent to each participant for feedback. Only one of the participants wished to change the transcript by

adding some additional comments to the transcript. The new information was added to the original transcript and later accepted by the researcher and the participant.

McNamara (1999a) suggests a four-part process for analysing research data: (1) Read all the data gathered, (2) organize comments into commonalities, (3) name these commonalities as individual themes, and (4) attempt to identify patterns, associations, or relationships.

All the data from the face-to-face interviews were re-read, and each of the participants had a column on a large sheet of paper for recording key phrases summarizing his or her comments. Once a commonality was identified in several of the columns, it was highlighted with the same-colour marker. At the completion of this phase, one could easily distinguish four or five commonalities or themes. An attempt was then made where possible to identify any patterns associated with the themes. I then re-read each of the transcribed interviews one at a time and examined each of the columns for each participant, to ensure I had not overlooked anything. This is also the same procedure I have learned and used at work for a period of approximately 6 years while conducting internal audits. On a separate sheet of paper, I placed the themes as heads of columns. Then I went back through the transcribed interviews and selected quotes to support and link to the themes.

The data for the focus group were clear to analyze. As stated earlier, I began the focus group by reading aloud my main research question; once it was read, the participants continued with the discussion. One participant mentioned being able to act prior to being promoted, and the other participants built on this comment by adding their recollection of acting and the experiences that resulted from it. Once this subject was exhausted, I asked "What else?" and in response to this open-ended question, another participant spoke about the present supervisors' course and the topics that should be added to improve the course. When analyzing the

transcribed data from the focus group, I noted that specific themes stood out as they were being identified by the participants. Again, these themes were transcribed on paper as column headings, and again, corresponding quotes were placed under each theme. The themes from the focus group were compared with the themes of the individual group and found to be similar.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a continuous and vital thread throughout this research project. Trustworthiness was accomplished throughout the project by establishing credibility, confirmation, and dependability. Stringer (1999) highlights some key points in conducting research:

> *Credibility* is established though *prolonged engagement* with participants; *triangulation* of information from multiple data sources; *member checking* procedures that allow participants to check and verify the accuracy of the information recorded and *peer debriefing* processes that enable research facilitators to articulate and reflect on research procedures with a colleague or informed associate. (p. 176)

To ensure the credibility of the project, the researcher conducted a review of organizational documents and relevant literature, and involved participants from the organization who supported the findings. Accountability was maintained throughout the project by the involvement of other front-line supervisors in the Atlantic Region through piloting the semi-structured questions, providing the interviewees with a transcribed copy of the conversation, and also providing the focus group participants with a transcription and summary of their session. The project supervisor and the Commanding Officer of "L" Division also provided additional support throughout the project through discussions on the analysis and results of the research.

The participants in this research project confirmed the data collected by reviewing the transcript of their interview and then either confirming, adding, or deleting the information in the transcript. Participants were invited to provide additional insight or information at any time during the research project if they thought it would be beneficial to their comments or to the

research. The approval of their transcripts was accomplished through an e-mail message to the researcher.

The dependability of the research was ensured through consultations with the project supervisor, participants, and project sponsor at various times throughout the research project. Quotations and paraphrasing from the data collected and the literature review provided further dependability in supporting the findings of the researcher.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explained why qualitative research was selected for this research project. There was also an explanation given as to why semi-structured questions were used during the interviews. A rationale was also provided concerning the selection of the participants and an overview of the ethical considerations associated with the research project. The next chapter focuses on the analysis of the data, an exploration of the themes that emerged, the conclusions that were drawn, and the recommendations that I made after analyzing the data.

CHAPTER 4—ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This action research project posed the following question: What organizational practices can be implemented to support learning for front-line supervisors?

The sub-questions were, What core competencies are required by front-line supervisors to support their leadership learning? and What support is needed from the organization to incorporate these practices?

This chapter explores the data gathered from interviews and a focus group with eight front-line corporals stationed in Prince Edward Island. The chapter is divided into three parts: first, a brief synopsis and analysis of the interviews and the focus group; second, an exploration of the themes that emerged and the conclusions drawn as a result of analyzing the data; and finally, an explanation of the scope and limitations of this research project.

Study Findings

Status of Participants

Seven front-line corporals were interviewed during this research project, two females and five males. There is no significance to the disproportionate number of males represented in the participants. There are a total of 10 front-line corporals in Prince Edward Island, and 2 are female while the other 8 are male. When I initially solicited participants for this research project, 9 out of a possible 10 supervisors volunteered. To keep this sample manageable, I originally determined that six interviews would be the maximum I should conduct for the project. Due to

scheduling priorities and releasability issues, the first six corporals whose schedules were compatible with mine were interviewed. After completing the six face-to-face interviews, I realized I had a sampling from two out of three policing districts in Prince Edward Island, so I decided to conduct a seventh interview to include a participant from the third district. Due to conflicting time schedules, a face-to-face interview was not possible; thus, a telephone interview was conducted for this seventh interview. For the purpose of this project, the participants are referred to as numbers 1 to 7.

A focus group was also held after the individual interviews were conducted to discuss my research question. Again, an invitation was offered to all the front-line corporals in Prince Edward Island. Seven corporals originally agreed to attend this session, but unfortunately there was a severe snow-storm on the date scheduled for the focus group and, as a result, only five corporals were able to attend the focus group. As in the individual interviews, the participants were assigned numbers. Their numbers were 1, 3, 6, 7, and 8. Numbers 1, 3, 6, and 7 were participants in the interview portion of this research, and number 8 was new to the research study. Participant 8 has 33 years of service and has been in the corporal rank for 13 years.

The questions posed to the focus group were open ended, and the first question began with the research question. From there, various probing questions were asked throughout the focus group discussion. The group was quite talkative, and there was no shortage of answers or comments. Participants 1 and 7, however, were not as talkative as the others. The focus group concentrated mainly on areas where assistance could be given to help develop the corporal supervisors. The area of knowledge in investigative skills did not surface until later in the session, and the group commented that there should be competency levels in terms of investigative skills for front-line corporal supervisors. These required competency levels would

assure all subordinates and supervisors of front-line supervisors that the corporals have all the necessary core operational competencies (investigative skills such as the preparation of search warrants and knowledge of handling human sources) or at least are working on achieving them. The required competency levels in specific areas would ensure credibility to everyone, and there would be an enhanced comfort level for the subordinate, the supervisor, and the supervisor's supervisor.

Table 1 depicts the years in the rank and years of service and background summary for the research participants. It shows that the group is senior in service, with the exception of two new corporals with only 1 month and 3 months of service in this rank, respectively.

