

Organizational Communication Usage by Police Sergeants: A Case Study

by

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For my kids! Learn something new every day.

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Disclaimer

This project is submitted as a requirement in the Master of Arts in Communication and Technology program at the University of Alberta. The research, analysis and opinions expressed in this capstone are original work or properly referenced, not those of the Calgary Police Service or the University of Alberta.

The researcher is a member of the studied organization. The research design ensured that participants had as much agency and confidentiality as possible. Study instruments were approved by the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board and the case study organization.

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Abstract

The impact of supervisors on organizational success can depend upon their organizational communication usage. Communication provides impacts on employee engagement and organizational success. How is trust built in organizational communications? This research explores the role of supervisors and the systems they use in building trust and supporting organizational communication. How do front-line supervisors choose and utilize organizational communication channels and what impact do these choices have on how they communicate with their team members?

This research explores a case study of a municipal law enforcement organization, particularly front-line supervisors (sergeants), and their impact on engagement and communications. Qualitative research data is collected through semi-structured interviews. Data was then analyzed through the lenses of structuration theory, sensemaking and social capital. The results of this study appear to demonstrate the emphasis sergeants place upon their communicatory impact and the importance with which they take the role of being sensemakers for their employees. Results further show the emphasis participants place on carefully selecting the communication tools and channels they use in the organizational communication process. This research demonstrates the important focus required on sergeants' communication systems and processes for effective organizational communication.

Introduction

I have been employed by the Calgary Police Service (CPS) for the past 22 years. I currently hold a mid-level management role and have had the opportunity to work across many areas of the organization. My current role in charge of technical investigations for the CPS has helped expand my knowledge of technology. During this time, the profession of policing has seen dramatic changes. Recently significant social and policing pressures have emerged, such as the Black Lives Matter movement. Additionally, over the past couple of years, COVID-19 has had particular impact on various front-line emergency services (Labbé, 2022).

These external pressures and various internal changes create challenges and opportunities for organizational communication and engagement. Given the high amount of public attention placed on policing, often employees were learning about organizational events from traditional or social media before they heard it from the organization. Traditional organizational communication methods appeared to lag behind the current events and could be hard to access. I have watched how this has affected employees and the organization both positively and negatively. I began a journey of learning, applying and then training members of the organization in Organizational Change Management (OCM) principles. Partnering with experts across the organization in strategic communications and research, I began pursuing various organizational improvements to make employees' jobs better and more efficient. I believe that organizational communication is critical to change management, organizational improvement and strategy development.

With the assistance of experts throughout CPS, I began gathering research that demonstrated the impact of effective organizational communication, engaged front-line

supervision as well as proper systems and processes on the success of organizations. One of the fundamental changes I made was in developing a front-line employee advisory committee. This was titled the Patrol Advisory Committee (PAC) and became quickly accepted by the organizational executive and members alike as a critical change agent, advocate and peer communication platform. This platform has been running for over five years, with critical involvement in almost every organizational change. The PAC established formal and informal organizational communication channels to help improve the organization. I was interested in learning more about communications and sought out the Master of Arts in Communication and Technology (MACT) program at the University of Alberta. I had observed that throughout the Calgary Police Service there are many motivated, committed and strong experts that were aimed in the same direction to improve the organization. Initially the challenge was not talent or desire but systems and processes being outpaced by employee and citizen expectations.

The MACT program has provided a diverse set of perspectives to understand various aspects of communication. Notably, regarding this research, the program offered theoretical and historical perspectives on communication and more recent reviews on organizational communication and the changing roles of communication professionals. The ability within the program to learn from instructors and my highly experienced and diverse class cohort has provided precisely the well-rounded approach required to dive deeper into opportunities for improvement in organizational communications.

The MACT program allowed me to learn more about important emerging literature around technology and ethics. I saw the MACT program as relevant to improving the organization and ensuring its success and relevance in society.

What I have learned has expanded my knowledge and provided context for exploring meaningful communication relationships and systems. Of particular value were topics supporting organizational communication and research methods.

Employee Engagement and Organizational Communication

Employee engagement and satisfaction are pervasive measures of organizational effectiveness across business and industry (Baldoni, n.d.; Sorenson, 2013; Wakeman, 2013). Organizations frequently measure their employee's satisfaction and engagement. One typical example is the Gallup Q12, a worldwide measurement tool delivered by a specialized polling organization. In particular, the Q12 purports to have surveyed over 100,000 different workplaces and 2.7 million employees (Harter et al., 2020). Employee engagement measurement is heavily used by organizations based on this. It is viewed by organizations as an indicator of organizational effectiveness and is often tied to measures such as increased sick time, absenteeism and employee turnover.

Often labelled as internal or employee communication, organizational communication is important in considering organizational effectiveness and engagement. The connection between employee engagement, communication and organizational success has been well researched (Brecher & Flynn, 2002; Gregory, 2011; Verčič & Špoljarić, 2020). The opportunity in this research is to explore this relationship in depth in a law enforcement environment, with a small but essential cohort within the organization.

Study Purpose

In this research, I aim to identify opportunities for improvement or further study within the organization on employee engagement and organizational communication. In my roles within the organization, I have observed patrol sergeants as crucial in leading our front-line officers and representing the organization. Historically I have seen and experienced opportunities where it appeared communication could have improved for this role, particularly around communication systems and platforms. I am interested in identifying opportunities and learning how communication could improve for sergeants and front-line police officers. This will include examining organizational information such as the employee survey, communications surveys and corporate strategy and planning information¹.

This research will also attempt to examine the role, the organization, and the literature to identify and explore organizational communication and supervisor impact. My goal is to better understand the communications impact of front-line supervisors. It will aim to assess how supervisor communication usage affects communication with their employees and explore how supervisors use organizational communication channels, tools and technologies in their roles.

This technology/channel usage will be explored both from the perspective of how supervisors receive organizational communication and how they further utilize systems to share the communication with their teams.

¹ Public data or used with permission

Literature Review

The focus of employee engagement on organizational success continues to grow in organizations across North America. Depths of literature focus on the impact engaged employees have on organizations (Achievers, 2016; Markey, 2014; Sorenson, 2013). The importance of this field is evolving following massive shifts in employment patterns in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Government organizations and in particular law enforcement are no different. In early COVID-19 literature, several law enforcement agencies have seen negative performance impacts in the wake of the pandemic challenges (Li et al., 2021).

Both similarities and differences in structure exist between private corporations and government/law enforcement organizations. Methods of communication and engagement and how those relate to corporate objectives may have similarities between all types of businesses. In law enforcement, much of the focus on results relates to community safety, citizen satisfaction and employee mental and physical wellness (Duxbury & Higgins, 2012). Hierarchical structures and links to tradition and military culture common in law enforcement organizations offer both challenges and opportunities for research. This literature review will explore the research surrounding the topic of employee engagement with a focus on the domain of law enforcement organizations. Links will be examined between communication systems (information technology), organizational communication, supervisor impact and employee engagement.

The following literature review will explore the role of systems in building trust and supporting organizational communications, particularly for front-line supervisors. This literature review will examine:

- The impact of front-line supervisors' communication practices and technology usage in engaging employees and aligning them to organizational communication.
- Channel selection and choices made by front-line supervisors in communication with their employees.
- The effectiveness and impact of supervisors' communication in sharing organizational communication with their teams.
- A review of literature in relation to supervisors and organizational communication
- The impact of communication technologies on a supervisor's team.

There are important reasons for this exploration across industries. The impacts of communicatory practices on engagement in law enforcement could be significant because of the potential to translate into real-life results such as crime reduction and prevention. The literature will be explored relating to different organizations to identify relevant broader research as a means of examining law enforcement. Where appropriate, specifics to law enforcement will be identified. The following review will approach the literature from a thematic-methodological perspective exploring key theories, frameworks and important topics in the research on communications and employee engagement.

Three Concept Domains

Three domains of employee engagement, supervisor impact and communication technologies will be explored, comparing and contrasting the impact of each on organizational communication and employee engagement.

Domain 1: Employee Engagement

Considerable communications and engagement research across industries helps to better understand an engaged workforce that is aligned to an organizational mission and priorities. Factors that repeatedly emerge as impacting engagement within the sampled research include:

- The communicatory impact of front-line supervisors, especially in aligning with organizational strategy. (Barhite, 2017; Duxbury & Higgins, 2012; Fuller, 2014);
- The ability for employees to engage in dialogue and understanding around organizational strategy. (Mineard, 2006; Rouleau, 2005);
- The requirement for organizations to adapt to the communications preferences of their employees. (Ingram & Lee, 2015; Johnson, 2012).

The research on employee engagement is extensive. The demographic factors over which the organization has little influence repeatedly show a lower correlation with employee engagement than factors the organization can influence (Ingram & Lee, 2015; Johnson, 2012; Mineard, 2006). These include factors such as age, gender, tenure and job role. Johnson's meta-analysis spanning three decades looked at all significant demographic differences and found very little statistical relationship between these demographic factors and employee satisfaction.

Mineard specifically conducted a quantitative analysis of police agencies finding that different generations of officers had the same preferences for organizational communication. Conversely, the discussed research shows multiple factors with influence based on the systems and processes of an organization. Further, Mineard's work showed that "participatory management styles" which allowed employees to be engaged in organizational communication and decision making positively impacted engagement. Mineard found that "satisfaction with supervision" and a "desire to be heard by management" (2006, pp. 354–355) were significant in employee engagement.

Echoed in various research across industries, including law enforcement, there are clear levers to engagement between leadership, organizational support and other factors over which organizations have control. This provides a focus to study the systems and processes within an organization and the opportunities they present.

One large study of Canadian police officers ($n = 7000$) identified factors negatively affecting police officer organizational commitment. Two of those factors are changing legislative and policy landscape and understaffing (Duxbury & Higgins, 2012). Importantly "ineffective communication" within an organization was identified as a third critical factor. Ineffective communication compounds the effect of changing legislative and policy landscapes, which ultimately dramatically impacts employee engagement. The researchers emphasize the need for policing organizations to develop and focus front-line leaders on the "people part" of their job instead of operations. Within Canada, front-line police supervisor's typically hold the rank and title of "Sergeant."

Various studies have explored the factors affecting the satisfaction of police officers in their work. Mineard (Mineard, 2006) focused on Generation X officers and their perceived

control over organizational factors. The study found a desire to be “heard by management” (Mineard, 2006). In their large quantitative analysis, Ingram and Lee (2015) found that the single most significant impact on police officer satisfaction was their direct leadership. The same study reviewed the characteristics of those leaders and the organizational systems that support that leadership. Johnson (Johnson, 2012), in a detailed, multi-decade and multidimensional analysis of police officer satisfaction echoes the findings above from a variety of sources that demographic factors have little correlation and instead finds that “perceived organizational support” and relationships with coworkers have the most significant impacts.

