

LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR POLICE SERGEANTS AND FIRST-LINE SUPERVISORS

A MULTI-SITE COMPARISON



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RESEARCH SUMMARY

Many current police workforce challenges drive the need for leadership training at the sergeant and first-line supervisor level, including rapid turnover forced by early retirements, the lack of consensus among police agencies as to specifically what leadership skills first-line supervisors may need, and the lack of budgetary resources in many agencies to facilitate such training externally. Additionally, the shortage of comprehensive and current empirical literature examining sergeant and first-line supervisor leadership leaves organizations with few resources with which to support their own training programs. This multi-site comparison study examines the experiences of three medium-sized law enforcement agencies that conducted sergeant leadership training internally. The study traces the training programs' trajectories from training needs assessment to the completion of the training and examines how the agencies identified internal experts to facilitate the training. It also provides feedback from training participants about program character. Important features of training implementation, such as scheduling and evaluation, are also described in this assessment.

This case comparison provides important lessons for police executive leadership in anticipating similar needs and hopefully will assist in identifying police in-service training landscapes, particularly in the areas of professional development, career laddering and employee engagement strategies. We believe that these three experiences, although discrete, originated from the belief that sergeants, first-line supervisors and middle-managers in policing embody a unique and critical role, and that training these individuals to be leaders is an issue of ongoing concern. The comparison between these agencies' experiences that follows includes statements about how the agencies established training topics that met perceived need, garnered buy-in from department personnel, scheduled and implemented the training, and adjusted the program as needed to remain flexible. This document also discusses whether these three programs have potential for longevity within each department.

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PREFACE

In 2014, during data collection for a training evaluation at Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety in Michigan, I spoke with many line-level Kalamazoo Public Safety Officers who identified the need for newly promoted sergeants in the department to acquire what they believed to be necessary leadership skills for that role. This need was echoed by command staff as a horizon concern because departmental promotions were accelerating due to increasing retirements. During this time, police managerial interest in sergeant training and quantifiable skills for the role of first-line supervisor began to increase nationally as concerns over succession planning became evident. At the time, police leaders and researchers alike noted a lack of supportive empirical research about the assessment of skills needed by patrol sergeants and the manner by which agencies identified and addressed this need. Moreover, although there were numerous anecdotal experiences of police agencies who had conducted sergeant leadership training, no comprehensive assessment of the ways in which police departments trained their line-level supervisors for leadership yet existed. This concern was of growing interest. One Kalamazoo officer predicted, “We’re going to need leaders – not just supervisors.”

Command staff at Kalamazoo were motivated to act, and in collaboration, we drafted a set of potential leadership training topics, a training schedule, and protocol for the delivery of this training. The resulting training experiences targeted newly promoted (and potential future) sergeants in developing what the department identified as necessary first-line supervisor skills. The training model was exploratory but resulted in positive feedback from officers. Within a few months, Gwinnett County Sheriff’s Office in suburban

Atlanta, Georgia, expressed an interest in conducting similar training in their department. They developed a sergeant training course, albeit with adjustments to scheduling, needs assessment and training delivery, which were unique to their agency. This training was delivered within the following year, and feedback again was positive. By 2015, the Gulfport Police Department on the Mississippi Gulf Coast had become aware of these two agencies’ experiences and developed their own sergeant leadership training program after assessing the strengths and potential of Kalamazoo’s and Gwinnett County’s models. Their program was likewise adjusted to suit their unique needs, and was delivered in the fall of 2015, with feedback obtained the following spring. In the spirit of collaboration across the miles, command staff from Gulfport subsequently visited Kalamazoo in order to compare their unique sergeant training experience, as well as share ideas for future training endeavors in this area.

This publication documents these three agencies’ experiences training their line-level supervisors and sergeants for leadership skills in order to share with the broader police research and practitioner community the details of training needs assessments, schedule, content and feedback gained. Our hope is that agencies, which have also determined needs in this area, can gain knowledge about how to conduct similar exercises on their own, or through research-practitioner partnerships or a peer agency, in order to improve sergeant leadership knowledge and skills.

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THREE SERGEANT LEADERSHIP TRAINING EXPERIENCES

STUDY BACKGROUND

THE CRITICAL ROLE OF SERGEANTS

Police research has rarely addressed the critical role and responsibilities of the patrol sergeant or first-line supervisor. Moreover, there are few studies of actual training approaches utilized to inculcate these individuals with skills and knowledge desired for these leadership roles. Police workforce management, however, has grown in attention and intrigue in the last decade (Batts et al., 2012). Empirical research has acknowledged that sergeants play a critical role in guiding the initial career development of subordinate officers, in mentoring and engaging subordinate employees, and in transmitting organizational values, among other social and bureaucratic tasks (Allen, 1992; Brown, 1988; FBI, 1997; Van Maanen, 1984). Importantly, research has found that sergeants and their leadership styles play a role in determining the job satisfaction of line-level officers (Ercikti et al., 2011; Griffin et al., 2001; Ingram & Lee, 2015) in disseminating values conducive to community policing behavior (Vito et al., 2005), and in patrol officer behavior and policy implementation overall (Engel, 1999; Engel, 2000; Ingram & Weidner, 2011). Research has also found that agency adoption of innovative policy and organizational change relates directly to middle-management attention and supervisor buy-in (Buchanan et al., 2005; Chenhall & Euske, 2007; Geller & Swanger, 1995; Morabito, 2008).

So far, research is inconclusive about the desired leadership skills and characteristics needed in police supervisors and the content and process of training designed to bring about these features. In police research, training evaluations are notoriously rare. Although there is a constellation of police supervisor and sergeant training for leadership roles, little to no evaluation of these programs has been conducted (Biloxi Police Department, 2014; Bynum, 2008; Camp et al., 2013; Cappitelli & Evans, 2014; Green et al., 2014; Jenks et al., 2007; Ohio Law Enforcement Foundation, 2014).