Table 1: *Participants' Gender, Years in Rank, and Years of Service*

Participant # and Gender	Years in Rank	Years of Service	Background
1 Male	13	34	Served in two Atlantic provinces and only general duty experience
2 Male	17	30	Served in Northern territories in front-line supervisory duties only
3 Female	1 month	15	Served in three Atlantic provinces with northern isolated experience; has general duty and major crime experience
4 Male	3 months	13	Served in two Atlantic provinces and BC and has general duty and drug section experience
5 Female	12	28	Served in two Atlantic provinces and has major crime experience as well as general duty
6 Male	12	33	Served in two Atlantic provinces and was promoted to a specialized unit and later transferred to general duties
7 Male	12	32	Has northern service as well as worked in two Atlantic provinces
8 Male	13	33	Served in two Atlantic provinces and has only general duty experience

Themes

The following four themes emerged after reviewing the data several times: gaining acting experience, having job knowledge, holding members accountable for their performance, and completing administrative duties. All the themes generated comments within the context of what could be taught or provided to potential or new supervisors. There was unanimous agreement relating to providing the opportunity to attend a well-designed supervisors' course, either shortly before being promoted or shortly afterward. The focus group participants discussed the course content of past supervisors' courses. They all agreed that there were major components missing from these past courses and offered suggestions for improvement.

Gaining Acting Experience

Most of the participants interviewed during the interview portion of this research expressed how important they found their acting assignments were in terms of readiness for their promotion to corporal. An acting assignment occurs when a member is absent from his or her duties (on training or vacation), and another member, usually one rank below, is selected to perform that member's duties during his or her absence and receives the salary for the rank in which he or she is acting. This situation then allows the member of the lower rank to experience the duties and responsibilities of the next rank.

In the past, and today in many detachments, it is almost always the senior member who receives the acting assignment. It was also usually the norm more than 10 years ago that senior constables received a promotion to the rank of corporal based solely on seniority. Today, many of the senior members who are in-charge (i/c) at the detachments have kept this tradition of naming the senior constable as being in-charge when the i/cs are absent from duty. Unfortunately, many of the senior members who receive the acting assignment are not always

interested in a promotion or a transfer. Consequently, the acting assignment does not default to many members, and many then miss out on this developmental opportunity. Ten years ago, the RCMP introduced promotional examinations as a prerequisite to gaining a promotion, and consequently these days it is not necessarily the senior member who receives a promotion.

The participants stated that this acting experience greatly assisted them to adjust to their new role, as it gave them the opportunity to "try on" the duties associated with being a corporal. Their acting time was expressed in terms of acting for long stretches at a time and intermittently over time. During these time periods, members were able to experience the duties and functions of corporals. The participants advised that this practice was helpful, as they knew what type of job they were getting into because of the opportunity to perform some of the corporal duties.

During the interview phase of this research project, participant 1 advised that, "because I occupied an 'acting position' months before being promoted and also my police experience of 21 years before the promotion, I was ready." Participant 2 related that "many constables today are getting promoted and haven't had the experience of being a senior constable at a detachment. They haven't been able to walk the walk. I think this is a disadvantage to them." Further, participant 3 stated that she "was the senior constable for at least several months a year and acted when the sergeant was away." She related that "the acting really prepares you for the new rank. The jobs of acting and being the real thing are very similar." Participant 3 went on to express that having the opportunity to act first was terrific, as she gained so much knowledge and experience. In her new role as corporal, "the learning curve has been quite easy and not as stressful due to this experience."

Participant 4 expressed that although he only has 3 months in the rank of corporal, the first request he made to his District Commander was to obtain permission to rotate any acting

assignments to all his team members throughout the year, and not just to the senior members. He explained that by doing this rotation, everyone will be able to see what he or she actually has to do and understand why he or she has to do it. In the long run, he is hoping that this experience will show the others how important it is to complete reports in certain ways and how frustrating it is for supervisors when reports are not completed properly. Each one will get a chance to "walk in his shoes for a bit" and see what it is like. I found this comment quite intriguing, as this member has only 13 years' service and was promoted quite early compared with today's norm for promotion. When questioned by the researcher, this participant explained that he was anxious and willing to act whenever he could for the experience. He related that, at one of his postings, his boss would never allow him or anyone else other than the two senior members to act. Shortly after this posting, he transferred to a small isolated unit where his corporal supervisor was absent much of the time, and this supervisor believed in rotating the supervisory experience. At this point in his career, this participant decided that when he became a supervisor, he would allow all to act if he could. Participant 4 has now implemented this idea in his role as supervisor, and his objective is to give everyone possible this developmental opportunity (personal communication, February 27, 2005).

Participants expressed that acting was an important ingredient in learning the role of a supervisor and during the focus group commented that all potential supervisors should have the chance, if possible, to act prior to being promoted to corporal. The focus group participants agreed that during the past 10 years, acting assignments usually defaulted to the senior constables at the unit. The focus group participants were also unanimous that the members receiving a promotion to the corporal rank are not necessarily the senior members in their respective unit, and most miss the opportunity of experiencing these acting assignments. They

suggested that, where possible, members actively seeking promotional opportunities should be afforded the opportunity to participate in acting assignments for developmental purposes. This opportunity for potential supervisors would help the members tremendously, and once they attained the rank of corporal, help make their learning curve less strenuous.

Having Job Knowledge

The second theme that came across strongly was having good job knowledge in relation to investigations. Most of the participants thought that members had to have a good knowledge of operational duties, and especially the common Criminal Code offences (break and enters, thefts, and assaults), to perform their duties effectively, and most believed they had this experience. A solid knowledge of operational duties added to their comfort in their supervisory role, and they considered that acquiring this knowledge was the easiest task and function for them. Solid job knowledge is crucial to supervisors performing their duties. Participants claimed that by knowing the investigative aspects of criminal investigations, it was easy to provide guidance to their subordinates, as this task is second nature to them.

Participants also claimed that if a supervisor did not know the procedures for directing and giving guidance during a criminal investigation, his or her credibility was then either lost or tarnished, as the subordinates know who is credible and who is not. Participants 2 and 3 advised that if they did not know the answer to a question or were unable to give direction pertaining to a criminal investigation, they would always tell their subordinate they were checking into it and would get back to them. There is little time for researching and checking on procedures when giving direction and monitoring Criminal Code investigations. This solid investigational background and knowledge of operational duties then frees the supervisor to concentrate more on learning the administrative duties that accompany his or her role.

Participant 5 advised, "As far as investigations, I didn't have any problems reviewing files and giving directions due to my investigative background; I didn't worry about that aspect at all." Participant 4 related that he considered his three types of police experience—a drug section in British Columbia, an isolated town in Newfoundland, and general duty in rural Prince Edward Island—to have "been a great asset" for him in his supervisory role. "I have encountered lots of different situations and know how to deal with most of them." Participant 6 related that with his extensive background in Criminal Code and federal operations, he felt very confident in giving direction to his subordinates, and this asset allowed him to teach himself some necessary computer programs.

Participant 7 considered that his past experience not only helped him perform his job efficiently, but also served him well in being accepted by his team. The team members recognized he had the expertise required to supervise and thus were supportive of him. His experience gave him credibility. Another participant (participant 2) related that he had experience up north with "assaults, murders, and robberies," and this experience gave him the credentials for taking the reins and giving direction to his subordinates once he became a corporal. Participant 1 advised that a person must be knowledgeable in conducting investigations; otherwise, he or she would have no respect at all from his or her subordinates.