Domain 2: Communication Technology

The role of information technology in organizational communication has been heavily researched (J. Brown & Doucet, 2020; M. M. Brown & Brudney, 2003; Friedl & Verčič, 2011). In a recent holistic review of internal communication channels, communications researchers evaluated the impact of channel selection on employee engagement. (Verčič & Špoljarić, 2020). Channel selection involves the different methods by which communication can be delivered. The authors discuss examples of channels such as face-to-face communication, printed material, social networks and electronic means. They emphasize the importance of the message being communicated and the method/channels used to deliver that message. Organizational communication research across industries identified a continual gap in the concrete understanding of the association between rich communication channels and employee engagement. In general, rich communication channels would be those that allow the most two-way communication, information sharing, ability to focus and feedback. In their rather large study to explore this gap, authors identified a “high and statistically significant” (Verčič &

Špoljarić, 2020) relationship between rich communication channels and high employee engagement. In qualifying their research, the authors discuss the complicated nature of new technology implementation and individual organizational characteristics. In showing the complications, the authors explore how some organizational communication “should still be dominantly conveyed via traditional media” (p. 6) while contrasting this perspective with the assertion that new communication technology should be incorporated into organizations but that it must be carefully adapted and adjusted for the organization and the communication needs of employees. Overall, the assertion by Verčič & Špoljarić is that channel selection remains essential based on the message, the receiver and the desired results. Kim (2018) also makes this distinction in a study of 28 Korean organizations. Kim’s focus emphasizes the requirement for symmetrical channels for successful communication.

Welch (2012) references McLuhan in discussing the importance of the medium as the message in exploring how employee demographics (primarily age), message content and intent require flexible communication delivery options. Verčič and Špoljarić (2020) end their detailed study by making several points. The first is that all generations of employees prefer some messages being delivered in traditional ways but that they also prefer adaptable, rich and modern communication channels. The second is that channel selection varies based on the message being delivered and the intended audience. Differing audiences and messages mean that there is no universal channel that leads to success.

Dr. Terry Flynn, in “The New Era of the CCO” (Chief Communications Officer) (Bolton et al., 2018) explores the impact and effectiveness of digital engagement systems (DES). His research explores the need for organizations to engage stakeholders (internal and external) in personalized, natural and empathetic ways. Given the limited capacity (time, span of control,

competing priorities) of senior leaders and the benefits described in employees' direct leaders being the source of organizational communication, opportunities emerge to digitally expand capabilities.

Digital engagement systems and communication technology are not defined as a singular piece of software but rather a broad category or suite of options designed with user experience and interaction in mind. The systems can include legacy technology and new systems. The important part is in considering the design and implementation that enables collaboration and exchange. The literature refers to a customized and comprehensive suite of technology options and may include:

- Employee recognition and rewards systems – Tools used for sharing success and details about employee performance'
- Knowledge management systems – Policy manuals, Wiki's and other systems designed to collect and distribute organizational knowledge'
- Organizational intranet systems, and
- Enterprise Social Media – Tools similar to popular social platforms (e.g., Facebook) but explicitly designed with the needs of organizations in mind.

In a study of 500 German organizations Sievert & Scholz (2017) reported that over half relied on internal social media tools to communicate with their workforce. Although dated, Deloitte's (2013) *Technology, Media and Communications Predictions* report cited that approximately 90% of Fortune 500 companies employed some version of "enterprise social media". Therefore, the question is, are enterprise or internal social media systems effective? Deloitte calls them "not yet a panacea" (p. 14) and cites statistics (from 2013) showing that roughly half of employees engage with the platforms in any meaningful way.

Literature often relies upon comparisons to other industries and broader communication satisfaction research in law enforcement (LE) organizations. A 2019 educational doctorate thesis reviewed broader technology implementations in policing and concluded that technology implementation is overwhelmingly seen as a path to success. The qualifier was that comfort levels and how that success may occur varied widely among officers. (Berube, 2019). The author utilized a sensemaking (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010) lens to interpret the results of his interviews. They focused on “shared and individual” viewpoints on technology implementation in policing organizations and how those contribute to officers’ sense of identity and their social processes (Berube, 2019). Although the thesis focuses on broader technology implementations it gives some insight into the demographic and interpretation factors at play.

Finally, remembering that technology is only one piece of internal communication, the alignment of supporting systems and processes is required. Tied together, the research suggests these systems can allow for the creation and maintenance of professional relationships and enable employees to foster relationships at work which has been shown to be the single biggest driver of employee engagement (Friedman, 2014)

Domain 3: Supervisory Impact

The influence with each role on all levels of management is especially important in the review and its potential impact on internal communication. The importance of first-line management impact is often repeated in research around employee engagement and communication.

Fuller (2014) explores data from an engagement survey analysis conducted by Gallup research, among others. Some key findings surrounding management support are that employees

who spend more time with their manager in one-on-one or performance-style meetings generally have higher engagement. An additional interesting factor shows that employees with supervisors who are more organizationally well connected tend to have higher engagement. Supervisor connectedness has an impact on the development of both sensemaking and social capital, which will be explored in further detail. Cornelissen also explores how employees prefer organizational communication to come from their “direct supervisors rather than more senior managers. Employees are more likely to trust their immediate supervisors” (Cornelissen, 2017, p. 242). A 2015² internal communications survey conducted of all Calgary Police Service employees found that meetings held by a direct supervisor were the most preferred channel of communication (Calgary Police Service, 2015).

As remote work patterns with less face-to-face interaction become more common, a 2017 study (Barhite, 2017) was valuable in exploring the impacts of internal communication when employees are supervised remotely. Some of the key findings in the research echo what has been explored above. Barhite found that it was important to determine the importance and content of the communication in determining the channel on which it should be communicated. The study found the “leader-member exchange” quality to be particularly important in determining satisfaction. It found positive impacts on rich face-to-face communication (p. iv). The study went on to examine in detail the conflicting positive and negative impacts of communication technologies on employee communication. For example, citing improved decision-making abilities but challenges in building intra-team trust. (p. 29)

In addition, Barhite showed the significance of rich and symmetrical communication with a manager as impactful to engagement. It further clarified that being co-located with a supervisor

² Calgary Police Service internal document. Used with permission

was not important but what was important was a rich “leader-member exchange” relationship (Barhite, 2017). The leader-member exchange (LMX) was popularized by Scandura and Graen (1984). They leaned heavily on Weick’s sensemaking theories to analyze the quality of the relationship and exchange of information between supervisors and employees. Not only does this rich leadership serve the employee but also the organizational mission. In a heavily cited study by Linda Rouleau (2005), the key impacts of supervisors as “interpreters and sellers of strategic change” is explored. This key link draws together the desirable impacts of engaged employees and those front-line supervisors' impacts on organizational success.

Duxbury & Higgins’ (2012) previously mentioned study on Canadian law enforcement found that supportive management was key to the satisfaction of Canadian police officers. The research recommended that organizations provide the skills, tools, time and incentives for managers to focus on employee support. Recently Rinkoff (2021) conducted a study on the implementation of improved diversity policies in a large Canadian police agency. His findings detailed the impact of supervisor traits in making lasting organizational change. Rinkoff reviewed key supervisor traits such as encouragement, presence, auditing and discipline and found links to the success of controversial policies. Rinkoff’s key finding emphasizes the role of sergeants and providing additional support during the implementation of controversial changes.

In any organization, there are a proportionally small number of senior leaders with limited time and reach. The larger proportion of front-line supervisors and middle managers represents a rich available resource for organizations to leverage in internal stakeholder communication. The literature on the impact of supervisors provides ample opportunities for exploration. Rinkoff’s research on law enforcement leadership characteristics provides one recent example. There

remains however a need to examine how supervisors utilize organizational communication and translate that into communication with their teams of employees.

There are increased pressures presented in law enforcement agencies, where shift work, remote locations and a relatively high turnover of roles and supervisors are common. Choi et al. (2020) recently discussed several factors particularly present in policing organizations, such as authoritarian structures and job stresses that can cause occupational burnout related to physical or psychological trauma. Weick's (1993) seminal paper on the Mann Gulch disaster, although a case study on firefighting, makes a case for generalizing to all organizations, particularly in the face of crisis or disaster. Weick discusses the impacts of multiple crises, authoritarian structures and the amplified impact of communication breakdowns during major events. More recently, impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement have challenged policing organizations. Preliminary research has been conducted showing increased workload, stress and anxiety added to police officers through these events (Frenkel et al., 2021; Newiss et al., 2022)

Theoretical Context

Structuration

Anthony Giddens spawned the discussion of structuration theory through the 1980s. This theory explores the roles between the control of resources, the structures created by organizations, social structures and the communication practices that bind these together.

Giddens' attention to an "ongoing series of practical activities" (Whittington, 2015) draws attention to the interaction between employees, groups and tasks. With interaction between

“actors” being the key to successful organization. It is less about the fact that communication occurs and more about the cooperation, coordination and organization that occurs as a result of the communication. Taylor et al. (2007) describes this as imbrication, the processes of communication and interaction that begin to overlap and become interdependent upon each other. The key goal is “how to transform a situation into a result” that flows from structural connections in an organization. Imbrication emphasizes that the systems and infrastructure used to ingrain standard communication practices within an organization are just as important as the formal strategic messaging. Whether communicating about a change in strategy or a shift change, systems have an impact.

Whittington and structuration theory emphasize the role of middle management in the implementation, communication and success of strategy. In referring to agency executives, he explores the “potential limits to the power of those at the top” Whittington’s work references the ever-expanding understanding of the role of middle-management in strategy implementation. The role middle managers can play is partially based on how they are enabled and constrained by the directions of senior leaders and by organizational processes and systems. Mantere and Whittington review, from a structuration perspective, the roles that middle managers obtain within an organization and how those enable them to impact organizational strategy. Their research shows how setting managers up for success is crucial in strategy implementation.

A large modern organization constrained by remote work and shifting and challenging conditions requires well-designed systems and processes to support middle-managers’ agency and their role expectations (Mantere, 2007). Agency, in structuration theory, is the ability for individuals to think and act independently within an organization. There is a need to explore the work of officers and supervisors whose role naturally includes shift work and remote work away

from offices. Opportunities for further research specific to COVID-19 and other remote work challenges and opportunities may exist. Indeed, Mantere explores four primary communicatory roles of middle managers in corporate messaging and strategy implementation:

- Implementing – turning the organization’s strategy into action;
- Facilitating Adaptability – providing the skills and experience to aid in adapting strategy to practice during daily work;
- Synthesizing information – turning the information provided in strategy into understandable real-world information for front-line employees; and
- Championing alternatives – providing bottom-up, leading-up intelligence that serves as feedback and adaptation for senior leaders.

Mantere describes how this allows leaders to “synthesize information” and “facilitate adaptability” (Mantere, 2007, pp. 306–308). This is dependent on the manager’s drive and desire to communicate the information and upon the manager having the proper structural support to deliver messages effectively. Structural support may consist of detailed tactical support by communications professionals and the proper communications channels, technology and Digital Engagement Systems, especially with rapidly changing COVID-19 public health requirements.