This study acknowledges the shortcomings of police workforce research by presenting and comparing three programs undertaken in law enforcement agencies of varying jurisdictional character to train sergeants for leadership roles. Each of these agencies' varying experiences included many of the same steps and procedures, but in a way that was uniquely specific to their organizations. This document assesses and contrasts these experiences in order to highlight the critical role sergeant leadership training may play in police work. The agencies compared here are the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS) in Michigan, the Gwinnett County Sheriff's Office (GCSO) in Georgia, and the Gulfport Police Department (GPD) in Mississippi.

TRAINING FOR LEADERSHIP IN POLICE WORK

Like other police training topics, the content and process of training for leadership skills and knowledge in policing is as various as the number of venues and programs that may exist. These include leadership orientation, values, coaching, methods

of supervision, discipline, problem-solving, evaluation, counseling, critical incident management, and handling problem employees, among innumerable other topics. To enumerate each of these past or present programs would be a difficult task, but from a review of existing programs, basic pillars of leadership training can be said to resonate with law enforcement agencies. The three agencies involved in this case comparison had not communicated with each other about the leadership topics prior to beginning each training program, but created their own program from assessed need. The topics were seen as timely, relevant and essential, given each of the agencies' determination, and were developed over the course of program creation into deliverable training modules with assigned trainers.

When it comes to training process and delivery itself, again, there are myriad ways in which this has occurred in past police training experience, as it did with the three agencies involved. This is one component of the training discussed here, where there was some awareness of prior training on the subject. Scheduling constraints, the annual requirements of training for specific topics, the existence of internal and external training resources, including personnel, and departmental buy-in were all seen as determinants of the leadership training surveyed here.

STUDY APPROACH AND DATA COLLECTION

This overall study originated in 2012 with an assessment of training for adaptability that was conducted in the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety in Michigan in the United States. As part of that evaluation, ride-alongs were conducted with officers (called Public Safety Officers, or PSOs, in Kalamazoo) who, as part of a post-test evaluation, were asked about the training experience they had just undertaken. A PSO, when reflecting on the impending retirements of many managerial personnel, stated that in the future, "We're going to need leaders - not just supervisors" (Scheer, 2014). Researchers brought the comment to the attention of command staff in the department during a presentation related to the training evaluation, and the need for sergeant-level leadership training was recognized. The research staff assisted the department with crafting, scheduling and evaluating the training experience and provided feedback to the agency to inform and improve future training on the topic during 2013 and 2014.

In 2014, research staff alerted training personnel from the Gwinnett County Sheriff's Office in Georgia to the Kalamazoo experience, and the agency began to conduct its own internal needs assessment for this training. The experience of that agency was markedly different in training content, delivery and scheduling to that of Kalamazoo. Again, the same research staff was invited to conduct an evaluation of the training as allowed by the agency once it was completed, and an assessment was presented to GCSO training staff in 2015.

Research staff discussed both of these training experiences with command staff from the Gulfport Police Department in Mississippi in 2015. The agency had an interest in delivering similar training to a sample of its middle management as a pilot program and began to create a similar training program that summer. The Gulfport experience was again different from the other two in multiple ways, which are discussed in this document. The training program and evaluation was completed in early 2016.

The interest and involvement of research staff in creating and evaluating these three programs followed a pattern in which the researcher was at least partially embedded within each agency. The researcher provided sample training curricula and resources to staff in order to brainstorm and devise each training program, assisted staff with scheduling meetings and compiling notes, observed training as it was delivered and compiled notes on training delivery and participant reaction, and conducted pre- and post-test evaluations of training efficacy through the use of a questionnaire, in-person interviews and roundtable advisory panel discussions. The role of the researcher was to assist the agencies with initiating and managing each process as they evolved. It can be stated that the researcher's involvement, while critical to the development and outcome of each of the three programs, was not impressed upon each agency, and the researcher was allowed different degrees of involvement among them. However, despite the agencies arriving at the overall decision to engage in and offer the training itself, the researcher's involvement and interaction may be said to be a critical component in both the process and outcome of the training due to the embedded nature of a knowledgeable and committed researcher in each case.

SAMPLE AND RECRUITMENT

The commitment and participation of each of these agencies cannot be said to imply a "sample" for comparison or evaluation in the strict methodological sense, given that each of these training experiences was discrete and the training programs were conducted in succession and in isolation from each other. Neither agency was said to have returned to a prior agency's experience for reflection, comparison or improvement. Each agency was chosen for this particular evaluation due to the involvement of the same researcher in each of the training experiences, albeit to a different degree with each.

AGENCY CHARACTERISTICS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The following demographic data (see Table 1) reflects the different department characteristics and demography at the time each training program was implemented.

Table 1.
Agency demographics

Agency name, location, year of training	Number of sworn officers ¹	Jurisdiction area and population (approximate)	Number of training participants ²	Specific jurisdictional distinction
Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety, Michigan (USA), 2014	205	25 square miles, 76,000 persons	14 (13)	Department is a public safety agency with cross-trained police, fire and EMS officers.
Gwinnett County Sheriff's Office, Georgia (USA), 2014	750	430 square miles, 910,000 persons	8 (7)	Department is responsible primarily for managing correctional facility and court services.
Gulfport Police Department, Mississippi (USA), 2015	158	64 square miles, 67,000 persons	12	Department was directly affected by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

¹ This figure corresponds to the number of state-certified, uniformed officers with arrest powers that were engaged in routine police duties (including detectives, K9 handlers, narcotics officers, and others with a specific collateral duty) at the time of the training delivery.

² This figure reflects individuals who started each training program upon start date; a number in parentheses would reflect the number who completed the entire program.