During the focus group, the idea of being a good investigator, with good job knowledge, evolved in terms of the group wishing to have established standards for becoming a supervisor. The participants acknowledged that today it is possible for a member to become a supervisor and not have written a search warrant during the previous 3 years. Using this scenario, the participants agreed it would then be difficult for this supervisor to give direction to any of his or her subordinates on search warrants until the supervisor came up to a standard of being familiar

with all the requirements now necessary to obtain approval for a search warrant. Participant 6 advised that there should be some type of standard, checksheet, or manual where both the corporal and the corporal's supervisor would agree on the competencies that the new supervisor requires for further development.

Holding Subordinates Accountable for Their Performance

The third theme that surfaced from both the interviews and the focus group was to learn an appropriate and effective way for handling subordinates who were not performing up to par. During the interviews, all interviewees agreed that this is a very important task they are required to perform, and yet there is hardly any training offered to corporals in this regard. During the focus group, however, participant 8 related that he had taken a course titled "Interest-Based Negotiations," an internal RCMP course offered approximately 5 years ago and not offered recently. From this course, he learned some strategies for dealing with difficult people and getting them to perform. He thought all supervisors could benefit from this training course in terms of holding people accountable in the performance of their work.

Participant 1 related that when he became a corporal, he "wasn't ready to handle the many diverse personalities and mood swings of the members." Further, participant 5 explained that she has difficulty dealing with the members. She related that it is difficult to tell members some things by trying to correct them while finding a way of not being too critical. She advised that she tries to "correct them" and doesn't want "to tick them off so they won't work. I want my comments to be helpful and it is sometimes a very hard balancing act."

Participant 5 went on to say that "there should be more of how to deal with people on the Introduction to Management and Supervision course. I don't think you can ever have enough of this." These comments came from a senior corporal who has been in the rank almost 13 years.

Participant 6 supplemented this comment when he said, "Since we deal with people, we need to have courses to learn how to deal effectively with our members and particularly when supervising them." He went on further to explain that "sometimes, if you are lucky, you can see how others handle situations and from that you can model it, but if you aren't exposed to it on a regular basis, how do you learn?" Participant 7 advised, "The guidance of members was something I just didn't feel comfortable with." Participant 4 related that the one aspect that he was not prepared for in his new corporal role was taking a hard line with members who were not performing:

> It is the "how" I want to know how to handle. I don't want it to be confrontational, and I know there will be a reaction to my even commenting to some members. It is the confrontational aspect where I have to make the member change their behaviour that I feel the least comfortable and least prepared. This still makes me feel anxious.

During the focus group, participant 3 advised that she had recently learned some of these valuable skills during a course titled "Coaching for Performance," offered by Dr. Peter Jensen, Inc., an external company hired by the RCMP. Her thoughts were that supervisors should spend time regularly with their subordinates, giving praise, encouragement, and correction, because then the doors of communication are opened regularly and both parties will know what to expect from each other.

During the focus group session, the participants advised that the topic of dealing with employees and holding them accountable should receive a lengthy amount of time on the supervisors' course. Participants advised that scenario training would be ideal to learn skills in this area. They also thought it would be beneficial if senior corporals and sergeants were included on the course to talk to the class and share some of their experiences in this area.

Completing Administrative Duties

The knowledge of performing administrative duties was the last outstanding theme that surfaced during the face-to-face interviews. The corporals considered they had weak knowledge of many administrative issues and wanted to be better prepared for these duties. Participant 7 advised: "The part I recall not being prepared for was the scoring of the files." The scoring of files is a mandatory and important activity that provides the RCMP and Statistics Canada with statistics concerning crime trends and frequency in every area. These data are extremely useful to assist the RCMP in positioning its resources strategically and in deciding what problem solving it needs to concentrate on to combat the reported crime. During the focus group, this participant added that, even now in terms of administrative duties, every month each unit gets a printout from Ottawa advising of the unit's percentage of scoring errors; however, the unit never receives guidance on what to do to correct the errors.

Participant 6 relayed that he was "in a pickle" when he arrived at his general-duty post, as he was unfamiliar with the computer programs that house the investigative files. To perform his duties, he had to ask many people to show him how to access the files he had to review, and how to score them electronically, and return, re-assign, and conclude them. It was a year later when he received a course in the computer programs. Participant 6 also relayed that annual assessments are very important for the members' career, and no one ever advises how to complete them or what exactly should be said on these significant documents.

Participant 2 advised that for him, administrative duties were not foreign, as he at least had an idea of how to perform some of them because of his acting appointments prior to being promoted. His investigative skills were still his strong part. However, participant 2 expressed that

> Today when many members are not getting this "acting experience" before being promoted, they are really behind the eight ball when they begin their supervisory duties,

> as they probably have never performed or experienced most of the administrative duties, and I see the additional stress on these new corporals.

Participants 3 and 8 also echoed that they wished they could receive some feedback, direction, or training on completing annual assessments and the Performance Report for Promotion (PRP), a document required for promotional purposes. All the participants recognized the importance of such documents and want to do a good job in completing them accurately and fairly, for the good of both the members and the organization.

Other Notable Findings on the Themes

It is noteworthy to mention that all four of the above-noted themes (gaining acting assignments, having job knowledge, holding members accountable for their performance, and completing administrative duties) fall under the umbrella of training. During the focus group, this training theme surfaced even more strongly as participants offered suggestions and ideas to strengthen the training component for front-line supervisors.

During the individual interviews, the participants spoke directly about training issues they thought contributed to becoming an effective supervisor. However, during the focus group, all questions were open ended, and training became the dominant theme relating to improving supervisory skills.

All participants believed that more training would contribute to them becoming more effective and efficient supervisors. All participants realized that training is not always available to everyone, and it is hit and miss as to when the member or new supervisor receives such training. Developmental training, besides attending the Introduction to Management and Supervision course, is also hit and miss; sometimes the courses are not available, and sometimes if the course is available the member is not always available to attend. Participant 2 related that he never had the Introduction to Management and Supervision course, and today he wonders if

he has missed something in his development that perhaps has prevented him from advancing in the ranks. In many cases, there is simply no plan in place to allow for a member's growth and development. Many supervisors may never see another course pertaining to supervision, leadership, or management. Some members, on the other hand, are fortunate to receive the Introduction to Management and Supervision course at the right time in their career, as well as other developmental courses throughout their career. Some members take the initiative themselves and seek courses on their own time and money through other institutions.

During the past few years, the RCMP (2003a) has been developing the *Competency Dictionary* for each job code in the Force. In the *Competency Dictionary*, the RCMP defines a competency as "an observable and measurable knowledge, skill, ability or personal characteristic defined in terms of the behaviours required by employees to achieve the performance output/outcome needs of the organization of excellence" (p. 4). These competencies will be the basis used to launch a new promotion system. During the transition years between the launching of the new promotion system, this guide or checklist could still be implemented to assist the present corporals with their development.

The specific suggestions made during the focus group are included in the Study Recommendations section in chapter 5.

Study Conclusions

The study asked: What organizational practices can be implemented to support learning for front-line supervisors?

The two sub-questions were: What core competencies are required by front-line supervisors to support their leadership learning? and What support is needed from the

organization to incorporate these practices? This section addresses these questions in relation to the data gathered through this action research project.