Structuration also ties to the discussion on technology as an often-cited theory in researching information systems. (Jones & Karsten, 2008). Although this is a theory that in many respects pre-dated modern communication systems, it’s focus on “structure” and the impact upon agency and action in organizations makes it a focus of the design and impact of communication systems. Jones and Karsten explore how these structures, even if virtual, play upon the impact of information systems.

“Although structure is virtual, its effects can be observed indirectly through its influence on the social roles that people play” (Jones & Karsten, 2008, p. 135)

Sensemaking

The concepts and theory of sensemaking by Weick (1995) involve the understanding that an important piece of communication in organizations is how individuals interpret messages (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010). It also brings into consideration the social structures and how members of an organization come to understand the communication and environment they work within (University of Twente, 2004). In contrast to systems and processes that encompass a transmissive view of communication, Weick explains that individuals undergo processes to understand what organizational communication means. Additionally, he explores “sensemakers” as individuals who help interpret, digest, and share messages. This relates to the discussion on social capital below and the focus of this research by understanding whether key individuals (supervisors) impact communication in an organization. There are seven key aspects to sensemaking.³ The theory refers to two aspects that may be important to this research. The first is that sensemaking is a “social” process. Concepts such as roles, perceptions, stereotypes and interpersonal influence affect how individuals process messages. The second aspect important to cover is labelled by Weick as “plausibility.” Weick posits that plausibility takes precedence over the accuracy of messaging. This could be an important aspect to explore when it relates to

³ The seven properties of sensemaking are: Identity, Retrospect, Enactment, Social, Ongoing, Extracted Cues, Plausibility. (Weick, 1995, p. 61)

accurate and effective organizational communication with front-line employees performing critical or safety-sensitive roles.

One telling and appropriate definition of an organization states that they are “a series of interlocking routines, habituated action patterns that bring the same people together around the same activities in the same time and places” (Weick, 1993, p. 632). Weick analyzed the breakdowns in communication that resulted during a wildfire disaster through his lens of sensemaking. He points out that “individual behaviors, perceptions of reality, identities, and acts of leadership are influenced by intergroup processes” and that emotional ties “keep panic under control in the face of obstacles.” (Weick, 1993, p. 647). Returning to Rouleau, an opportunity presents itself in managers as being well placed to mitigate the panic and be key players in “anchoring” organizational communication (Rouleau, 2005).

Social Capital

Tied closely to structuration and sensemaking is the concept of social capital. Social capital describes the value and impact built by individuals as they create and grow relationships. Al Condelluci, a notable scholar on the concept, describes this by asserting that when people know each other, they treat each other better. “Capital means value ... the money we save by our relationships is dramatic” (Condelluci, 2014, June 3). Social capital explores the “set of rules, norms, obligations, reciprocity, and trust embedded in social relations, social structures, and society’s institutional arrangements that enable members to achieve their individual and community objectives.” (Bakiev & Kapucu, 2012, p. 977)

Allowing employees to nurture and develop multiple diverse networks of contacts that transcend sometimes temporary roles, postings or projects can only serve to enable “trust and

reciprocity” (Rheingold & Weeks, 2012) across an organization. The nature of the work within the example of a law enforcement organization means that employees change jobs often. Altering schedules, places of work, and teams can make it hard to maintain and develop long-term work relationships. It also creates a complicated web of social ties among employees that can be difficult to measure or assess. Hampton & Wellman (2018) as a caution to technology adoption, also explore the loss of community and social capital as technology has become more pervasive. Exponential shifts of technology use related to COVID-19 might be further driving this trend. Their writing explores how “persistent and pervasive communication” often driven by technology can also support relationships. We often see in organizations (and in society) how small insular social circles can become dysfunctional. The groups may become overtly negative or diverge from the mission or ethics of an organization. Rheingold states that “individuals in isolation succumb to incentives to defect from collective action” (Rheingold & Weeks, 2012, p. 220). Exploring the opportunities to support communication within all types of organizational cohorts can further support an organizations’ mission.

Relating closely to social capital primarily in psychology research is the “empathy gap.” This concept describes the disconnect between groups and the creation of perceived superiority and disparity between them. The researcher describes the empathy gap in relation to rival sports teams and competing political parties. (*Harvard Intergroup Neuroscience Laboratory*, n.d.) One detailed study examined the impacts of communication between groups and how that impacts empathy. The study deliberately created opposing groups and conditions to measure empathy between the two. It found positive impacts of communications efforts and common goals between groups to decrease the empathy gap. (Cikara, 2015, Oct 21)

Inside large organizations, there are naturally a variety of disparate groups. The differences between these groups are often exacerbated by varying priorities between departments, specialties and roles. The work of Dr. Cikara's Harvard Intergroup Neuroscience Laboratory also explores the impact of hierarchical structures on decreased intergroup empathy. Their studies show decreased levels of empathy with the introduction of increasingly hierarchical structures (social dominance) (Cikara, 2015, Oct 21; Hudson et al., 2019; Zaki & Cikara, 2015). The impact of social capital increased for hierarchical organizations between individuals considered in and out of any particular group. Of particular concern, this also showed further negative impacts on measures of inter-race empathy (diversity and respect) (Hudson et al., 2019). — all crucial factors given that hierarchical structures are a veritable hallmark of policing organizations.

Communication Framework

Developed in the 1970s, the McKinsey 7-S framework offers a potential tool for structuring the analysis of factors affecting communication within the organization. The seven factors of the 7-S framework are; Structure, Strategy, Staff, Style, Skills, Systems and Shared values. The framework values each of the seven factors equally and utilizes them to structure organizational change initiatives (Crolley & Airiodion, 2021). Reviewing each factor shows links to structuration, sensemaking, social capital and the employee engagement research discussed above.

For example, Singh (2013) identifies and utilizes the model to assess internal communication within a series of private organizations through qualitative analysis. She takes a

step-by-step approach to framing the various structures and systems of the organizations in reviewing their effectiveness. Singh discusses shared values within the 7-S model, which aligns closely with the social processes and plausibility discussed by the sensemaking theory. Similarly, Giddens's structuration research ties closely with the factors of structure and systems. It is a primarily sociological theory often cited within information systems and organizational research (Jones & Karsten, 2008). Structuration speaks of the links and dependence between agency, social structures and systems (Jones & Karsten, 2008; Whittington, 2015)

Cornelissen (2017) offers a potentially complementing framework where he discusses four "PARC principles for success." Commonly used in assessing social media, the four principles are Participatory, Authentic, Resourceful and Credible. In the context of organizational communication, employees have often assessed communication channels and messages based on similar factors. For example, Dr. Flynn's (Brecher & Flynn, 2002) work relies heavily on concepts of relatability (participatory), credibility, empathy (authentic) and trust with a variety of allegories to PARC. While frameworks such as PARC assess the internalization of communication, McKinsey 7-S focuses more on various systems and channels of communication (DeConinck et al., 2008).

Assessing communication within an organization based on the PARC principles and the McKinsey 7-S model allows for individual assessment of multiple systems and channels. This includes the previously discussed impacts of communication technologies and supervisor impact. Smith and Flynn's work finds links to organizational improvement when tied to these concepts and offers a need to explore the same in a law enforcement organization.

Literature Summary

There is a large volume of organizational communication research, however, there is limited previous research combining the impact of front-line supervisors, employee engagement and supervisor usage of communication technology in communicating with their teams. Given the importance of supervisors in organizational communication being demonstrated in literature, this area requires further research. This case study will analyze that gap in the combined impacts of front-line supervisors, communication technology and the engagement of front-line employees.

The common themes found in this literature were:

- Employee engagement: (Cikara, 2015, Oct 21; Rheingold & Weeks, 2012) Increasing connection opportunities between employees increases collaboration and engagement.
- Supervisor Impact: (Duxbury & Higgins, 2012; Rinkoff, 2021) Supporting front-line leaders in communications increases employee commitment to organizational priorities and job satisfaction.
- Communication Systems: (Berube, 2019; Bolton et al., 2018) Continual evolution of internal communication channels and technology to support the organization's growth and positively impact social structures, inclusion and diversity.

Although the areas of employee engagement, supervisor roles within communication and communication systems have been well researched, the interaction between these three domains has not. Examining these together in how they interact, affect, and complement each other is a possible area in need of further research.

The theories of structuration, sensemaking and social capital provide structure and context that can aid in researching these domains within an organization. Structuration theory

emphasizes the importance of increasing knowledge, imbrication and agency for front-line leaders to support their employees and organizational strategy. The role of sensemakers in the interpretation of organizational messaging provides further opportunities to examine theoretical links to the importance of supervisors and the social processes they can enable. Finally, several frameworks exist that enable the analysis of communication channels and their wholesome impact on officer engagement. The PARC and 7-S frameworks will help sort and clarify this research's results.

These areas for research will be explored in the context of a Canadian municipal law enforcement agency, in this case, the Calgary Police Service. An example of this communication among front-line police sergeants would be the recent COVID-19 pandemic. As a topic with information that was changing rapidly; police officers were looking to their sergeants for a broad variety of information they may not have had answers for. This would have included questions on personal safety, family impacts, vaccines, lawful authorities and organizational policies, among other topics. Sergeants, being their direct leaders, would be looked upon for that information. Can the theories of sensemaking, social capital and structuration provide a path to better understanding organizational communications? Use of the 7-S framework the impacts of concepts such as shared values, systems and strategy may be vital in aiding this understanding. Research in the field of communication continues to evolve and there are multiple directions that the research can go. Despite the depth of literature, the most significant gap that this research will seek to contribute to is the analysis of how the three domains of supervisors, employee engagement and communication systems work together within a law enforcement environment.

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This research will explore the primary research question:

- How do front-line supervisors choose and utilize organizational communication channels and what impact do these choices have on how supervisors communicate with their members?

In addition to this primary research question, the following supplemental questions will be explored:

- How does a supervisor's use of organizational communication affect communication with their teams?
- How do current supervisors utilize communications systems and technologies in communicating with their team?

In working to answer these research questions, this section explores the research design, methodology and planned analysis of the research.

Many studies exploring the impact of leaders and supervisors on employees use a survey methodology. Barhite (2017) surveyed leadership and organizational competencies around technology and leadership (supervisors). In examining front-line supervisor impact, the research often used surveys to find correlations to engagement and organizational success (Barhite, 2017; Fuller, 2014; Holland et al., 2017)

Various studies have examined engagement and communication in organizations, particularly law enforcement organizations, that have often used quantitative methods. Duxbury & Higgins (2012) utilized a large-scale survey (n = 7000) of Canadian law enforcement organizations to identify characteristics of individuals and organizations that contributed to engagement. Similarly, Ingram and Lee (2015) administered a survey evaluating police supervisor demographics and communication styles in relation to their leadership. Recently, Rinkoff took a different approach in conducting a qualitative case study of sergeant leadership styles within the Toronto Police Service (Rinkoff, 2021). This case study involved interviewing a number of sergeants to detail their individual leadership traits and their impact on change adoption within the organization.