TRAINING PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Each department's training experience was unique to its own institutional environment. They were developed by staff who were aware of similar programs, and in the case of both Gwinnett County and Gulfport, with knowledge that such training had been attempted in each previous agency evaluated here. However, awareness of each other's training experiences was limited in that curricula, and outcomes were unknown. Each agency's experience occurred largely as any other police agency would make the determination that in-service training be developed and implemented, as evidenced by the largely autonomous manner each agency undertook the entire training program. The narrative that follows is intended to provide information about these specific dimensions of each training program:

1. Method of assessing training need ("needs assessment")
2. Number and rank of individuals involved in the training creation and delivery
3. The existence of a stand-alone Training Division
4. Establishment of topics for the training
5. Involvement of trainers external to the department, if any
6. Matching facilitators to topics
7. "Selling" the program to departmental stakeholders and participants
8. Scheduling the training
9. Training objectives
10. Implementing the training
11. Ability to adjust program in-progress, as needed
12. Evaluation of the program and providing feedback
13. Longevity of the program (foreseen and actual)

THE KALAMAZOO EXPERIENCE: "COMMAND DEVELOPMENT TRAINING"

The Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety is a fully cross-trained public safety department located in southern mid-Michigan and serves a jurisdiction of approximately 75,000 full-time residents. At the start of the Kalamazoo training conducted in 2014, the agency had recently experienced a series of promotions to the rank of sergeant, which resulted in PSOs taking on increased and previously unknown leadership roles. Kalamazoo's patrol units, platoons, are responsible for providing police, fire and EMS services throughout the city. Sergeants on each platoon are tasked with first-line supervisory duties related to scene management, immediate supervision, and maintenance of platoon morale and productivity.

The Kalamazoo training experience, as previously discussed, emanated from plans made by the department's stand-alone Training Division (then staffed with three sworn PSOs specializing in police, fire and EMS training respectively, one sergeant and

one captain) to fulfill PSO interest in inculcating leadership skills in its newly promoted sergeant cohort, as well as other recently promoted sergeants. Sergeant training participants, hand-selected by the training captain, included recent or prior sergeants who were deemed eligible to receive the training due to their schedule, placement or responsibility. The captain utilized no empirical assessment to determine the list of participants, but was instead guided by the practical limitations of the department's training schedule and trainee availability, as well as recency of their promotion.

³ For further information and historiography about public safety agencies, see J. Wilson (2016), *Public safety consolidation: A multiple case study assessment of implementation and outcome*, Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

⁴ KDPS has unique schedule and training limitations due to its public safety capacity, primarily due to the prevalence of fire skills training as the dominant part of its in-service training regimen.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND TRAINING CREATION

A researcher from Michigan State University, who had been embedded in the department's training division since 2011, assisted the training captain with a basic training needs assessment. The researcher rode with PSOs on patrol and spoke with lieutenants and other command staff to solicit potential topics they felt should be included in a hypothesized sergeant leadership training program. Additionally, the researcher gained information pertaining to the degree the training would be supported by line-level officers and command staff. Training topics for Kalamazoo's Command Development are reflected in Table 2.

Training objectives were created by the individual trainers once they were assigned their specific topic and communicated to the training captain for inclusion in the subsequent graphic organizer distributed to the trainees. These objectives often resembled suggestions made by PSOs and management during the needs assessment phase as potential training goals. The training itself was given the title, "Command Development Training," as the training captain wanted to tie the experience to broader succession planning.

Due to the unique scheduling challenges of the Kalamazoo Public Safety model, which likewise constrained other features, such as time off, overtime potential and patrol allocation, the training was devised as a series of frequent "roundtable" discussions, as opposed to a training course. The sergeants would attend the roundtables on duty in the first hour of their respective platoon shifts, of which there were four department-wide. The location for the training was determined to be the agency's centrally located headquarters, in a conference room with a conference table, as the captain wanted to create an environment for discussion and idea-sharing.

Scheduling the training proved easy for the training captain, who was used to creating and overseeing the delivery of in-service training plans for other topics. The captain devised a three-month schedule, where the sergeants would rotate through the 11 diverse roundtable discussions according to their work schedules and used a “training passport” or printed organizer to take notes, gather signatures from trainers displaying attendance, and keep basic information pertaining to lessons learned in a unified fashion. This “passport” concept had been used by the department for other similar training in the past. The training passports were kept by each sergeant and brought to the sessions.

Matching the facilitators to the suggested topics was again done instinctively by the training captain. He surmised that many of the department’s lieutenants, who had themselves recently promoted from sergeant, would be able to share important perspectives with the newly promoted sergeants. Initially, some lieutenants were wary to “buy in” to the training, as a few stated retrospectively that they felt as though being tasked with the training was a burden; however, once word of the training spread department-wide, many persons at the same rank, who were not asked to be facilitators, began to question why they had not been asked, which created a form of interest, support and exclusivity to the training that was unforeseen and fostered camaraderie. Some were selected because of basic tactical knowledge, such as critical incident response and fire scene management. The training captain also decided to allow the department’s longest-serving sergeant to deliver the roundtable session on “Sergeant How-Tos,” intended to be a nuts-and-bolts discussion of typical sergeant duties and pitfalls, which eventually became a frank sergeant-to-sergeant discussion that the trainer decided was best delivered with no command staff present. The Chief of Public Safety was expected to deliver the final session, a summary of their training experience.

At the last minute, before training was to begin, the training captain decided to include some PSOs who had not yet promoted to sergeant, ostensibly so that they could prepare for the expectation of promoting and also to influence those who were not chosen to attend to reflect on their potential readiness for promotion. This was intended to promote prospective program longevity.

TRAINING IMPLEMENTATION

The training took approximately three months to deliver all 11 roundtable discussions to the various sergeants. The size of the roundtable groups varied because of the schedule but were as small as three participants (to one trainer) and as large as six. The reason for this fluctuation was that once the training began, many sergeants would attend off-schedule roundtables in expectation of future days off work. However, 13 total sergeants completed all 11 roundtables in the three months of the training.