In total, eight front-line supervisors participated in this research project. They were interviewed individually and/or participated as part of a focus group. Based on their experience as a front-line supervisor, they were asked to share their thoughts and experiences on what they consider are core competencies required for front-line supervisors to support their leadership learning, what organizational practices can be implemented to support learning for the front-line supervisors, and what support is needed from the organization to incorporate this learning. Open-ended and semi–open-ended questions were used in the individual interviews, as well as during the focus group. These questions allowed participants to expand on issues they thought were important.

All participants agreed that training for front-line supervisors is both crucial and essential. They further agreed that a supervisors' course is essential for the development of new supervisors; however, all participants thought that some modifications were necessary to make the present Introduction to Management and Supervision course more effective. These participants offered ideas on improvements and changes for this course.

First and foremost, I was delighted to learn from the participants that they do indeed recognize that they need further skills to assist them in their development as supervisors. They believe this development can be gained through a variety of learning assignments and training courses. This first conclusion speaks directly to the research question: What organizational practices can be implemented to support learning for front-line supervisors? A variety of learning assignments and training courses should be offered to all front-line supervisors at an appropriate time in their career. Training should not be offered too early, when the member does not

understand what the new skills are for and consequently does not transfer the knowledge to the new duties. Similarly, training should not be offered too late in the developmental stages of this newly promoted corporal's career. These supervisors are the key to our future. Participants in this research expressed both excitement and anxiety when they were promoted to the rank of corporal and became a front-line supervisor.

> Supervisors have long been the backbone of most organizations. Their leadership is often the difference between getting work accomplished and not meeting schedules. They are the buffers between upper management and frontline employees, serving in effect as human barometers for both groups. (Humphrey & Stokes, 2000, p. 1)

The development of supervisors is important, not only for their subordinates in ensuring they are receiving the proper guidance and development necessary, but also for themselves, as this development will prepare them for their next role in the organization. Della (2004) speaks about the importance of training by law enforcement agencies, and Wills (1994) talks about successful companies who take the training of their employees very seriously.

The second conclusion originating from this research, particularly from the focus group, is the necessity of improving the content of the present supervisors' course. This conclusion also speaks to the main research question. All the participants advised that on all the different versions of the supervisors' course they attended, they did not think the course content hit the mark for what they consider they should know as a front-line supervisor. All participants mentioned such items as writing performance appraisals and Performance Reports for Promotion (PRPs), holding people accountable for their actions, and understanding some of the key administrative tasks as the important issues they wished added and discussed at length on the supervisors' course. The development of front-line supervisors is congruent with the sentiments of Brown and Posner (2001), McManus (1995), McNamara (1999a, 1999b), and Plunkett (1994), as previously explored in the literature review. All these authors speak about the development of

skills to be successful. The development of the supervisor will serve to help both the subordinate and the supervisor as they progress through the organization.

The third conclusion drawn from this research is that "acting assignments" greatly helped all the newly promoted corporals ease into their new role. These acting assignments can be compared to a type of apprenticeship or on-the-job training assignment. This conclusion is not surprising; as one traces the history of an apprentice from ancient times through to the guilds and then to the present-day interpretation of apprenticeship, this type of learning environment has proven a successful means of passing on specific skills. In his research, Billett (2000) commented that guided learning was most valued by the workers and was reported as making effective contributions to the learning workplace. Maynard and Smith (2004) commented on the recent improvements in modern apprenticeships. Carson, Lanier, and Carson (2000) also explain how the Shakers in their era pursued excellence by sharing community expertise and apprenticing.

A fourth conclusion was the suggestion of a newly promoted corporal having a mentor, especially during the first few years in the ranks. This idea was compared to the cadet field trainer. When a cadet—a recent graduate from the RCMP Training Academy—arrives at his or her first posting, a senior constable is assigned as his or her trainer during at least the first 6 months and sometimes longer. This person is the "go-to" person for assisting the cadet with such tasks as completing the paperwork, conducting investigations, finding accommodations in the community, and even purchasing a vehicle. The participants in this research study considered that a mentor could have assisted them had such a program been in place when many were promoted.

During the individual interviews, the participants were asked if they had a mentor (see question #4 in Appendix A). A number of them did not know what a mentor was, nor what a mentor could do. All the participants mentioned during the focus group that they could have benefited from someone besides their immediate supervisors to trust and run ideas past. Forret (1996), Scandura et al., (1996), Veale (1996), and Yukl (2002) support some type of a formal or informal mentoring program in an organization.

Having a personal coach during this new adjustment period would also be a positive learning experience and an alternative if a mentorship program is not available. In the literature review, it was noted that Veale (1996) is supportive of a coaching arrangement within organizations.

The fifth conclusion drawn from this research is that the supervisors believe that standards are necessary to attain the front-line corporal level. The participants in this research indicated that a standard or at least a checksheet listing all the required duties and competencies of a front-line supervisor would serve as a guide or starting point for a supervisor's learning plan or performance agreement. It would also serve as a road map for what future and immediate training is necessary for the newly promoted corporal.

The sixth and final conclusion that surfaced during this research was the necessity for the front-line corporals to meet as a group to discuss common issues and to assist in coaching each other. The participants suggested that once a month would be ideal, with an annual meeting as well. The focus group participants also thought that attending a few Division Executive Committee meetings would help them understand more about the management side of the RCMP and see the bigger picture in terms of new developments and initiatives being rolled out. This experience would also assist them in explaining the rationale for some of the new initiatives

when asked by their subordinates. In Sanderlands' (1997) research concerning the furniture chain IKEA, he explains that its managers get together and learn together. With the presence of other managers and role models to deliver specific presentations at these meetings, learning will take place, whether it is specific to a process or to the culture of the organization.

I now address the sub-question, What core competencies are required by front-line supervisors to support their leadership learning? As noted earlier in this paper, the interview questions used for the individual interviews were specifically designed to ask the participants what competencies they thought were essential in becoming an effective and efficient supervisor (see questions #1-4 in Appendix A). The participants' responses answer this sub-question, as they spoke about interpersonal skills, planner, decision maker, informer, honesty, fairness, treating all with respect, praising subordinates for work well done, assigning subordinates work that fits their ability, valuing their uniqueness and individualism, providing them with adequate direction, setting a good example, good communication skills (writing and orally), good listener, motivator, and leadership as being important core competency skills for a front-line supervisor. These competencies are consistent with what some researchers have identified. For example, Humphrey and Stokes (2000), Jennings (1993), and Plunkett (1994) support these competencies in their research findings.

The second sub-question posed during this research project was, What support is needed from the organization to incorporate these practices? Upon reflecting on the findings, conclusions, and recommendations in this research project, I see nothing too startling or too costly in incorporating these recommendations throughout our organization. The supervisors' course is already being delivered. Its content is still being tweaked as we become more specific concerning the needs of our clients and as we target our audience. Being a member of the senior

management team in our organization and, more specifically, being responsible for training in the Atlantic Region, I will be able to encourage the implementation of these recommendations in speaking with my staff and in addressing various groups throughout the Atlantic Region, as well as in participating at the national level in the quarterly Human Resources management meetings.