The literature reviewed shows a primarily quantitative approach with some exploration in smaller case studies. The evaluation of relevant literature provided insight into demographic and statistical factors of engagement and communication. The current research study aims to gain a deeper understanding of leadership's impact on communication and employee engagement which may be better suited to a qualitative approach. As a result, a qualitative approach in this research will build upon the abundant survey data and aim to provide detailed experiences and thoughts from participants.

This research looks to further explore how front-line supervisors use organizational communication in leading their teams. Organizational communication, often referred to as internal communication, is the messaging and information shared within and throughout an organization. Cornelissen (2017) describes organizational communication as focusing on the stakeholders within an organization, a group upon which the company depends. The details of

how that information is digested, interpreted and used may be necessary in developing a more complete understanding of organizational communication.

With the aim of obtaining more detailed information and experiences from participants, this proposed research will be qualitative in focus. Denscombe (2010) describes qualitative research as providing “a more complete overview of the subject” (p. 141). This will allow the exploration of more of the “how and why” (Yin, 2009) of supervisors’ interaction with the systems and processes of communication. Building upon that will be the interaction this communication enables or inhibits with their peers and subordinates.

Design

The intent is to explore supervisors’ interactions with internal communication systems and processes and the resulting impacts on their teams. This research is designed to draw out feelings, perceptions and perspectives from participants. A case study with a qualitative approach is well suited to examine these details.

A case study provides an “in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance.” (Denscombe, 2010). Denscombe further describes that case studies specialize in “unraveling the complexities” (p. 53) and interrelations of a given situation.

In utilizing this case study approach within the study environment, it is hoped this research will explore detail around the specific interactions and processes that make up supervisor communication usage within the case study environment.

Case

A municipal law enforcement organization offers an environment with several variables which might allow detailed exploration of these research questions. The Calgary Police Service (CPS) was chosen as the case study organization for this research. This large Canadian municipal law enforcement organization has approximately 3000 employees serving a city of 1.3 million (Wikipedia contributors, 2022b). Full details of the case study organization and a description of organizational communication within the Calgary Police Service are provided in Appendix A.

Participants

In order to explore supervisor communication, this case study will focus on patrol sergeants. Sergeants are the cohort of front-line leaders closest to front-line police work. The literature review detailed the impact front-line supervisors can have on organizational communication and employee engagement. For example, Rouleau's work explored the impact of front-line supervisors as interpreters of strategic change (Rouleau, 2005) and Rinkoff's recent paper (Rinkoff, 2021) explored the impact of supervisors (sergeants) in a police agency. The Calgary Police Service offers a setting with various roles and ranks of employees and in this case the research will focus on front-line patrol supervisors. Sergeants work shift work and are generally out on the road away from offices, managers and corporate headquarters. Within organizational surveys over several years, Sergeants have been identified as key to employee engagement (Calgary Police Commission, 2021). 73% of all employees within CPS (all ranks) recently stated that they were satisfied with their supervisor.

The selection of this group represents a supervisor cadre that maintains relatively homogeneous roles and tasks throughout the participant group. Additionally, these supervisors lead an estimated 900 front-line officers in often dangerous and uncertain work. Denscombe (2010) emphasizes that a strength of case studies is their ability to adapt to a particular situation and on “one or just a few instances.” (p. 65). In this organization and cohort, the selection of sergeants will allow for some variability and differing perspectives while still allowing for analysis of the complexities and details of the case.

Specific requirements for the participants are:

- Active police officer holding the rank of “Sergeant”, and
- The participant is actively assigned to supervision of a team of patrol officers.

Participant selection

Participants will be selected through a purposive sampling approach. In this case, that will include participants with a range of seniority in the organization. Most supervisors have between five and 25 years with the CPS. Participants will have naturally had a variety of work assignments throughout their careers that may give them differing perspectives. The researcher will attempt to identify employees with diverse organizational experiences. Additionally, each district office (police station) will have varying size, community demographics, and crime rates and may bring different perspectives from the supervisors. Sampling and selection will identify supervisors from different district offices for contact.

The researcher will recruit potential participants by directly emailing them with the details of the proposed research. Potential participants will choose whether to contact the researcher to

participate and will be encouraged to select the best timing for their interview, including encouraging them to complete the interview outside of work time. Encouraging participation on personal time and on the participants' terms eliminates a need for applicants to notify others (i.e., their supervisor) in the workplace and reduces conflict with their work. This will also carefully delineate the purpose of the research as for a graduate degree program as opposed to specifically within and for the purpose of employment.

Interviews

The research questions aim to gather detailed information on supervisor communication structures and processes within the case study. The instrument used to capture detail within this case study will be interviews of front-line supervisors. Interviews will allow for discussion directly with participants and the exploration of more “complex and subtle phenomena” (Denscombe, 2010, p. 173).

Semi-structured interview questions will centre around these three themes:

- Personal experiences - Experiences of supervisors where organizational communication was effective and ineffective

These questions will relate to the primary research question on how supervisors choose and utilize communication channels in the organization. This will help to develop an understanding that will lead to the second group of questions surrounding the effect and impact the communication has on employees.

- Team impact - Ways in which supervisors interpret and share organizational communication with their teams

Although this research and case study focuses on supervisors, the organizational implications on all employees were shown in the literature. Supervisors and organizational communication have been shown to impact employee engagement and organizational success. These questions will explore the delivery of communication to team members through supervisors.

- Systems and processes - How supervisors utilize the various communication systems to digest, interpret and share communication with their teams (i.e., email, intranet, memos, etc.)

Building upon the first group of questions will be further exploration of the systems and processes engaged by supervisors. How, when and why they make their choices and share those choices with their teams.

Data Collection

With the intention of gathering detailed insight, a semi-structured approach will allow the researcher to explore themes or information provided by participants. Denscombe (2010, p. 175) explains that the approach allows for participants to “develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher”. Approximately three to five interviews will be conducted. This will allow for a balance between a detailed case study of just a couple of participants with some variation for differences that may emerge between participants and their organizational

experiences. Participants will be selected based on prior involvement and interest in organizational improvement and communication. Patrol sergeants who have shown interest and involvement in making improvement are likely to have thought through these topics and provide more depth in their responses to the interview question. Participant selection will include some consideration for differences between work areas, seniority, team dynamics and organizational experience. Quality research informants should provide diverse organizational perspectives.

A detailed recruitment letter, informed consent and opening script will be followed in selecting and interviewing participants. (See Appendix D, E and F) The recruitment letter, informed consent and other research documents will be submitted for University of Alberta ethics board approval. They will discuss in plain language important aspects of participation as well as set the stage for an understanding of their participation. Interviews will be conducted remotely with video conference software (Microsoft Teams). Following the interviews transcripts of the audio will be completed. The researcher will record field notes of key points or times while in the interviews and then have the audio from each transcribed with the name of the participants removed. Recordings and notes will be kept digitally on a secure drive for a period of five years in accordance with the informed consent. In supporting the participant selection detailed above, remote interviews will allow more flexibility for their timing and attendance while also mitigating any potential COVID-19 public health protocols in place at the time.

Please see the recruitment letter, informed consent and interview questions in Appendix D, E, and F.

Analysis

A thematic analysis will be conducted upon the conclusion of the interviews. Data will be analyzed proximally to each interview so that themes or challenges identified can be used to adapt to the following interviews if required (Merrigan et al., 2012).

Individual questions will be organized as will any additional or overall themes from the interviews. Categorizing and reviewing into a spreadsheet will allow for full analysis within the research. The recording and transcript will allow for careful and detailed review.

The qualitative content will aid in triangulating the data from prior literature and organizational data (Calgary Police Commission, 2021; Calgary Police Service, 2015) and will provide additional information to put “meaning and significance” (Merrigan et al., 2012, p. 78) to the data. Utilizing the McKinsey 7-S (Crolley & Airiodion, 2021) model and the theories of sensemaking and structuration give a solid foundation for exploring these impacts.

Results

Data Collection

The researcher sent invitations to eight individuals matching the study criteria. Four participants responded willing to participate in the interviews. The case study methodology called for three to five interviews to be completed. Scheduling was completed as planned and the interviews took place over Microsoft Teams at a time that was chosen by the participants.

All potential participants were provided with the Recruitment Email as well as the Information Letter and Consent Form (see Appendix D and E). Those participants that replied to book an interview were again provided with these two documents copied into the meeting invitation that set the time for the meeting and included the Microsoft Teams link. At the start of each interview the participants were walked through verbal consent and a summary of the interview details. None of the participants had concerns and all consented to being recorded and participating in the interview and research.

Microsoft Teams software has a built-in recording feature which automatically records a transcript of the meeting. Following the interviews, only light administration was required to move the files to the proper secure location and edit the transcripts. Editing of the automatically produced transcripts involved cleaning up spacing and readability. Any potentially identifying information was removed. Any data used or quotes extracted from the transcripts were compared to the audio recording for verification.

Participant Demographics

All four participants matched the selection criteria, primarily being patrol sergeants. One was female and three were male. The participants had between 18 and 20 years of experience with the organization and between one and four years in the rank of sergeant. As is common in law enforcement, all took a variety of paths to their leadership positions. One worked a primarily investigative career, two came with a variety of undercover experiences and the final brought primarily uniformed policing experience. All four of the participants presently work in police stations in different areas of Calgary (Districts). The participants all portrayed as positive and upbeat in their work and in participation in the research. They each provided detailed responses to the semi-structured interviews.

Interview Flow

The participants were all heavily engaged in the interviews. For example, in the second question (1.2) participants were asked to describe how they see work-related communication within the Calgary Police Service (CPS). All participants went into detail with this initial question partially answering further planned questions. Each interview lasted from 45-60 minutes. Probing questions were rarely required to elicit detailed responses. The open question format did cause some duplication and repetition in answers, but this allowed participants to add depth and reconsider details.

Analysis

Results of the interviews with details from transcripts and field notes were reviewed and further refined into coding categories for reporting and review. The methodology called for the use of the McKinsey 7-S (Crolley & Airiodion, 2021) model in analyzing the results. This model provides seven elements or categories developed for organizational review and improvement:

- Shared Values
- Skills
- Staff
- Strategy
- Structure
- Style
- Systems

In practice, upon reviewing the transcripts an iterative coding process was followed with categories changing slightly through coding. Coding began based on reference to the 7-S model as well as grounded theory with an open coding review of the transcripts. Categories began by loosely resembling Weber and Manning (2001). Their qualitative research on sensemaking and organizational change had several parallels and provided a valuable starting point. Their research formed a basic foundation with coding categories of: Self, Training, Others and Why. Starting with these structures and after three passes of the transcripts, the most appropriate categories became Self, Team, Organization, Tools/Systems and Other. Interview participants bounced between topics and thoughts in the interviews. The questions in the interview were divided into four general sections of questions. For ease of delivery the coding, analysis and repeated passes

at data allowed for themes, generalities and differences to emerge clearly from the data. The reality of the 7-S model provided some guidance, however as more of a change management/strategic planning tool for organizations. The final coding categories became:

- 1) Self - Discussions by the participants focusing on their experiences, preferences and needs
- 2) Team - Responses focused on the participants' teams (constables) and the communication with those employees
- 3) Organization - More general responses on organization-wide communication channels and processes
- 4) Tools/Systems - Details provided by participants on various communication systems, channels, tools and delivery methods specific to the interviews and research questions
- 5) Other - Other important points or examples worthy of coding for further review or retrieval

Results

Participants primarily began by discussing self-preferences around organizational communication. Speaking in general about standard communication channels. For the Calgary Police Service, these tended to be e-mail and All Personnel Memos (APM). An APM is a department-wide memo sent to all employees via e-mail. All participants responded in similar ways to questions surrounding communication systems. The participants stated the need for these systems and their applicability in the right circumstances. Participants spoke of the need for clear written communication for instance in legal, policy and procedure updates. All participants also

discussed at length their preferences for face-to-face communication in receiving and then further delivering the reasoning behind a message. This was particularly pointed out in relation to communication regarding policy changes and sensitive topics. Sensitive topics were described in the interviews as events such as employees in crisis, workplace accidents, hirings and terminations.