Participant and trainer interest in the training and morale fluctuated from the beginning to the end. Notably, the training (which was suggested by PSOs and command staff to the researcher) went through a life-cycle of curiosity, integration and ownership. The facilitators began to hone their presentation and discussion skills as the training evolved, some opting to use supportive visuals such as PowerPoint, and some choosing a more scenario-based question-and-answer approach. Each roundtable session was distinctly different and entirely a product of the facilitator’s personality and preference for training. Among the observed sessions, the introductory leadership session and the session on coaching garnered the most discussion and sharing of sergeant perspective on specific highlights of each facet of leadership

and management, while the sessions on fire scene management and responding to critical incidents were styled as scenario-based challenges with a high degree of interest. The sergeant-to-sergeant discussion was also seen as valuable from retrospective discussions with participants, as many sergeants felt that session allowed them an opportunity for peer relationship-building.

The researcher noted high morale for and participation in the program throughout. Non-participating sergeants stated that the program was evolving positively and there was confidence in the department’s commitment to developing better line-level supervisors as a result of the program. It also appeared that trainers began to take ownership of the program as it was implemented, resulting in a degree of enthusiasm for the training program.

Reactions of the trainees themselves was positive and reflective of feelings of departmental engagement. The newly promoted and expected-to-promote sergeants who participated in the program stated that

- The training was delivered enthusiastically and that each had distinct favorite instructors, topics and program features;
- The schedule was appropriate for their traditional work scheduling;
- The length of the sessions was conducive to discussion, and they appreciated the diversity by which each roundtable discussant took ownership of their own session and made it distinct; and
- Positive morale for the promotion to sergeant was enhanced; there were moments of genuine honesty about fears, challenges and sincere question-answer exchanges in each of the roundtable sessions.

TRAINING EVALUATION AND PROSPECTIVE LONGEVITY

The Kalamazoo experience lasted just over three months, and the researcher performed post-training interviews with participants and trainers at one month following the training completion and again at six months. The evaluation suggested there was need for continuing the program in some form and making it a part of the promotional process each time a wave of promotions to sergeant may occur. There were other suggestions for improvement, namely the incorporation of other personnel to act as trainers, and electronic media in the form of thumb drives to contain training materials, relevant articles on leadership, videos, and other important features be made available. Participants were asked to discuss particularly memorable moments of the training that they felt were valued; one stated that the initial revelation that (as one facilitator put it) “the sergeant is the most important role in the department – PERIOD” brought a feeling of genuine urgency, community and focus that was unique and justified the entire program.

Feedback and evaluation data about the training was provided to Training Division staff and the training captain shortly after post-test data was evaluated. The researcher and the Training Division both felt that the experience, although it was a pilot program, was successful in engaging newly promoted line-level supervisors by creating learning opportunities for both superior officers and peers. The Kalamazoo Command Development Training experienced a second implementation in 2016, when then-promoted sergeants went through an abridged form of the training. The agency has

stated that there will be review of the training in anticipation of future promotional periods, and that with the overall experience being positive, feels comfortable institutionalizing the training. However, since there has been turnover at the Training Division itself, there may be interruptions to projected program longevity with different training topics taking precedence. At last contact, the department has institutionalized training objectives for delivery in a different manner consistent with projected promotional processes.



Table 2.
Topics of training in each venue

Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety, “Command Development Training”	Gwinnett County Sheriff’s Office, “Supervisor Development Course”	Gulfport Police Department, “First-Line Supervisor Leadership”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership (introductory session) • Accountability • Police legitimacy • Communication • Coaching • Responding to critical incidents • Cultural competency • Sergeant how-tos • Managing commercial fire scenes • Managing residential fire scenes • “From the Chief’s Desk” (final session with Chief of Public Safety) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation (introductory session) • Effective followership • Individual assessment • Microsoft products • Individual goal-setting • Leadership, performance management, supervision • Performance appraisals • Time management • Interpersonal relations/emotional intelligence • Accident investigations • Domestic violence and pursuit policy • Constitutional law • Sexual harassment • Management through consequences • FMLA/FSLA • Shift scheduling • Common medical issues • Supervising staff in corrections • Emergency/critical procedures • Class presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coaching/mentoring Leading by example Complain up, not down • Management overview: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The supervisor transition/ “from buddy to boss” Compstat Evaluations Liability Scene management Major crimes/critical incidents Time management Policy review PD operations • Conflict resolution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grievances Citizen complaints Troubled employees • Decision making: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursuits Case management/ report review Ownership • Human resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time clock program Computer systems Sick leave/FMLA Budget • What makes me “me”

THE GWINNETT COUNTY EXPERIENCE: “SUPERVISOR DEVELOPMENT COURSE”

The Gwinnett County Sheriff’s Office is an approximately 750-sworn member sheriff’s department in suburban Atlanta, Georgia, serving Gwinnett County, the second largest county in the state of Georgia by population. The sheriff’s office services a population of approximately one million persons and operates a large suburban correctional facility. At the time of the department’s decision to create and deliver leadership training to its supervisory staff, the department had a newly appointed training major and a dedicated training staff. The decision to deliver the training was made with knowledge that Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety had been training similarly (as told by the Kalamazoo-embedded researcher), but the training was developed internally and without observation of that agency’s experience.

The sheriff’s office desired to train its sergeants and corporals (a rank just below a sergeant) on principles of leadership as outlined by the training major’s own provided material and objectives. The training major created an assessment strategy for individuals who would participate in the program (including a Myers-Briggs Assessment and a writing test) to ensure that those who participated were able to meet the training’s outcomes and deliverables. The researcher was able to submit a pre- and post-test survey to training participants and was able to observe two different training exercises, a lecture and a scenario-based activity.