First and foremost, we have to believe that the development of our front-line supervisors is crucial to the organization and there has to be the will to stay the course and concentrate our efforts in this regard. Every one of us has a vital role to play in the development of our future leaders, and we can set an example by mentoring and coaching some of these members ourselves. Whether brief or extended, "coaching depends on having the desire to help others succeed and possessing the knowledge and skills that it takes to help through the process of personal conversation" (Kinlaw, 1999, p. 19).

To be more specific concerning the sub-question on what support is needed from the organization to implement these recommendations, in Prince Edward Island the support required comes from the Commanding Officer of the Division, Chief Superintendent Randy Robar. He is ultimately responsible for the delivery of the RCMP's policing service in this province. He has the authority to insist on the development of front-line supervisors. I have discussed the findings of this research in several conversations during the year with Chief Robar. I am convinced he is supportive of the development of front-line supervisors and will take the necessary steps to incorporate these recommendations in his Division. In fact, during the year he encouraged the idea, via an e-mail message, of allowing his front-line corporals to meet as a group to discuss certain issues (R. Robar, personal communication, May 2, 2005).

Scope and Limitations of the Research

This section explains the limitations and scope of this research project and the implications of the limitations for the research findings. The purpose of the study was to gather information from front-line corporals, presently stationed in Prince Edward Island, pertaining to what organizational practices can be implemented to support learning for front-line supervisors. In addition, participants were asked to comment on what they thought were the core competencies required by front-line supervisors and to offer any ideas or suggestions that would enhance the learning and preparation for the duties of front-line supervisor. In-depth data relevant to the participants' experiences in the corporal rank were gathered, and conclusions were drawn based on analysis of the data. This section explains certain limitations to consider when reviewing the conclusions reached in this project.

The sampling of research participants should be considered before accepting the conclusions arrived at in this study. The research participants in this project were all from "L" Division (Prince Edward Island). This is a very small sample, and participants are products of two different promotional processes. In addition, two of the participants were newly promoted, having only 1 month and 3 months in the rank at the time of the research. Within the scope of this study, the conclusions drawn are acceptable across the front-line supervisor group. It should be noted that this research pertained only to front-line corporal supervisors and not to other corporal supervisors located in other specialized jobs such as Drug, Auto Theft, and Community Policing units.

The number of years in the rank of corporal and the number of years of service for these participants should also be noted when viewing the conclusions. The majority of this sample of participants are at the end of their career (30 years plus). Only two of these participants have

what is termed "junior" service, having 13 and 15 years of service. A younger member may have different ideas on training and learning than might a member with more than 30 years of service. The years of service and years in the rank of the participants should be considered before generalizing that the conclusions made are equally applicable for all front-line corporal supervisors.

This study did not acknowledge the social, cultural, or economic backgrounds of the research participants. It may be reasonable to assume that a college- or university-educated participant may view training endeavours differently than one who has no postsecondary education. This study did not take into consideration whether any of the participants had previous supervisory experience before joining the RCMP or through secondary employment while employed as a member of the RCMP. Participants who had this supplementary supervisory experience may then have further knowledge of and opinions on training and special initiatives for developing supervisors' knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explored the in-depth data gathered from eight front-line supervisors located in Prince Edward Island ("L" Division). Participants were asked to comment on how qualified they thought they were when they assumed the rank of corporal and what they thought contributed to their readiness. They were also asked what areas they considered were lacking in their preparedness for their duties in the corporal rank and what suggestions they had to improve this situation for themselves and for future corporals. The gathered data were analyzed, and conclusions were drawn in conjunction with the literature reviewed. Finally, an explanation of the scope and limitations of the project was provided. Chapter 5 explains the recommendations

made as a result of this study, within the context of implementing them first in Prince Edward Island and then later in the Atlantic Region.

CHAPTER FIVE—RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents the recommendations based on the findings of this project within the context of implementing them at the front-line supervisory level in the RCMP, particularly in Prince Edward Island ("L" Division). A review of the significance of this project to the RCMP, as an organization, is then explored. An explanation is provided as to how each of these recommendations can best be implemented and what the associated consequences might be. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research that will further enhance front-line supervision for corporals in the RCMP.

Study Recommendations

The data showed that participants were unanimous in thinking they could benefit greatly by participating in a variety of training and development projects. When asked during the interviews and focus group about what specific training and projects they could benefit from, they all mentioned the many benefits they experienced during acting assignments. Based on the analysis of the data and a review of the literature related to this study, I propose the following recommendations.

Recommendation #1—Create a Developmental Plan for Each Front-Line Supervisor

The first recommendation is that there is a need to create a developmental plan for front-line supervisors. An important component of this plan would be to ensure the supervisors are scheduled to attend the Introduction to Management and Supervision course and possibly other developmental courses pertaining to supervision, leadership, and management. Today, the

Introduction to Management and Supervision course may be offered to a newly promoted corporal if there is a position available for the candidate. There is no guarantee the newly promoted corporal will be offered a position on the Introduction to Management and Supervision course during their early years as a corporal. This course should be offered to all newly promoted corporals within their first year.

This developmental plan is an important component for developing both front-line supervisors and their subordinates, because a subordinate's development is usually dependent on the influence and skills of his or her direct supervisor. Further, these developmental plans should consider the corporal's strengths and weaknesses in terms of competencies to perform his or her duties, as well as personal, detachment, and organizational needs and interests.

Participant 3 stated that she thought the course titled "Coaching for Performance," a course recently being delivered to potential leaders in the RCMP by an outside agency, was terrific. This participant had recently attended the Introduction to Management and Supervision course and during the focus group session relayed to the researcher that she did not think she had learned much from it. The majority of front-line supervisors have received only a few developmental courses, and the one main course, Introduction to Management and Supervision, that they all spoke of did not seem to exactly fit their needs.

Recommendation #2—Improve the Present Supervisors' Course

The second recommendation is that the Introduction to Management and Supervision course presently being delivered be improved, to build on and include key supervisory skills such as dealing with poor performers, motivating members, and acquiring techniques for writing annual assessments and Performance Report for Promotion. This course should have several credible presenters speak to the supervisors about routine problems they will encounter. During

the research, several participants commented that the Introduction to Management and Supervision course, though quite helpful, could be improved with the addition of a few more topics relating specifically to front-line supervisors' tasks and duties—for example, completing annual assessments and holding their subordinates accountable for their work. This course should address the primary concerns expressed by the participants and should help them handle their front-line supervisory duties in a more professional, efficient, and effective manner.

Recommendation #3—Make Acting Opportunities Available for Promotable Constables

The third recommendation is that every opportunity should be afforded in providing acting opportunities to constables seeking promotional opportunities and who are worthy and capable of handling these new duties and responsibilities. Many of the participants commented on how their acting experience helped them adjust quickly to their new role once they were promoted to the rank of corporal, as they were no longer acting. Traditionally, these acting assignments are given to the senior members at the unit, who may not even want to be considered for promotion. A promotional opportunity today usually means a physical relocation, and many of the senior members are simply not interested in moving. Acting opportunities can be easily provided in each unit once members seeking promotion identify themselves to their supervisor. There are a number of occasions during the year when a front-line supervisor is absent from duty, and on a rotating basis each potential member wanting this experience could be offered this opportunity.