Sergeants spoke to varying degrees of the ways they seek or are provided further organizational information through less formal communication channels. Two participants spoke of the value of their peers in providing details, context and clarity on organizational change and information. Conversations with peers would occur over almost every channel from face-to-face communication on shift change to a variety of email and messaging applications. Participants spoke of the ways in which they communicate with their supervisors (Staff Sergeant and Inspector). Various communication channels covered by participants were:

- NCO meetings (Non-Commissioned Officer) - These meetings are commonly held for all supervisors in a district. Layouts vary but often they are held once or twice a month. With the COVID-19 pandemic, many of these were held remotely via phone or video conference but participants spoke of them returning in general to in-person.
- Face-to-face meetings with supervisors - Two participants spoke of the value of meeting their supervisor. They however emphasized that with shiftwork this may not occur for weeks at a time.
- E-mail - This was the predominant method of communication from sergeants to their supervisors. Participants stated that this was because of shift work making it hard for them to speak with their supervisors in person.

- Peers - Participants spoke several times of the organizational information they received from peers. This included information shared by their staff sergeant and inspector through their peers. Often, again based on shiftwork patterns. They viewed peers as excellent resources to “bounce an idea off” or to find out additional context on organizational decisions. These peer conversations typically occur during shift changes face-to-face or between peers on multiple platforms from email to messaging applications or telephone calls.
- Sergeant Engagement Meetings – Two of the participants spoke highly of meetings that occurred with groups of sergeants and the chief or agency executive. These were hour-long lunch type meetings with an open dialogue and no agenda. They appreciated the face-to-face interaction and ability to gain additional information to share with their teams. These meetings have occurred infrequently affected partially by the pandemic.
- Sergeant Workshops – One participant discussed positively a recent sergeant training day where they had a day at headquarters with an agenda full of topics relevant to their jobs and the organization. It was described as adding structure to peer information sharing. They spoke in particular about the health and wellness information they gathered in the workshop. These workshops have been even less frequent than the hour-long meetings with workshops being run only once or twice per year.

Digital Engagement

All participants emphasized their appreciation of relatively newer communication channels. Although several of these channels existed in limited form before the pandemic, many

of these came into wider use during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes video messages, live streams and video forums involving agency executives as well as the platform Microsoft Teams. This discussion of organizational communication during the pandemic was mentioned by all participants despite not being one of the interview questions.

In relation to their teams, three of the four participants were overtly positive on the importance and impact of the recent live streams. These live and recorded video events were positively received by sergeants who shared that they “put a face to the name” of the executive, personalized the message and provided interactive communication opportunities. One participant spoke of the value, particularly for newer members of their team in expanding their knowledge and comfort of executive members. Another participant also commented on the interactive nature of the live streams, allowing for questions to be submitted.

Two participants stated that they “like visitors” and would appreciate personal visits but understood the capacity issues associated with executive members visiting hundreds of front-line officers and found the live streams to be a valuable alternative.

The fourth participant had some notable suggestions for this communication channel. They really liked the live streams and videos and also provided focused helpful suggestions on how to improve them for his team. Being a team of front-line officers in patrol cars and working shift work he commented that these videos were overly focused on dayshift workers with offices, desks and discretionary time. He offered up the suggestion that they become more tailored to those unique logistics of his teams to increase their impact. Another participant commented that his officers were not able to access the videos from their phones or patrol car computers, which speaks to perhaps training or communication breakdowns based on the fact that other

participants were able to have their teams watch the videos from the same devices. Either way, the tool/platform was praised in varying ways by all participants.

“Oftentimes the frontline opinion is left out just by virtue of doing the primary mission they're not able to have their say or give their speech because they're busy doing the work.”

- Participant

In relation to other technology, it was interesting to note that all sergeants discussed having little or no interest or experience in engaging with social media tools outside of work. All indicated that they use social media very little. However, several mentioned that their teams of employees are heavily involved in social media. They described themselves as starting in the organization before smartphones and recognized that their preferences may be different than their employees. Despite this, the participants utilized and greatly appreciated all the newer communication platforms. These included video, Microsoft Teams, messaging applications and the organization’s intranet.

Team Communication

Participating sergeants all stated they viewed their role as interpreters of organizational information for their teams. They each spoke in their own ways of “adding context” to communication from the organization. Focusing on policy updates, all four participants emphasized that discussions with the team on interpreting policy, adding the “why” and learning from each other was important. Email was one particular communication channel where participants spoke of interpreting and adding additional details when face-to-face with their teams. Each participant noted several times the importance of parade as a communication channel for sergeants.

“Parade” is a start-of-shift meeting that all operational police officers have. Traditionally parade is a time where shift assignments are handed out, criminal trends are discussed, and other direction is given by the supervisor. The importance of parade was brought up repeatedly by all participants. They viewed parade as the opportunity to share serious or sensitive information, to discuss the interpretation and implementation of policy and to discuss team concerns. The importance of having this “safe environment” was mentioned by the sergeants.

The sergeants interviewed viewed their role strongly as filters and interpreters of organizational communication. One participant spoke about being a filter for information such as the crime management strategy and other district priorities. Sergeants generally felt that they shared about 90% of the information provided to them by the organization. Further, all participants spoke of the important role of policy discussions in parade. When asked about policy and organizational changes, they recognized that all members received the changes via All Personnel Memo (APM). But all spoke of the need to have discussions in parade about the why and how of the message.

“It’s very valuable to sit and discuss (policy) and the reasons why potentially it’s been changed or amended.” - Participant

Hidden communication channels

Several communication channels were discussed by participants within the interviews. Traditional asynchronous channels such as emails and memos were discussed, but several other channels were also noted by participants. They provided some insight into how sergeants viewed communication and important organizational information.

Organizational training - Notably, Incident Command training was discussed as a channel in which members of their teams received contemporary and detailed communication opportunities. Participants focused on communication for their teams that made their work safer and more efficient. They saw value in the importance of information sharing that members received in training such as this. One participant spoke of being thankful that training is re-emerging post COVID-19.

Micro-Training - With the emphasis by all sergeants on parade as their most important communication channel, two participants spoke of their appreciation of the newly developed “micro-training”. These modules are prepared by the centralized training unit within CPS and delivered in a package that allows them to be easily delivered by sergeants, in parade. Again, with Sergeants’ focus on information that makes their core duties easier, there appeared to be an appreciation of this platform.

Analysts - Again focusing on the information that makes their teams more effective at their primary responsibilities two participants spoke of the communication they receive from their district analysts. These civilian members ideally have a deep understanding of crime trends within the officers’ work area. They provide information in both written form and verbally, primarily in parade. One participant spoke of the huge communication gap left in their district by the lack of a dedicated analyst for a significant period. Analysts presumably take a communication burden off sergeants by synthesizing criminal information and aiding in the deployment and prioritization of resources.

Outside agencies - three of the participants spoke about the organizational information and communication they receive from outside agency contacts. These sergeants spoke of their previous organizational experience in specialty areas where they developed networks of contacts

in other agencies. This included Calgary Transit and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) as examples. The other participant spoke of contacts throughout CPS in their experience doing peer support and other additional roles. These channels appeared important to the participants in learning organizational information that was not shared with them in the usual manner.

RTOC - The Real Time Operations Centre is the command centre for the Calgary Police Service. The participants in this research and all operational sergeants report to the RTOC for decision-making on police incidents. One participant discussed at length the communication they receive from RTOC as valuable to them and their team. For the participant this focused on the discussions and debriefs around major incidents such as pursuits, officer-involved shootings and other volatile incidents. The participant saw as valuable the discussions that could happen organically either in person or over the phone with command staff in the RTOC. RTOC Sergeants meetings occur every Sunday morning where all on-shift sergeants city-wide meet in person (COVID-19 dependent) to discuss a variety of topics. The meeting was also discussed in a positive light with some suggestions for improvement provided by a participant. This was described as a platform where there is valuable information shared that has not come through another channel. Participants shared two examples of specific procedure improvements that had significant impact on front-line officers' effectiveness in their jobs that were shared through this platform where this information had not been shared in any other way. In the first example, members were experiencing delays in obtaining support from a partner agency where other areas had found ways to expedite the assistance. The second specific example surrounded members having misunderstandings with new impaired driving processes. Answers for these problems

came from peers in the meeting as opposed to official channels. These examples are discussed in depth in the following discussion section.

Discussion

The primary research question focused on gaining a better understanding of how supervisors (police sergeants) in the law enforcement organization utilize organizational communication in communicating with their teams of police officers. The research looked to better understand the relationships and impacts of communication channels and method choices. It is perhaps unsurprising that all the participants focused on standard communication channels in the organization. The most mentioned were email, verbal communication and All Personnel Memos (APMs) that are emailed to all employees. All the participants stated their preferences for verbal and face-to-face communication. This included discussion around parade, Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) meetings, peer-to-peer discussions and telephone calls where required.

Although stating clear preferences for verbal communication, all participants understood the need for written communication (emails and memos primarily), especially when discussing policy changes and other similar communication. They did add a preference for further discussing those changes verbally with their teams. Weick's sensemaking lens may add context here. He describes sensemakers as those individuals that help in the interpretation and dissemination of messages. The value of this role has been explored repeatedly in the literature. Rinkoff (2021) recently conducted research within the Toronto Police Service and found the leadership of sergeants "mission-critical" to the successful adoption of a controversial policy implementation. Rinkoff's research explored the leadership traits of supervisors in the policy implementation. Although leadership traits were not the focus here, all sergeants in this case study appeared to hold dear this role in explaining the context behind a policy and aiding in interpreting and clarifying it for their teams. The sergeant's role demonstrates several of the

attributes of sensemaking theory in which sergeants communicate and clarify plausibility and perceptions in the communication of information in a way that “keeps panic under control in the face of obstacles” (Weick, 1993, p. 647)

The Calgary Police Commission’s Annual Employee Survey examines employee engagement. It explores similar variables and it is worth examining the similarities and differences to this research. It provides a means to examine whether there is triangulation with this research in similar aspects of the job.