TRAINING CREATION

The Gwinnett County Supervisor Development Course was a months-long, classroom-based experience, complete with assigned textbooks and reading, graded assignments, which the participants were to fulfill, and classroom presentations and activities. The training was structured this way due to the training major’s decision to provide supervisor and leadership reading materials, immersive educational experiences, and scenario-based training in a classroom environment so as to resemble external supervisor leadership courses to which agencies normally send officers. Having been exposed to these types of external courses, the major wanted to recreate this experience internally, and for scheduling reasons, it took months to deliver. The class met at different intervals (generally weekly to bi-weekly) from September 2014 to April 2015. There were 26 specific classroom sessions and 22 topics; the additional sessions without topics allotted for classroom presentations, floating dates due to scheduling changes, and potential field experiences outside the agency. The training was delivered in a classroom in the department’s headquarters.

Training objectives were detailed in a course guide that resembled a college-level course syllabus. These objectives displayed attention to creating, as closely as possible, a course befitting a college seminar that would be offered at the university level. The objectives were tied specifically to outcomes that would be measured by specific assessment exercises, such as graded tests and written work. Group projects, job shadowing of existing sergeants, a focus paper on a specific, approved research topic, “table top exercises,” which were activity-based, field experiences, online training modules, and other assessments and written exercises were included in this rigorous program. The course guide broke each of the specific sessions down into individual standards and objectives, which the participants were expected to follow.

Training topics varied, and by comparison to Kalamazoo’s experience, were more rigorous in their training of identifiable skills (for example, Microsoft products training, Family Medical Leave Act training, reviews of departmental policy, and conducting performance appraisals). Training topics ranging from effective leadership, interpersonal relations/emotional intelligence, communication, emergency and critical procedures, and management of different types of employees were delivered. At its face, the training was a robust course in which participants could be expected to be actively busy and engaged in multiple topics related not only to policy and procedure within the department, but also broader identifiable competencies related to leadership, often not specific to criminal justice settings. The readings ranged from textbook materials and articles to films depicting important leadership topics. Trainers were determined by matching the specific topics to individuals both within and outside the agency that the training major felt were the best to provide this information. There were “guest speakers” in the classroom sense, who were brought to provide an outsider’s perspective. The training effort was intended to embody the training major’s outlook that the act of having the training should send a message to the entire department about commitment to personnel development. All training topics from Gwinnett County’s Supervisor Development Course are shown in Table 2.

TRAINING DELIVERY AND TRAJECTORY

The training was elaborate and painstakingly delivered, and as is the case with many time-consuming and costly training courses of this type, participant and departmental buy-in was essential in order to see the training through to completion. Each course followed a similar process that first identified the social science/legal foundation, what and why actions are performed, applicable operational procedures and practical exercises. Each session lasted for one to five days, and entire work shifts with breaks incorporated. The department’s lieutenants and other sergeants felt that the course was essential in educating its new sergeants about not only the essential components of supervision specific to their agency (such as policy review and procedural identification), but in also exposing these persons to leadership trends and the managerial sciences. At times, the course would be thought to inspire a degree of fatigue among participants, but in retrospective evaluation (the researcher met with the participants just following course completion), the trainees felt invigorated and informed by the various training topics and exercises. After a series of courses were completed, including emotional intelligence, dealing with problem employees, and management through consequences, each student conducted practical exercises of dealing with a problem and troubled employee. The agency used professional actors, and the exercise was observed and assessed (using established criteria) by three command staff personnel, who provided immediate feedback to the student after the exercise. Feelings of empowerment, advancement, confidence, and overall discovery were shared. One participant likened the experience to a college course they had taken and said that the delivery of the training represented a unique and positive step in their professional development.

The trajectory and length of the training did have an impact on trainees’ impressions of many of the larger assignments, however. After engaging in an hours-long training exercise, with multiple more on the horizon, many participants stated that they began to

feel fatigued with the responsibility of completing a major research assignment. However, the participants stated that the entirety of the course, and the length of time it took to complete it, required commitment unlike other training exercises they had engaged in.

THE GULFPORT EXPERIENCE: “FIRST-LINE SUPERVISOR LEADERSHIP”

Gulfport Police Department, located on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, serves a population of approximately 67,000 persons. The city is a magnet for tourism and special events, such as annual car shows, beach weekends and spring break events. The city suffered extreme infrastructure and economic damage as a result of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, and by the time of its experiment with a first-line supervisor leadership training in 2015, the department had seen the successful rebuilding of its workforce and was in the middle of a projected promotional process due to retirement that was predicted to last for the next several years. The idea for the training came when command staff were alerted to both the Kalamazoo and Gwinnett County experiences by the researcher, although it was likely that such a program would have occurred, due to the expected need brought by rapid promotions that were taking place.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND TRAINING CREATION

The Gulfport training lieutenant and sergeant, and the operations captain, acted as a creative union that devised a one-week, fully immersive training course that would take place in 2015. The scheduling constraints, which would require backfill and overtime pay, were mitigated by the restriction of attendees to a single representative of the “newly promoted sergeant” or middle-manager cohort from the department’s diverse offices: motorcycle officers, patrol officers, detectives and even dispatch were some of the groups who were represented by a single sergeant, who was seen as attending a pilot program that would be evaluated for efficacy after the training was completed. In this way, the agency was sure to “adjust” the program based on post-training commentary and suggestions for future use, as needed.

The topics devised were grouped around five broad categories: leadership, management and supervision overview, conflict resolution, decision making and human resources. In this manner, the Gulfport staff saw the ability to train for both broad theoretical concepts, such as management theory, and more practical skills, such as communication techniques and information technology. The schedule was decided to be one week, Monday through Friday, in a daily eight-hour time block. The training was delivered in the department’s situation room conference venue, which allowed for both classroom tasks and free exchange of ideas. Training topics for Gulfport’s First-Line Supervisor Training are shown in Table 2.

The matching of trainers to topics entailed breaking down each of the five “daily categories” into subtopics, which were delivered almost exclusively by command staff and lieutenants. This was a proposition that required buy-in from many of the agency’s seasoned veterans. The concept of training sergeants appealed to many of the trainers, but post-training feedback disclosed that many training participants felt there should have been more

oversight and consideration to assigning trainers. Specifically, a few trainers were unsure of their specific role or why they had been chosen for the topic, which initially affected their enthusiasm to train the material.