What would be important at the end of this assignment would be a debriefing or evaluation of how the acting member handled some of the new experiences. Specific areas may be identified that the member could work on after he or she returns to their normal duties. This recommendation would again help in the development of this member.

Recommendation #4—Establish a Mentoring and Coaching Program for Newly Promoted Front-Line Supervisors

The fourth recommendation is to have a mentor or coach assigned to each newly promoted front-line supervisor. One participant mentioned that when new members arrive at a detachment from the Training Academy, they are assigned a coach or mentor to assist them during their first few months of service. The participants thought it would be a good idea to have someone besides their supervisor to guide them and be there to offer advice, or simply to be a sounding board for them while they settle into and adjust to their new duties. The concept of mentorship is already being rolled out in the organization, although it is still in its infancy. It is a matter of time before all members become aware of the concept.

Logan and King (2004) advise that to develop first-class people, individual attention is necessary and not just classroom training. Training in the classrooms was adequate in the 1960s and 70s when management was thought of as giving and taking orders. These days, it is recognized that "people need the individualized attention from experts that will enable them to build better careers, happier lives and stronger relationships" (Logan & King, 2004, p. 10).

Recommendation #5—Establish Standards and a Standards Guide for Newly Promoted Front-Line Supervisors

The fifth recommendation is the establishment of standards to be attained or acquired by each front-line supervisor. Because of the number of changes the RCMP has experienced during the past 10 years, many traditional roles have changed. As stated by the participants during this research project, they believe there should be standards established for front-line corporals. It is possible today for a member to be promoted to the rank of corporal and assume duties supervising members on the front line and to not have written a search warrant or developed any

human sources in the preceding few years. However, we expect these newly promoted corporals to provide direction to their subordinates and verify that their search warrants meet the standards. With the establishment of acceptable standards, all front-line corporals will eventually be operating at the same skill level, and the standards should also ease the adjustment to their new role.

Over the past few years, lists of duties and responsibilities have been created to assist new managers, particularly at the sergeant and staff sergeant levels. A similar type of list could be developed into a guide to assist newly promoted corporals in their development. This guide could lead to naming specific functions, skills, and competencies that could be incorporated into newly promoted corporals' learning plans and performance agreements or could be used as a stand-alone document to track performance and learning that require enhancing.

Recommendation #6—Organize Half-Day or Full-Day Monthly Meetings for Front-Line Supervisors

The final recommendation is that front-line supervisors be able to meet for a half-day or full day every month to discuss common issues and to bounce various ideas off each other. The participants were in agreement that the opportunity to meet as a group of front-line supervisors to discuss common issues would be an advantage for policing throughout the province. They would be able to discuss as a group how they would implement certain policies and changes, thereby helping to bring consistency throughout the division. These meetings would also help the front-line supervisors learn together as a group by sharing share best practices with each other. The participants in the focus group thought that the safe forum of a group meeting would permit some to ask for assistance in how to handle a certain situation, and they would feel free to discuss specific issues among themselves.

Implications for Prince Edward Island ("L" Division)

This study has argued that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police should provide greater training and development opportunities to front-line supervisors. This should be a well-planned and proactive process, and not a reactive one. The front-line supervisors are ultimately responsible for the development of their subordinates by supervising the quality of subordinates' investigations and by holding them accountable. The organization is in the midst of reviewing and renewing all its provincial contracts due in the year 2012. Focusing attention on improving the skills and abilities of front-line supervisors will have a ripple effect by ultimately improving the quality of investigations, showing our commitment to being an "organization of excellence" (RCMP, 2003c, p. 10). This outcome would, in turn, reaffirm to the RCMP's partners its commitment to this end. To be an organization of excellence requires grassroots employees attaining solid, top-notch, and professional skills. Most importantly, these recommendations, if implemented, should contribute to the development of future leaders in the organization. The new skills and abilities resulting from the implemented recommendations will serve the front-line supervisors well and assist them in moving through the ranks to eventually become the RCMP's future leaders.

Implementation

This section reviews how to implement the recommendations in this study into "L" Division. Implementing these recommendations will involve the cooperation of several key people. These people are the Commanding Officer of "L" Division, Chief Superintendent Randy Robar; the Criminal Operations Officer for "L" Division, Superintendent Russ Mirasty; the Human Resources member in "L" Division, Staff Sergeant John Ryan; the training coordinator

for the Atlantic Region, Ms. Nancy Cameron; and I, the Human Resources Management Officer for the Atlantic Region. Besides having a vision, a leader "must be a social architect who understands the organization and shapes the way it works" (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 102).

Having been stationed in Prince Edward Island for 5 years as the officer in charge of Atlantic Region Audit and then as the Criminal Operations officer for the Division, I have extensive knowledge of the Division's executive make-up. In my current role as the officer in charge of Human Resources, all training endeavours in the Atlantic Region fall under my management. Consequently, I believe I have a good understanding of the Division and region and can support and facilitate any necessary changes to help implement the recommendations.

I enjoy positive relationships with the stakeholders in the Atlantic Region. I will introduce these recommendations in my normal style. I will present the ideas, findings, and recommendations to several management groups in the Atlantic Region and specifically to Chief Superintendent Robar, the Commanding Officer of Prince Edward Island ("L" Division). The Commanding Officer of "L" Division is ultimately responsible for the delivery of the policing service in the province of Prince Edward Island. The second in command is the Criminal Operations Officer, Superintendent Russ Mirasty. All relevant parties in "L" Division and on the Regional Executive team will be provided with an overview of the data analysis and recommendations section of this study. Through these discussions and presentations, I hope that my recommendations will be successfully implemented in Prince Edward Island and perhaps in other areas in the Atlantic Region.

Following is a more detailed explanation of how I plan to implement each recommendation.

Recommendation #1—Create a Developmental Plan for Each Front-Line Supervisor

This recommendation is simply an acknowledgement by management and the training unit that the status quo is not acceptable. Our front-line supervisors are a key component in our organization, and over the past years, there has been no proactive development for this group, whose members in turn are responsible for the growth and development of our most junior members.

Recommendation #2—Improve the Present Supervisors' Course

At the present time, the training endeavours in the Atlantic Region fall under my management, and I can say that the course content will be examined to see if it is meeting the needs of our front-line supervisors. The current Introduction to Management and Supervision course has been in existence for 2 years and can be re-evaluated to ensure we are hitting the mark in terms of course content for the audience to whom the course is delivered. This is simply fine-tuning to match what our front-line corporals have stated they need. Given that the Introduction to Management and Supervision course is open to all supervisors, regular members, civilian members, and the public service, it may be difficult to include the specific training needed by the front-line supervisors in this course because of the diverse range of participants. If enough new front-line corporal supervisors are ready for this course at the same time, it may be possible to hold a separate supervisors' course for this specific group.

An alternate plan is to incorporate the specific training for these supervisors and to offer separate mini-courses of 2 or 3 days in duration, after the supervisors have attended the existing Introduction to Management and Supervision course. Another alternative is to offer the front-line supervisors some of the specialized training items during their half-day or full-day corporals'

meetings (Recommendation #6). The cost would be negligible, as Prince Edward Island is small geographically, and 2 or 3 days of training for a group of 10 members would not be significant.