Employee engagement scores (Calgary Police Commission, 2021) are at their lowest in 5 years. These scores are a composition of several factors designed to measure the satisfaction of employees. The Employee Engagement Index (EEI) is a measure of engagement referenced across multiple polling organizations worldwide and includes several similar metrics including organizational pride, job satisfaction and motivation. A description of the relevant communication and employee engagement parts of the survey are included in Appendix A.⁴ As front-line policing is the base service there are an estimated 800 employees and 80 supervisors (sergeants) in the cohort conducting the work for the CPS. One participant related to this by stating that “the most important people that we have are the frontline staff. They're the people that represent the Service”.

One of the positive findings in recent employee surveys is the ratings that members give to their direct supervisors. 73% of employees are satisfied with their supervisor, despite only 39% being satisfied with their job (Calgary Police Commission, 2021) (noted as Exhibit 19, 20 and 32). That survey clarifies the importance front-line employees place on their supervisors. This case study has provided findings from sergeants on the importance they place upon themselves

⁴ The full survey can be accessed at <https://www.calgarypolicecommission.ca/reports/>

as purveyors of organizational information. This perspective from the sergeants, placing themselves as key interpreters of organizational information, is consistent with the emphasis they placed upon communication channels such as NCO Meetings, sergeant training days and the sergeants' lunch meetings with the chief. These opportunities all provide sergeants with organizational information that allows them to become the sensemakers for their teams and leverage their platform and position.

Team

The literature reviewed provides insight into the value of how well a supervisor is connected within an organization and the related impact on communication and engagement (Fuller, 2014). It was shown that employees with more well-connected supervisors tend to have higher engagement. Frontline constables, working for these sergeants, tend to be newer in their careers and may have a less developed network of contacts in the organization. The network of relationships within the organization and the support of their sergeants in these informal communication channels may be worthy of further study.

Upward Communication

Further expanding on the role the participants saw for themselves as interpreters of organizational communication, several spoke of challenges or interest in communication that travels up the chain of command. For instance, one participant spoke of problems they were experiencing with a new process. This process was created to expedite how officers receive

professional assistance for citizens facing a mental health crisis. Instead of expediting the professional referrals, the participant reported that it was creating three-hour wait times for front-line members waiting for help. The participant spoke of sharing this information up the chain of command in several different ways but did not hear feedback on whether these concerns were being addressed. Other participants also spoke of attempting to send ideas or information from themselves or their teams up the chain of command and hearing no response. One participant spoke of a project one of his members is working on to improve a communication process. The project's content in this context is less important than the sergeant's and his team's perception that they are waiting for answers and decisions and have been for over a year despite asking for updates. In the context of this research, the delays may relate to organizational communication. Returning to the remote and shift working role of sergeants and officers means that asynchronous communication methods (i.e., email) are required in sharing information with dayshift managers since the sergeants often work different hours than their supervisors. These methods inherently create delays. Recently the organization has explored improvements to communication structures for employees to suggest organizational improvements. An example would be work completed by the Project Management Office (PMO). This office oversees major organizational projects and changes such as significant technology changes or reorganizations. They inherently rely upon organizational communication for project updates. As such, their communication needs and offers include a regular newsletter, an intranet page with details and an interactive form allowing organizational improvement submissions by employees. Their processes include a regular feedback loop to employees on updates. It would be worth exploring these new channels and their potential effect on upward communication in the organization.

Mantere, from a sensemaking lens, provides one primary role of supervisors in “Championing alternatives” (Mantere, 2007, p. 309). He describes “The expectation to champion new ideas ... has the potential to help fulfill agency for middle managers.” (Mantere, 2007, p. 308)

This further emphasizes the benefit championing alternatives plays upon employee communication satisfaction. Mantere discusses the requirement to provide structural supports to enable proper communication. This is for traditional communication down the organization and information flow from the front-line up the organization. Information provided by participants in this study shows desire to see improvements in communication up the organization.

COVID-19

As presented in the findings, all participants mentioned considerations around organizational communication in the COVID-19 pandemic. A description of the Calgary Police Service context and environment around COVID-19 is included in Appendix B. Participants’ insertion of this topic showed that it had some impact and continues to shape their memories and perceptions. Each one described being pleased with the multiple communication channels available to obtain information. They described having email, a phone number, an intranet site, live stream videos and multiple other channels to find information for their members. Despite the continual change and uncertainty provided by the event, they felt comfort in having multiple channels to attempt to find information. Here again, the sergeants viewed themselves as responsible for providing the information for their teams and aiding in its interpretation. Sensemaking provides context in allowing sergeants multiple channels to locate the information

they need and “anchoring” the communication uncertainty to a minimum for members. This is tied to the literature where Verčič and Špoljarić (2020) found that all demographics of employees prefer to receive both traditional communication channels and new, rich communication methods. “Depending on the type of information people need; different media lead to the highest satisfaction.” (pg. 6)

A recent study into the impacts of pandemic work on police officers (Newiss et al., 2022) identified negative well-being impacts on officers through COVID-19. Its’ key finding was that improvement and “repair” requires “genuine efforts to hear the voices of those who have endured this prolonged tour of duty.” The above research echoes sentiments seen in literature beyond just COVID-19, such as Hail’s (2020) research on police reform in Scotland which identified a desire for front-line police officers to provide feedback and “be heard.”

Communication Channels

This research sought to determine how supervisors utilize communication channels and technologies in communicating with their teams and how those choices impacted communication and engagement. Despite anchoring their preferences in verbal communication, each participant discussed complementing that communication in the strategic use of digital communication channels. The participants discussed messaging applications (primarily Signal and WhatsApp) and Microsoft Teams as systems they use regularly. One participant discussed creating a week-end email summary each week for their team highlighting successes, learnings and information for the upcoming week. Several of the participants discussed creating instructional or directional emails on complicated and essential topics that they would intentionally then further discuss in

their parade. Two participants discussed their discomfort with Microsoft Teams and other technical platforms at the start of the pandemic, evolving to an evident comfort and even preference for the technology, particularly in making their parades more efficient. The participants described how critical crime information (bulletins and trends) is now automated within the platform, allowing them more time to have what they viewed as essential parade discussions.

Verčič and Špoljarić (2020) again discuss the importance of channel selection in relation to the message and the intended audience. The participating sergeants all discuss consciously choosing platforms based on their message. The platforms discussed such as live streams/videos, Microsoft Teams and instant messaging apps, were all leveraged by sergeants, with some discussion on accessibility limitations. Tying into Giddens' structuration theory (Whittington, 2015) is valuable in a time where COVID-19, technological advances and changing social structures have increased demands on policing. Structurations' emphasis on how middle managers and front-line employees implement strategy, facilitate adaptability and synthesize information (Mantere, 2007) provide a focus on the formal and informal communication structures that impact front-line officers' success.

The discussion on social capital in the literature draws links between social connections, successful relationships and organizational communication (Rheingold & Weeks, 2012; Zaki & Cikara, 2015). This appeared in the case study as sergeants referencing their peer group and other organizational connections that aided their agency and power in sharing information with their teams. Sergeants discussed less rigid communication opportunities such as lunch with the chief, sergeants' workshops/training days, RTOC information sharing and peer connections that provided them with valuable organizational information to aid their team communication.

Cikara's (2015, Oct 21) research on social capital showed that decreased connections, particularly in hierarchical organizations, had negative impacts on empathy and collaboration. Importantly her research supported that increased connection opportunities increased collaboration and empathy among disparate cohorts. Sergeants showed recognition and appreciation for being able to share that information from their peers and the organization with their teams that perhaps provides support to their personal agency and the sensemaking roles they provide to their teams.

Generalizability

Analysis of communication structures and systems within a large law enforcement agency may help identify more significant impacts on employee engagement and organizational success. This research aims to provide detailed context and analysis of a real-life situation. Denscombe (2010, p. 67) discusses the generalizability of study results to other cases or the remainder of a population. Tied with a detailed thematic analysis and literature review, these results could be used to assess current internal communications processes and explore new opportunities to research or leverage the impact of supervisors and communication channels to complement organizational success. Within the case study organization, there are plans for an internal communication survey to be provided to all employees in late 2022. Tying the details received in this research with that survey and other organizational information may increase success in improving communication. The results of this study will ideally be presented to agency executives and strategic communications professionals. There are multiple other cohorts within the Calgary Police Service with unique roles and communication needs. Utilizing results from

front-line sergeants may also provide preliminary insight into other employees' communication needs.

Limitations and Lessons Learned

Shiftwork

The cohort and case were chosen partially because of the nature of their remote deployment and key organizational role. During this research, the impacts of shiftwork became increasingly apparent. All of these participants work nights and weekends. Ideally, this research could have focused more specifically on the impacts of shift work and remote work on communication. How does communication differ on nights and weekends vs. dayshifts? What are the impacts of synchronous and asynchronous communication as it relates to police officer shift work? There is an opportunity in future research to explore the impacts on organizational communication in greater detail in relation to shiftwork. This could include looking at individual communication channels, both old and new, in greater detail to identify their attributes and limitations.

COVID-19

This research occurred within one period in time after approximately two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, during a time of decreasing severity and case numbers. A detailed description of COVID-19 communication in the CPS is included in Appendix B. At the time of this research, most restrictions were lifting. This meant that gatherings and non-essential

meetings in person were allowed again. Given the continued restriction changes and uncertainty, interviews were all still conducted via video conference. Communication around COVID-19 was still regularly dominating organizational and mass media communication. Regular COVID-19 related organizational policy updates were still occurring during the research.

COVID-19 provided examples and detail for the participants to discuss during the interviews. This presented as both a limitation and a benefit. Benefits included participants discussing tools such as video conferencing and live stream videos at length which they were now more regularly using. This likely would not have had the same impact without the pandemic. In complement to this, the participants detailed their appreciation for in-person parade. Two participants lamented the times when they were not allowed to meet face-to-face for parade. COVID-19 likely changed organizational communication's nature and attributes, and this study provided a snapshot of communication during the pandemic. It caused the increased use of different technologies and changed understanding and appreciation of existing communication channels. COVID-19 may also impact how communication occurs in the future.

Conversely, COVID-19's impacts during this research may have changed or directed their ability to communicate with others effectively and therefore, their perspectives on communication. The recent disruption of the pandemic on communication norms may mean that standards and perspectives have changed. As a result, building on this research, further examining the changes or conducting a longitudinal study may capture a variety of communication examples and participant sentiment and how they change over time. This longitudinal approach would also help to determine if impacts as a result of COVID-19 continue to affect communication over time.

Additional lessons learned

Participants all brought up examples of communication or timely events that were of interest to them. These included policy and procedure matters, the pandemic and recent impactful events. These events are of course important in their descriptions of communication. A longitudinal review conducted over a few points in time may help to:

- 1) Identify trends and common sentiments over time
- 2) Develop an understanding of sergeant's communication based upon their development and role experience.
- 3) Analyze critical times before and after the deployment of new communication channels

There are some elements of the current study that could be improved. A question that was confusing to participants and felt somewhat out of place was a discussion about organizational communication that participants received from outside the organization (question 2.4).