Training objectives were determined by the individual instructors once they were assigned a specific topic. For instance, the operations captain and training sergeant were assigned two different topics under the category of “management” and “conflict resolution,” and in creating their own hour block of training for that specific topic were required to submit training objectives to the training lieutenant. These objectives were then printed in the “training passport” for the trainees to ensure organized understanding of training goals.

A few select features of the Gulfport training mirrored what had been done in the other two environments, but were adjusted to be Gulfport-specific. Reading material on many topics was distributed by the instructors. In the case of a graphic organizer, the “training passport” was utilized by the trainees as a way of guiding them through the week, although post-training feedback suggested that this method could be greatly expanded in future training efforts to consist of an actual notebook (even electronic) for more extensive note-taking.

TRAINING IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

The training included the Gulfport chief of police delivering a summary of the entire training in order to provide context to the week. The classroom environment proved conducive to many of the more skills-based training sessions (such as policy review and Family Medical Leave Act), while there was still a feeling of discussion when more practical and scenario-based training occurred (such as dealing with troubled employees). Based on post-training feedback, attendees also appreciated the diverse cross-section of officers within the department that were in attendance, as it was rare for many of them to attend the same training course; in that case, it appeared as though the more conceptual approach of the training supporting leadership was successful in uniting diverse supervisors across multiple units. As the training progressed throughout the week, the diversity of topics, perceived importance to their role within the department, accessibility and passion for the different topics reflected in the many trainers, and the conceptual “big picture,” left the participants enthusiastic and with feelings of overall training success.

The training was unique in that, similar to Kalamazoo’s experience, the different modules were reflective of the personalities of the trainers yet unified under the broader organizational category of leadership training. In this manner, as with the other two experiences, a full spectrum of varieties of leadership styles and behaviors were offered as agency-specific leadership examples for the new supervisors to become acquainted with in context. This was one of the strongest lessons of the Gulfport training as evidenced by post-training feedback. A strong example of this was the unit called “What Makes Me ‘Me,’” in which the participants were urged to share something personal about their lives that made them different and unique and talk about how this unique characteristic defined them as people and as potential leaders. This session was viewed positively by all participants and resulted in moments of mutual respect and group cohesion and left impressions of departmental diversity.

TRAINING LONGEVITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Like Kalamazoo and Gwinnett County, the expected longevity of the program was contingent upon the program being used for future expected promotional cycles. The program was received positively in post-training discussions with the researcher, and suggestions for training improvement were extensive and endeavored to bring about a better program for individuals who were expected to promote to the rank of sergeant in the coming years.

What is remarkable about the Gulfport experience is that many of the participants stated that such training approaches and ideas were seen as continuous evidence of a new training ethic within the department to proactively resolve expected challenges ahead of their arrival through needs assessment and training innovation. In this manner, the agency utilizes training of this nature diagnostically to continuously improve. This was a feature of the training that many of the participants indicated was, similar to the Gwinnett County training major's outlook, indicative of organizational commitment and employee engagement that was sincere.



CHAPTER THREE

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The three discrete training experiences were evaluated by an external researcher, embedded in each department, for specific themes and lessons which could inform future leadership training in these departments and elsewhere. In Table 3, multiple points of comparison are shown for each of the training experiences to stimulate ideas as to how agencies may utilize the opportunity to train for line-level leadership.

Table 3.
Training experiences compared

	Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety	Gwinnett County Sheriff's Office	Gulfport Police Department
Training needs assessment and goals	Conducted in tandem with researcher ride-alongs with PSOs and interviews with command staff to determine training goals	An outside consultant trained in conducting DACUM (Developing a Curriculum) task analysis	Conducted by agency command staff in determining goals
Number and rank of individuals involved in the training creation and delivery	11 persons, one assigned to each training topic	Approximately 20 persons were tasked with training delivery, but due to course length, this remained flexible	17 persons, with some teaching multiple topics
The existence of a stand-alone Training Division	Has a five-member Training Division, but division captain took charge of training creation	11-member, full-time training employees; training devised and/or coordinated largely by the training major	Training sergeant and operations captain coordinated and implemented the training with input from command staff
Establishment of topics for the training	Determined by the training division captain, informed by needs assessment	Topics based upon finding of the DACUM analysis	Determined by the operations captain, training sergeant and agency chief in pilot session
Involvement of trainers external to the department, if any	All trainers were internal (patrol lieutenant and higher)	Multiple external subject matter experts were used, including HR, attorneys, psychologists, law enforcement personnel	External trainers were used, as needed, such as city attorney and IT personnel
Matching facilitators to topics	Done by Training Division captain in order to equitably include persons who were deemed credible experts and knowledgeable	Done by training major in combination of schedule availability and subject matter expertise	Done by training sergeant and operations captain, based on subject matter expertise and perceived credibility

“Selling” the program to departmental stakeholders and participants	Program experienced rapid buy-in from trainee participants, trainers were initially tentative but quickly took ownership	Participant buy-in was determined by the rigorous nature of the course, post-training feedback indicated that program length was a factor	Program experienced mixed reactions from some trainers, but most trainer support and trainee buy-in was very high
Scheduling the training	Based upon public safety scheduling considerations, trainees attended 11 roundtable sessions for one hour over a three-month period	one to five-day training sessions according to pre-determined schedule, courses held weekly, except for holidays	One week of total training, eight hours per day; trainees paid overtime, as needed; backfill was utilized case-by-case
Training objectives	Determined by each trainer in creating their own training roundtable session on assigned topic, included in “training passport” for trainee	Determined by the training major using the DACUM analysis results	Determined by each trainer in creating their own session on assigned topic, objectives collected by operations captain
Ability to adjust program in progress, as needed	Program was very flexible due to potential incidents that could interfere with training sessions, trainees often “made up” missed training dates by attending others at different times	Program was flexible and included built-in “floating dates,” program experienced one drop-out due to scheduling conflicts	Program did not encounter need for adjustment; however, one session was completed earlier than anticipated, ending training for that day
Evaluation of the program and providing feedback	Researcher performed pre- and post-training interviews with participants, non-participating PSOs, and command staff, all feedback was reported to training captain and chief	Researcher and training major both performed separate evaluations, researcher performed post-training roundtable interviews and reported feedback to major	Researcher performed post-training roundtable interviews, and feedback was provided to training sergeant, operations captain and chief
Longevity of the program (foreseen and actual)	Program was projected to be reinitiated upon need	Program retention unknown due to staff turnover	Program was suggested by participants to be reinitiated upon need