Recommendation #3—Make Acting Opportunities Available for Promotable Constables

Acting assignments serve as a taste of what a supervisor does during a shift. It gives a member a bird's-eye view of the duties and responsibilities, usually for small amounts of time. To implement this recommendation, I plan to discuss with Chief Superintendent Robar the pros and cons of allowing the members who have potential or who identify themselves as being ready for promotion to experience this opportunity. Normally, it is the senior member on the shift who receives these acting assignments, and he or she is not always the member who is eligible for promotion. If Chief Superintendent Robar agrees that this opportunity be shared among the members who are eligible for promotion, he could speak with the three District Commanders and encourage them to offer this experience to all the promotable constables, not just the senior members. The District Commanders, in turn, could see who the potential members may be and could weigh the risks associated with this idea prior to selecting anyone to act.

Recommendation #4—Establish a Mentoring and Coaching Program for Newly Promoted Front-Line Supervisors

The recommendation to encourage mentors and coaches for front-line supervisors should be easy to implement. First and foremost, there should be some form of presentation to this group, to fully explain mentoring and coaching. Again, this presentation can be given either during the Introduction to Management and Supervision course or in a session held specifically during the half-day or full-day meeting with the specified group. I would ensure this session is included on the Introduction to Management and Supervision course or is a topic of discussion during the full- or half-day meetings with this particular group (Recommendation # 6). From this

presentation will come a better understanding of what a coach and a mentor can do. It will then be a matter of determining whether the finding of a coach or a mentor will be up to the individual or if "L" Division will set up a formal system where a coach or mentor can be selected from a pre-established list of qualified persons. This process can also be discussed with the Commanding Officer of "L" Division, who has the final say in the matter, and the training Staff Sergeant in "L" Division, who would oversee the program, to determine if they would prefer to implement a formal or an informal system.

Recommendation #5—Establish Standards and a Standards Guide For Newly Promoted Front-Line Supervisors

Because of the current promotion system, some front-line supervisors may assume front-line supervisory duties, although they have not worked in the field for many years. They are expected to supervise and give direction to subordinates on how to perform routine tasks. Some of these corporals too may not have experienced a number of the basic functions in many years. Established standards and a standards guide could easily be prepared by the present front-line supervisors; the guide could be used by all the front-line supervisors, and supervisors lacking in experience in one or more areas could include these areas in their learning plan or performance agreement with their supervisor. To implement this recommendation, I would again speak to the Commanding Officer about the options: either the guide could be used as an assignment for someone in a development program to develop, or this specific group of front-line supervisors could create the guide.

Recommendation #6—Organize Half-Day or Full-Day Monthly Meetings for Front-Line Supervisors

I do not anticipate resistance to the recommendation to allow the corporals a half-day or full day to meet with each other and discuss common issues. The recommendation can again be achieved by a request to the Commanding Officer. While discussing my research project with Chief Robar, I discovered that he is willing to allow the monthly meetings to happen. In fact, he is anxious for this group to meet and has sent them correspondence encouraging them to meet. Further, he held a meeting with all of them in early May to discuss their concerns and needs.

I enjoy extremely positive relationships with program coordinators in my area, and I am confident that the findings of this study will provide ample motivation to implement this change. I feel passion for this project, and to further facilitate this initiative I forwarded my findings to the Atlantic Regional Executive Committee in mid-May and have received favourable comments from the two of the committee members. At a later date, I have the intention of presenting my findings to the Council of Criminal Operations Officers in the Atlantic Region. I will discuss the findings in full at a later date with Chief Superintendent Robar.

I believe my findings and recommendations will be acceptable. The recommendations themselves will cost very little to implement, and for whatever the cost may be, the benefits from implementing these recommendations will pay dividends in return. The investment the RCMP makes in developing leadership skills in front-line supervisors is hard to put a price tag on. The front-line supervisors will be receiving the training they believe is necessary to improve and develop their skills. Most importantly, the Force has a responsibility to develop its members. "True success comes only when every generation continues to develop the next generation" (Maxwell, 1995, p. 188). If the RCMP wants top-quality investigations, then it has to invest in its

front-line supervisors to ensure they have the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform their duties in the most efficient and effective manner. "I believe a leader's success can be defined as the maximum utilization of the abilities of those under him" (Maxwell, 1995, p. 15). I believe that implementing the recommendations from this study will lead to an improvement in the quality of supervision, the quality of investigations, and leadership development.

Implications for Future Research

It is both exciting and sad to be at the end of this research project. My passion for this project will drive me to closely monitor the recommendations as they become implemented. The next natural step is to conduct an evaluation once the recommendations have been implemented for a period of between 1 and 2 years, to see if they indeed made any difference. The front-line supervisors would be interviewed again to see if they believe they have all the necessary tools to assist them in becoming good supervisors. An audit or review of investigative files would reveal the quality of supervision being delivered, and since Atlantic Region Audit conducted a review in this area several years ago (RCMP, 2002), a baseline has already been established for comparison purposes.

Change is happening all the time, and the role of supervisors has changed drastically over the past 10 years. Today's police officer has to be a problem solver, and be community minded, computer literate, creative, educated, and innovative. The environment and society are constantly changing. "Law enforcement must learn to move with the flow of society's needs and constantly improve services" (Bennett & Hess, 1992, p. 577). Consequently, it may be difficult to predict what supervisory skills will be necessary. By conducting further research on front-line

supervisors over several years, the organization will be on top of what new skills, if any, may be necessary for those supervisors. This continuous research can only lead us to be an organization of excellence.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed implementing the recommendations that resulted from this research project. The chapter reviewed the significance of the project to "L" Division (Prince Edward Island). It explained how I believe these recommendations could be implemented at "L Division. In conclusion, the chapter looked at further research that might be conducted as a result of the project. During the next and final chapter of this study, I discuss what I consider I learned as a result of conducting this project, and how the experience has personally affected me.

CHAPTER 6—LESSONS LEARNED

Introduction

This final chapter presents an overview of what I have learned through undertaking this action research project, and provides a brief account of how the project has affected me personally. Using action research in this research project was an excellent way to open the lines of communication and glean valuable information. "Researchers increase their effectiveness when they immerse themselves in richness of group life, talking with people about general events and activities, sharing a birthday cake, participating in formal or leisure activities, telling jokes and so on" (Stringer, 1999, p. 9). I have learned immensely from this research experience. I listened attentively to what the participants were saying and then learned from their expressed concerns, fears, and ideas.

I enjoyed the interviewing and focus group sessions the most during this research project. The participants' enthusiasm in speaking with me during the interviews and the focus group, and even months later when I was rechecking data (time in the rank and in service) with a few follow-up questions, was infectious. Their enthusiasm helped me to continue and forge ahead when my time schedule was overflowing. They demonstrated to me their commitment and dedication by participating in the research project, and consequently I had to reciprocate not only by completing the project but also by implementing the recommendations.