Participants asked for clarification and didn't provide the type of information anticipated. This question received some valuable information but didn't specifically address the intent of the research questions to learn about channels such as traditional and social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter) and what organizational information was coming from those sources. A reworded question may have produced better data.

Several of the later questions in the interview had been answered by participants earlier in the interview. In several of the initial questions, participants were asked for perceptions and opinions about optimal communication with their teams, where they also provided information on later questions. Although it was not negative to gain additional information, knowing this

early may have brought the ability for additional more detailed questions. Piloting the instrument would have helped in making the actual interviews smoother and would have given insight into potential probing questions for greater depth in interview responses.

Future Research

Most law enforcement agencies and organizations have a variety of cohorts and unique job roles with potentially unique communication needs and preferences. This research builds upon similar studies in the field but provides a look at one case study organization and one cohort. There is an opportunity for this research to be replicated with other groups of police officers and in other organizations. Specifically, this research did not examine in detail the relationship between organizational communication and employee engagement which is an opportunity for future research.

Additionally, future research could examine the important roles of other leadership positions within the organization, such as middle and senior managers. It would be helpful to explore how communication channel usage is similar or differs throughout the organization with a different set of participants and differing cohorts. Further detail surrounding different leadership positions would aid in a better understanding of leaders across the organization. Expanding to other cohorts of supervisors across the organization may help see where differences and similarities exist between the different levels of supervision.

Communication channels can also be analyzed in relation to different types of organizational messages (i.e., policy changes vs. technology updates). Future research with groups of leaders may offer the ability for participants to share dialogue to determine whether

consensus exists. Denscombe (2010, p. 177) discusses how these instruments create dialogue and interaction opportunities between study participants and may elicit deep insight. The interaction among the participants could aid in exploring consensus, differing opinions and social norms between participants (Mack et al., 2005, p. 65). All participants recalled specific examples of communication that they focused on. Future research where participants share experiences may provide details of a broader series of events and examples. These could include an in-depth understanding of supervisors' communication and a detailed understanding of communication between cohorts of supervisors and subordinates.

There were several new and emerging communication platforms used within the organization. Discussed often were live streams and the MS Teams platform. These platforms saw increased usage due to COVID-19 but were already in use and development before the pandemic. The usage of these platforms has continued to evolve and become further engrained in daily life within the CPS, despite easing public health restrictions. For example, meetings continue to have virtual options and occasional live stream broadcasts still occur. The literature shows value in rich and modern communication methods but emphasizes their careful and thoughtful deployment. Although crisis situations such as COVID-19 may not always make this possible, Verčič & Špoljarić (2020) emphasize the thoughtful and careful deployment of these technologies as key. By better understanding current perceptions of these platforms and technologies, there may be opportunities for improvement and future research. As illustrated by COVID-19, channels of communication are frequently changing. These changes offer opportunities to understand better the current and potential roles of communication within the organization.

Conclusion

The vital societal role of police officers and the potential impact of communication on front-line police officers underscores the importance of studying effective organizational communication. In a relatively large organization, it is vital to better understand the important role supervisors play in communication. This key organizational role has been shown in this literature and research to provide an important intermediary and interpretation role between front-line employees and management.

This research set out to explore the unique role of police sergeants in their use of organizational communication. The goal was to explore and analyze three research questions to provide insight into the case study organization and contribute to organizational communication research.

The primary question within this research was:

- How do front-line supervisors choose and utilize organizational communication channels and what impact do these choices have on how supervisors communicate with their members?

The following two supplementary questions supported this primary question:

- How does a supervisor's use of organizational communication affect communication with their teams?
- How do current supervisors utilize communications systems and technologies in communicating with their team?

- 1) Understanding of the importance of channel selection - Participating sergeants showed an understanding of communication's role in their work. Through the interviews, all participants spoke of multiple communication channels and discussed their reasoning for choosing each channel. Participants spoke of the importance of face-to-face in both formal and informal communication with their members. They added discussion around the need for other tools and channels to support communication with their teams. Participants spoke of parade as one crucial time to add clarity and context to organizational messages. In fact, during the parts of the pandemic where in-person parade was prohibited, sergeants spoke of ways of making them happen in abandoned parking lots or other remote locations to enable that face-to-face opportunity. And importantly, they recognized it as their role to provide detailed messaging and clarity.
- 2) Upward communication to middle managers - Beyond communication with their teams, participants detailed their thoughts and concerns around communication with their supervisors (staff sergeant and inspector ranks). One participant discussed seeing their supervisor rarely (due to shift work) and thus relying upon peers and alternative methods for updates from the organization. As their supervisors (staff sergeants) work primarily dayshift or remotely in the command centre, they have fewer opportunities for face-to-face communication with those supervisors, therefore relying on digital communication platforms. Sergeants utilized email as a primary communication channel with their supervisors, meaning that message exchanges occur asynchronously and can be slow due to days off and differing schedules. This is supplemented by synchronous messaging applications and occasional remote (MS Teams) meetings. Two participants spoke about

obtaining information from their supervisors second-hand through their peers (other sergeants). The pandemic's effects may have exacerbated the effects of infrequent communication with supervisors; however differing shifts appear to be the most prevalent factor.

3) Digital Engagement Systems - The importance of both face-to-face communication and supported digital communication channels was repeated by participants when communicating with their employees. They highlighted appreciation and growing comfort in newer communication channels such as video conferencing, live streams and the organizational intranet. Sergeants highlighted how these tools expanded their ability to receive and share organizational messaging in situationally dependent ways. All participants showed awareness and recognition of selecting communication channels based on the intended message and situation. Several participants stated that their adoption and use of newer channels and platforms was related to their employees who felt comfort with and easily utilized digital communication channels. Participants stated that their employees being younger or of a new generation was the reason for their digital comfort.

4) Individual preferences - Participants showed appreciation for their members' communication preferences. This included consideration for the timing, systems and setting they felt would best meet the preferences of their employees. This was particularly true for information that was more controversial or sensitive. Examples included a controversial policy or a workplace accident. Two participants spoke about considering

their teams' seniority, prior experience and preferences when making decisions about how to share information. One participant described parade as “our safe space” to discuss information that may be controversial or sensitive. Perhaps this was because of the closed face-to-face nature of the communication with a team they have developed trust in.

Several paths exist for exploration and development of organizational communication based on existing literature and this research:

- 1) Increasing support for existing communication channels that supervisors value. These channels include parade, peer discussions and several other discussed platforms. This means ensuring organizational messaging is formatted and prepared in the right way to optimize these channels. Participants detailed the use of MS Teams as a platform for sharing documents in parade (i.e., Crime bulletins). Implementation and comfort appear to differ based on sergeant and district. Increased training, platform development and organization-wide support may improve communication and usage. Examples here could include FAQs, support resources (videos, training) and support people where sergeants can increase their competency in these platforms. As MS Teams is still a relatively new platform, some organizational change and process management planning may aid in increasing adoption and competency.
- 2) Supporting supervisor's use of all communication channels by providing the tools and training to ensure they can use the platforms effectively. Primarily this surrounds digital platforms such as remotely accessing the intranet, live streams and MS Teams. For example, two participants spoke of themselves and their teams being unable to access live

streams remotely in cars or on cell phones. The organizational intranet is an additional communication example where it is clear that some can access it remotely while others cannot. Easily accessible resource guides (FAQs) or individuals specifically to support sergeants' communication and technology needs may address this gap.

- 3) Developing and increasing communication specifically designed for front-line supervisors. This means communications professionals and organizational leadership developing key messages and details on the reasoning behind a message to support sergeants in their message delivery. If the literature and employee surveys show the critical importance of front-line supervisors, can the organization explore more concrete and actionable steps that increase strategic communication support for sergeants? Training, access to mentors and resources for clarifying information; additionally, increasing resources explicitly developed for sergeants to aid in communication to their teams (i.e., intranet FAQs and pages for sergeants).
- 4) Provide agency to front-line leaders to align them with the organization's strategy and mission. Within structuration theory, agency is the ability for individuals to think and act independently in an organization. This expands upon developing organizational communication messages and channels that put the role of synthesizing and interpreting information in the hands of supervisors. Expanding the usability and deployment of digital organizational communication tools may provide more on-demand information that all sergeants require to act with agency. This includes the Intranet, social communication platforms and other new communication tools. One participant spoke of a

solution to a problem that was being discussed verbally among sergeants. They lacked a digital platform to discuss this among the broader group of leaders. Providing a platform that allows two-way communication among sergeants with greater autonomy is one way to enable agency while supporting organizational strategy. Specific current examples of these platforms are Microsoft Yammer and Slack.

- 5) Identify opportunities to increase the social capital of sergeants. This means putting sergeants in positions where they can grow their networks and organizational knowledge to support their teams. Participants spoke of the value they placed on non-traditional communication channels. They all appreciated platforms such as incident command training, lunch with the chief and sergeant-specific workshops and training days. These expand sergeants' networks, build social capital and create the conditions for building collaboration among disparate groups across the organization.

- 6) Support the role of supervisors as sensemakers for the organization and their employees. The organization can support this sensemaking role by refining and improving the systems that sergeants use for communication with their teams and how sergeants gather organizational information. The ability of sergeants to interpret and share organizational messaging directly relates to their role within sensemaking of creating clarity and understanding for employees, especially in crisis situations. Specifically, sergeants gain credibility and social capital with their employees when they have the answers to questions. Attending lunches or workshops where they learn new and important organizational information allows them to share this information with their employees

during parade and other relevant times. Returning from lunch or a workshop with organizational executives or other supporting areas provides clarity and understanding to sergeants and helps them gain power, support and understanding from their staff.

- 7) Providing, improving, and leveraging communication technology that provides rich communication channels that contribute to employee engagement. Platforms such as MS Teams were deployed quickly during the COVID-19 pandemic to substitute for face-to-face communication while still conducting business during the crisis. This platform and others can be reviewed and organizational support expanded. Post pandemic, these platforms continue to see use and further adoption. Sergeants detailed the value they and their employees see in multiple platforms and communication options based on the message and situation.

This case study has shown the importance of front-line leaders in organizational communication. Focusing on systems and processes can help to better leverage and learn from supervisors' organizational communication. Because of their role, it is important to consider front-line supervisors and their role in organizational communication. This includes focusing on all platforms used by the organization and supervisors to identify opportunities to improve communication and engagement.