LESSONS LEARNED

The following five takeaways are offered in discussion of the importance, relevance, structure and impact of the training experiences as observed at the three venues. While individual feedback sessions elicited a positive response and many details for improvement were provided by participants, these five themes were seen as having had the greatest import once staff and researchers reflected on the many years of training delivery and discussion.

- The specificity of the training to each agency's individual need was seen as the greatest strength of the training.* In each venue, participants stated that they either were aware of or had experienced “leadership training,” which was offered externally. As many police managers are aware, leadership training is one of the more commonly available in-service training topics offered at many venues and often proprietary in nature. A Gulfport trainee remarked, “There is time for other [external] schools, and that helps... but this was different; it was more beneficial for me in the short term.” A participant in Kalamazoo stated that the impression given by the more experienced managers and leaders was of “immediate value... to us as Kalamazoo sergeants” and spoke to a generational need to “give us something good. [New sergeants] expect to hear from them how to be successful.” This impression of the training being specific to their agency was also echoed in a feeling that “[external] supervisor training can be sort of generic... this wasn’t,” as stated by a Gulfport participant. A Gulfport trainer stated, “This provides us a better supervisor on the front end, and there will be time for future training to reinforce.” A Kalamazoo participant stated, “We work with these same people, trainers included, every day. This is exactly where we need to be learning this stuff – with those we trust.”
- The variety of leadership skills offered in each program by different facilitators contextualized and emphasized the relevance of the training.* Participants stated that the manner by which each of the training experiences occurred in a scheduled fashion, with special emphasis on different topics over time, made the training purpose more relevant because it was seen in the grander context of supervisor leadership. For instance, a Gwinnett County trainee stated, “The context in which we learned led me to think, ‘Hey, there’s something to this’... I don’t feel like this is being forced upon me.” Another participant from Gwinnett County echoed, “This type of training got my juices flowing; we became a cohesive unit.” The cohesion afforded by the context also affected the Gulfport lesson “What Makes Me ‘Me,’” in that the trust developed in the context of being surrounded by other new supervisors “made that really important. It wouldn’t have worked in any other context,” said a Gulfport trainee.
- The format of the training allowed for multiple leadership styles and ideas to be expressed.* The trainees acknowledged in each location that a strength of the program was in the multidimensionality of the training format and schedule in allowing for different trainers. This provided the trainees with a broader, more utilitarian sense of the breadth of leadership styles in each agency, and in the case of the use of subject-matter experts by Gulfport and Gwinnett County, a greater sense of organizational commitment. “We got the best people for each topic,” remarked a Gulfport participant, recognizing that the subject matter experts on legal issues of liability and other topics “made sure this was one of the best trainings [they] had.” A Kalamazoo trainee remarked that there was initially some concern that there was too much variation in each trainer’s interpretation of what constituted good leadership, but that as the sessions took place, a greater plan was brought into focus: “This was very hands-on in that we got to see everyone’s way of leading.” A Gwinnett County participant stated, “This was similar to how, on patrol, you might have several field training officers.”
- The training itself became a modeling exercise in leadership.* It was expected that the training would lead new supervisors (and in the case of Kalamazoo, potential future supervisors) to a stronger sense of organizational commitment and relationship-building. But the training appeared to have an even further effect in that it provided a modeling exercise for many of the participants to gain ideas for how they may resolve, with scenario-based training and creative input of their own, challenges on the job. “Without this [training], it appeared like we were set up to fail, in a way... this gives us so much in the way of ideas,” remarked a Kalamazoo participant. The same person stated that “we might start our own platoon in-service training” as a result, and that the previous culture was like supervisors were “being thrown into the fire... that was the culture for a long time, but now we’re changing the culture.”
- The training was seen as a potentially enduring driver of greater organizational change, with practical fear expressed that it may not.* In each venue, the training received positive feedback, along with very specific suggestions for improvement that were communicated to each agency’s command staff and stakeholder in training development. However, there was caution expressed in that, as is notorious in policing, organizational change can be the product of a small visionary group of persons, and when those transition to other areas in the agency (or leave), momentum can be lost. Each agency’s participants expressed doubt that the program will inevitably continue simply because it was seen as a positive step, due to the unknown capacities and resources of the agencies in the future with regard to motivation, vision and will to continue positive training.

CHAPTER FOUR

PERSPECTIVES OF POLICE LEADERS

LIEUTENANT TIMOTHY LOSO KALAMAZOO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

The patrol sergeant is one of the most critical positions to have in any department. The sergeant has the ability to teach, guide and direct officers in their assigned zone or district. Sergeants can be as active in their assignments as they desire and still have the responsibility of oversight to ensure that department goals are being met, officers are developing in their careers, and most importantly, officers are being safe in day-to-day patrol operations. The actions and leadership of the sergeant can have a lasting effect on officers who are under their supervision.

When I was promoted, our department was in transition with a number of senior officers retiring and new hiring classes going through the FTO program every six months. This influx of new officers and lost experience led to young sergeants being put into leadership roles over very young and inexperienced officers. Following old patterns, my official sergeant training was two nights of riding with a senior sergeant. My first night as a sergeant, we had a fire, and then a homicide with an additional suspect shot. The following night was the exact opposite, with nothing noteworthy happening. Night three, I was on my own, with the encouragement to call the shift lieutenant if I had any questions. Needless to say, there were many questions that followed, and faltering confidence that was built up over time and through experience.