New Knowledge

I have learned not to assume or anticipate results when conducting research. The group of participants for the most part are very senior in service with many years in the rank of corporal. Most of them are at the end of their service, and some I know are disappointed that they have not advanced further in the ranks during their career. Prior to beginning the project, I also had concerns as to how much information they would share with me because of my position in the organization (Human Resources Officer for the Atlantic Region). I learned that, although the majority of these participants are at the end of their career and probably will not advance any further in rank, they are extremely dedicated and devoted to their duties. They readily shared information and ideas with me concerning both their strengths and their weaknesses and also stated their willingness and thirst to learn more if given the opportunity. If this opportunity is not available to them, they demonstrated their unselfishness by stating that they realized the future generation of front-line corporals should be provided with opportunities to develop their supervisory skills in a controlled atmosphere and not a trial-and-error environment like many of them have experienced over the years. They were unselfish as they expressed ideas and suggestions to improve the learning curve for newly promoted corporals.

An interesting dilemma I found myself in during the early stages of the research was that during a face-to-face interview, when I posed a question to the participant such as what do you do to demonstrate something, the participant changed to the third person. He or she would answer something like, one would do such and such, or a good supervisor would do such and such, rather than using the first person and saying I do such and such. This happened twice during two interviews and with the same question. The first time it happened, I had to quickly think about whether I would drill down further and ask specifically what he or she does. Since I

had personal knowledge of the supervisor's skills and abilities, I quickly decided not to drill down further. I knew this participant and knew he seldom demonstrated what he was describing. He knew the theory of what a supervisor should do, but does not do it in practice most of the time. I thought that if I drilled down, it might embarrass and even discourage the participant. He might then relay to the other participants that the interview was embarrassing and suggest to the others not to participate in my research. Luckily, the change from speaking in the first person to speaking in the third person only occurred twice during this research. On both occasions, at the end of the interview I was able to re-visit the particular question in a different manner and talk about some of the hardest challenges in supervising members. It was at this point that both participants suggested that the area was perhaps one of their weaknesses.

Another revelation that occurred during the writing of chapter 3 was that I had already researched many portions of this report. The report was now sewing together all the learning that had taken place over the past 2 years. All the course contents and discussions during this 2-year journey were interrelated and came together in this document. The online discussions we held and the quotes we used from the various researchers were valuable sources of information that could and should be used during the writing of the report. Hindsight is a marvellous teacher.

I also enjoyed the analysis portion of the action research project. Learning, I would say, is the key theme that the front-line supervisors were reporting to me. They want to learn, and this feedback was refreshing to hear. My participants were not just members at the end of their career or newly promoted members in the rank who had all the answers or did not know enough to say anything. They had very rich ideas and suggestions. They all wanted to learn, for the betterment of themselves, their subordinates, and the entire organization.

Personal Growth

My final lesson learned was that I have more stamina than I ever imagined. I have thoroughly enjoyed the journey, although it has been a difficult climb. I realized, though, that where there is a will, there is a way. After leaving Residency 2, I embarked on a physical relocation to another province, sold a house, and moved to a new position requiring much learning and much travelling. I began to have a house constructed while living in a small barrack room for more than 5 months. Most of my belongings were in storage, and I did not have full access to the Internet owing to limitations imposed by our high-security levels and firewalls at work. I was unable to bring with me much of my already researched work.

I learned that I was not alone on this journey, and the many phone and e-mail conversations with colleagues and discussions with my faculty advisor contributed to my completion of the journey. I gathered strength from everyone and truly learned along the journey. "People who have a support system have the environment and tools to succeed" (Maxwell, 1995, p. 79). The climb was treacherous and tiresome, and I used several rest periods along the way to gather the momentum to finally reach the top. The experience was a true leadership challenge for me.

Final Thoughts

My final thoughts pertain to my growth and vision as a leader. I now have a better understanding of the word passion. When I initially selected this project, I knew I had a keen interest in the topic. As the project rolled out, and especially during the difficult times when I was trying to tie the project together, my personal definition of passion became clearer and clearer. My meaning of passion was expanded from "a keen interest" to courage and confidence

to continue with the research topic. Without the deeper and personal meaning of passion for the study, there would not have been an end or a conclusion. When I was pressed with time lines and competing interests, the passion for the project seemed to rise up and shine in my heart, which motivated me to put words to paper and submit drafts of chapters. The unavoidable delays were actually helpful, as they made me step back and review what I had completed, and I revisited some ideas that in turn gave me a different perspective on other ideas. For now, I have managed to complete this portion of the journey.

To truly finish this journey, I have to share my vision with the management in our organization. I must strive to have the recommendations endorsed and put into practice and on a regular basis. As Kouzes and Posner (2002) wrote, "leaders cannot command commitment, only inspire it" (p. 16).

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Name: _____

Years in Corporal rank: _____

Years of service: _____

Q1 Can you recall when you were first promoted to the rank of corporal, how you felt in terms of readiness for these new duties?

Q2 Further to this question, can you recall any specific incidents that you felt very well prepared for and not very well prepared for?

Q3 Can you recall any steps, procedures or training you became engaged in shortly after assuming your duties as a corporal that you feel helped you adjust to your new duties?

Q4 What do you do now for yourself to learn and develop your skills as a supervisor?

Q5 Do you have a mentor or a coach? If yes, can you describe how this works? How do you use this person to assist you with your development?

During the past few years, police work has changed dramatically and is still changing. Accountability is being monitored, management reviews are being conducted regularly, our computers systems are changing (SPURS, CIIDS, ROADS to PROS), and district policing, bridging the gap and the balanced scorecards are further new initiatives that the RCMP is involved with.

Q6 Have you received adequate information/training to keep up with these initiatives?

Q7 What can the organization do or should have done to ensure you receive adequate training and knowledge for these initiatives?

Q8 What do you do to specifically develop your subordinates?

Q9 What do you do to demonstrate your leadership in your unit?

Q10 Do you have any suggestions or ideas regarding the development of members at the corporal rank?

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in a research project concerning front line supervision as part of the requirements for a Master of Arts in Leadership and Training.

The student concerned is Ruby Burns from the Criminal Operations Branch, "L" Division, HQ, RCMP, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by contacting either Dr. Gerry Nixon, dean of Royal Roads University or Ms. Brigitte Harris, MALT/MADL Associate Faculty, Royal Roads University, Victoria, BC. This document constitutes as agreement to take part in a research project, the objective is to study the knowledge, skills and abilities of front line supervisors. I agree to be interviewed by Ruby Burns. I understand that all information disclosed is confidential and voluntary. I understand that I can withdraw from this research at any time throughout this research project. I understand that the interview will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes and I consent to being audio taped.

I understand that no harm will come to me, no deception will be used and that all information disclosed is anonymous. I understand that the information will be kept in a secure location by Ruby Burns for the next five years.

I understand that once this verbal interview is complete, Ruby Burns will send me the written transcript and that I am entitled to make all the necessary changes to ensure accuracy of my statements.

I give Ruby Burns permission to quote me from my statements for her research project as long as my name is kept anonymous and confidential.

A copy of the final report will be housed at Royal Roads University and will be publicly accessible.

By signing this form, I give free and informed consent to participate in this interview.

Name of participant:_____ Date: _____

Ruby Burns, Interviewer _____ Date:_____