A year later, it was enlightening and very helpful when we began the line-level supervisor training program. The ability to sit down and discuss the assigned topics with other newly promoted sergeants and the assigned senior sergeant or lieutenant helped to expand my knowledge base and draw from others' experiences. This program eventually blossomed a couple of years later into a sergeant academy where 10 newly promoted sergeants were able to go through two weeks of classroom presentations covering topics that had been covered during the initial training, as well as an intensive fire strategies and tactics course.

Gratefully, our department continues to grow and expand with new classes of officers exiting FTO at least every year. With such a young department, it is vital that training continues for every officer, regardless of rank or position. The street officer must have a solid understanding of their duties and laws they are to enforce. The line supervisors must have the same knowledge as the patrol officers they supervise, as well as to have the knowledge in the leadership and management of personnel to guide their officers both in the day-to-day activities, as well as when there are major events. I am grateful that we took the time and effort to create our supervisory training program to help me be a better supervisor and leader for the officers I have the opportunity to serve.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DWAYNE ORRICK GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE

Serving as a first-line supervisor is the most difficult job in a police organization. Sergeants are pivotal for ensuring agency directives are properly performed and maintaining a strong, positive organizational culture. Yet many organizations maintain a relaxed approach to selecting and preparing persons for these critical assignments. The failure to provide a systematic, valid approach to selecting and preparing first-line supervisors is one of the greatest threats to law enforcement agencies today.

With little direction and training of why and how to successfully perform in their new assignments, newly appointed supervisors are forced to rely on observations of previous leaders to guide their performance. Unfortunately, these persons were a product of the same system. By the time individuals are sent to a "general" supervisor training course, they have developed poor habits, created a poor work environment, and probably unnecessarily exposed the department to liability.

It is imperative all agencies, regardless of their size, engage in an organized succession management program that identifies the critical skills needed by the organization and systematically prepares candidates to their appointment. This can be accomplished through a variety of approaches, but should include a combination of individual assessments, classroom training, practical exercises, and a "field training" program for sergeants. Failure to conduct this kind of approach will inevitably result in agencies continuing to focus on maintaining the continuity of mediocrity.

LIEUTENANT JOSH BROMEN GULFPORT POLICE DEPARTMENT

When young men and women enter law enforcement, initial training on policy, procedures, liability, and the multiple layers of law is extensive. However, as a profession, we routinely fail those we promote; we accept on-the-job training and word-of-mouth as adequate training for our front-line supervisors. I had the privilege to attend the Gulfport Police Department First-Line Supervisor Leadership training in 2015, and while it did not change my personal leadership style, it did equip me with the necessary skills to navigate the unique and difficult situations our front-line supervisors deal with daily. As a department, we have not conducted any additional training like this since the 2015 class, and after speaking with many of the new sergeants about the issues they experience, the department is looking to run the training again.

Two factors of this training stood out. First, this training illustrated to the newly promoted officers that the department truly believed in them as leaders. Second, it allowed the officers to see things from a “30,000-foot view.” No longer do many departments simply promote because someone has the most tenure. At Gulfport, we are promoting our brightest to first-line supervisor, and we must invest in them. Without teaching our self-rising leaders the correct way to lead and navigate issues, they are on a path to either fail or be taught by those around them, good or bad. Without proper training on how to lead, we are cosigning on this failure and creating a culture of blind leaders. The “30,000-foot view” is also vital to the success of our first-line supervisors. Once a promotion has occurred, you are no longer one of the “squad,” and this view must change, or the department’s morale and forward progress will stall. Our supervisor training discussed this vital “buddy-to-boss” transition, gave a detailed look at how the budget works, and what goes into specific policy changes. Having the ability to see the department away from one squad or unit is key in first-line supervisors carrying and supporting a department’s direction.

I encourage agencies looking to maximize their training budget and get the best return on investment to consider this type of supervisor leadership training. We spend billions of dollars on training officers on things that are likely to never occur, but spend next to nothing on preparing our current and future law enforcement leaders. We owe it to our officers, our departments and our communities to provide them with the necessary skills to succeed.

CONCLUSION

The purpose, utility, design and desired outcomes for first-line supervisor training can be as diverse as the jurisdictions which offer these experiences. This report hopefully will stimulate discussion and contribute to a robust conversation about crafting and delivering such training. The legacies and longevity of each of these training experiences differed among each of the agencies mentioned, with administrative support and buy-in, trainee reaction, budgetary support, training scheduling and new training priorities being the most prevalent considerations. In each case, the training idea was adapted into greater organizational efforts for succession planning. Each training effort desired to create better law enforcement leadership with more adaptable skill sets as their careers progress.

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DWAYNE ORRICK has over 38 years of law enforcement experience. He is currently the assistant executive director for the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police. Previously, he commanded the Training and Support Services Division of the Gwinnett County Sheriff's Office. Before joining Gwinnett County, he served as the police chief in Roswell, Georgia, and the police chief/public safety director in Cordele for a combined 23 years. Prior to becoming a police chief, Orrick was employed with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs as a criminal justice management consultant. He has also worked as a police officer, field training officer and deputy sheriff. He is a graduate of the 186th session of the FBI National Academy and the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange (GILLEA) to Israel. Orrick has served as chair of the CIT Advisory Committee for the Georgia chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), a board member on the Georgia FBI Law Enforcement Executive Development Seminar (LEEDS), board member on the Governor's Commission on Family Violence, board member on the State Board of Public Safety, the governing authority for the Georgia State Patrol, Georgia Bureau of Investigation and the Georgia Public Safety Training Center, as well as a member of the Georgia POST Council and the POST Council Probable Cause Committee. He has also served as a past-president and board member with the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in criminal justice and Master of Public Administration from the University of Georgia. Orrick is the author of more than 40 articles on police leadership and management as well as the book *Recruitment, Retention and Turnover of Police Personnel*.

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