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Appendix A - Case Study Organization Overview

The Calgary Police Service (CPS) consists of approximately 3000 employees made up of roughly 2000 sworn police officers and 1000 civilian employees. The City of Calgary has approximately 1.3 million citizens making it the 4th largest city in Canada (Wikipedia contributors, 2022a) and one of the largest municipal police agencies in Canada. The municipal police organization covers over the 825 sq. km of the City of Calgary and has members spread out in 11 primary locations with several other smaller locations. In order to provide day and night coverage for the city, many employees work shift work and commonly work on the road in a car and away from offices for the majority of their shift. In a large municipal agency, there are a variety of supervision roles and opportunities. Approximately 900 of the employees are considered front-line uniformed police officers. These officers work away from headquarters and are remotely deployed. Often working from vehicles for their entire shift and working nights and weekends provides challenges for organizational communication. These front-line officers are responsible for attending almost all of the calls that come in from citizens. They investigate fights, thefts and disturbance complaints. These employees are formed in teams of six to ten police officers (constables). Each of these teams is supervised by a single supervisor (sergeant). There are approximately 80 patrol sergeants within the CPS.

Figure 1: Calgary Police Service Rank Structure

Rank	Chief	Deputy chief	Superintendent	Inspector	Regimental sergeant major	Staff sergeant	Sergeant	Senior constable level 2	Senior constable level 1	Constable (classes 1 to 5)
Insignia										No insignia

Source: (Wikipedia contributors, 2022b)

Influenced by both internal and external factors, the CPS has identified the need for an engaged and informed workforce to ensure success. The organization has placed “our people” and the importance of “investing in our employees” as a top priority in organizational strategy and prioritization.. Key success factors for the CPS are citizen (public) satisfaction and public safety. (Calgary Police Service, 2019)

Calgary Police Service Strategic Priorities

- Crime and Safety - Maintain a safe city in partnership with our communities in a way that promotes public trust and confidence.
- Our People - Enhance service to the public by investing in our employees to ensure a positive workplace experience for all.
- Organizational Performance - Plan and manage for long term organizational success.

(Calgary Police Service, 2019)

The historical systems of communication in CPS consist of hierarchical communication with top-down and standardized communications. Members of the CPS view this hierarchical communication approach as similar to other government, police and military organizations. The names and formats of current communication methods feel very hierarchical; *Chief's Orders, All Personnel Memos, and Directives*. Traditionally and recently these communications were paper based. Communications slowly migrated to email and employee intranet but have seen little evolution in approach. These platforms continue to provide primarily one-way and top-down communication and are fairly similar in format to when communication was paper based with written memos being mailed to remote teams.

The cultural traditions of the CPS contribute to the systems and processes of communication. The organization is 145 years old with strong ties to military tradition. This extends to structured dress, deportment and rituals.

The Calgary Police Commission has conducted annual employee surveys for some time. Results of this survey are released publicly. One key measure, based on a combination of survey questions, is Employee Engagement Index (EEI). The EEI is a four-pronged approach to employee engagement measuring four factors

- 1) Pride: “I am proud to say I work for CPS”
- 2) Satisfaction: “I am satisfied with my current job”
- 3) Motivation: “I am motivated to go above and beyond”
- 4) Recommendation: Willingness to recommend CPS and the job to others

(Calgary Police Commission, 2021, p. 18)

The EEI is a measure of engagement that is referenced across multiple polling organizations around the world and includes several similar metrics. It lacks consistency across polling organizations but factors measured within CPS have remained consistent for several years.

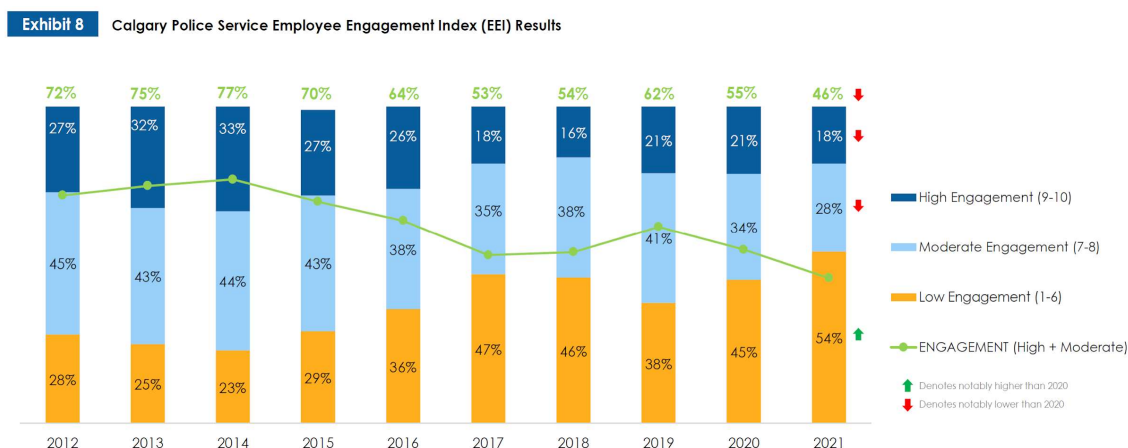
(Calgary Police Commission, 2021; VPSC, 2015)

Recent highs were seen in 2014 at 77% with a general downward trend to an all-time low of 46% in 2021(Calgary Police Commission, 2021)

In 2015 an organization wide survey of internal communications was conducted. Although the data is becoming dated there remain a few telling indicators showing opportunity for further exploration. (Calgary Police Service, 2015)⁵

- 25% of employees preferred to receive communication via mobile device
- 45% of employees access communications between 6PM and 6AM
- 55% of employees prefer to receive their communications from their supervisor or peers (as opposed to from the organization's executive)

Figure 1: Calgary Police Service Employee Engagement Index Results (EEI)



Source: (Calgary Police Commission, 2021) Reprinted with permission.

⁵ Internal document, Used with permission

Appendix B - COVID-19 Organizational Context

This research occurred at approximately the two-year point within the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. The past two years of COVID-19 within the Calgary Police Service followed an evolving public health crisis within Alberta. Based upon the researcher's personal observations the organization closely followed public health mandates while finding a required balance as an emergency service.

From an organizational perspective an Incident Management Team (IMT) was formed with key roles in management, including strategic communications. Various communication channels were implemented to address rapidly changing information and direction in the organization. This included;

Intranet: an employee web site that was updated regularly with legislation, direction and information relevant to employees. The intranet was kept up to date with information on rates of sickness within the organization and other key metrics and resources

Livestreams: Weekly video sessions in which organizational executives (senior leaders) along with key representatives would share weekly information, These included public health officials, health and safety supervisors, Human Resources, Mental health and wellness supports, etc.

Phone Line: Direct 24/7 access to an organizational health nurse or representative

Newsletters and memos: Daily and weekly email and newsletter updates specific to COVID-19 response

Update Meetings: Repeated (often daily) COVID-19 specific meetings for management and specific employee groups to participate in asynchronous discussion and updates.

As an emergency service, many employees remained at work while several supporting areas had been sent to work from home. Likely similar to many organizations there were information technology hurdles to overcome in the increased remote work.

Front-line patrol officers and sergeants, as emergency services workers were required to report into the office and attend to emergency situations throughout the pandemic. More administrative jobs such as finance and human resources were often sent to work from home. Despite this, there were significant changes in organizational communication and operations for front-line officers. One of the primary changes was a cancellation of “parade”, the start of shift in-person information meetings for officers. These quickly transitioned to either phone calls or to Microsoft Teams video platforms. The organization had adopted Microsoft Teams prior to the pandemic but its usage was extremely limited and it is unlikely that most patrol officers had used it prior to the rapid transition to its adoption.

At times officers were mandated into working in patrol cars alone (without a partner in the car) and to remaining away from their district offices. These restrictions changed rapidly and unpredictably throughout the first two years of the pandemic, often as infection and hospitalization levels changed. This meant that interaction and communication with the organization became almost exclusively electronic or remote.

These measures followed the public health direction from health authorities with occasional weakening and strengthening of the measures and resulting communication. This led to communication methods that adapted to the situation regularly.

Appendix C – Research Request Form CPS

Calgary Police Service Research Request
<p>This request process is in place for researchers from Universities and similar organizations involved in conducting research. Data or information requests by private citizens and/or for-profit organizations can be made through the Calgary Police Service (CPS) Freedom of Information and Privacy (FOIP) Section: http://www.calgary.ca/cps/Pages/Public-services/Freedom-of-Information-and-Protection-of-Privacy-Act-request.aspx</p> <p>Filling out this form allows the CPS to evaluate your research request for CPS resource requirements, data needs, potential issues with data interpretation, adherence to privacy legislation and to ensure the interests of the CPS are protected. Please note that upon review you may be asked to proceed via FOIP request. After completing this form in its entirety, please send it to the attention of the:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 20px;"> <div style="width: 60%;"> <p>Director Strategic Planning, Research & Analysis Section Strategic Planning & Partnerships Division By Mail: Calgary Police Service 5111 47 Street NE Calgary, AB T3J 3R2</p> </div> <div style="width: 35%; text-align: right;"> <p>By Email: research@calgarypolice.ca</p> </div> </div>

REQUESTOR DETAILS
<p>Name of Principal Researcher: Philip Hoetger – Student - MA in Communication and Technology Name of University: University of Alberta Phone: (403) 813-5711 Email: hoetger@ualberta.ca / phoetger@calgarypolice.ca Name(s) of Other Researcher(s): N/A</p>

PROPOSED RESEARCH
<p>Study Title: Organizational Communication Usage by Police Sergeants: A Case Study</p> <p>Intent of Research / Research Question:</p> <p>This proposal has simultaneously been submitted for ethics approval through The University of Alberta and is being supervised by Dr. Stanley Varnhagen, PhD stanley.varnhagen@ualberta.ca</p>

The proposed communications capstone project and research will explore the role of systems in building trust and supporting organizational communications, particularly for front-line supervisors (sergeants) within the CPS. This research will analyze the impact of sergeants' communication practices and technology usage in engaging employees and aligning them to organizational communication.

This research will explore the primary research question:

- How do front-line supervisors choose and utilize organizational communication channels and what impact do these choices have on how supervisors communicate with their members?

In addition to this primary research question, the following supplemental questions will be explored:

- How does a supervisor's use of organizational communication affect communication with their teams?
- How do current supervisors utilize communications systems and technologies in communicating with their team?

Methodology:

This qualitative case study is designed to focus on one demographic of front-line supervisors (sergeants) within the CPS.

To support the research questions above, approximately 3-5 sergeants will be purposively selected and interviewed in one on one interviews.

The interviews will be held within Microsoft Teams and will be audio recorded. The researcher also will record field notes of key points or times while in the interviews and then have the audio from each transcribed with the data anonymized. Recordings and notes will be kept digitally on a secure drive for a period of five years in accordance with the informed consent.

A thematic analysis will be conducted upon the conclusion of the interviews for the resulting project. Individual questions will be organized as will any additional or overall themes from the interviews. Categorizing and reviewing into a spreadsheet will allow for full analysis within the research.

The qualitative content will aid in triangulating the data from prior literature and organizational data. Other organizational data will be public data (c.f. 2021 Employee Engagement Survey) or used with permission.

Benefit to Calgary Police Service & citizens:

The applicant is also an employee of the CPS. Regular updates have been provided to organizational leadership and management of the Strategic Communications Section throughout

the MACT (MA in Communications and Technology) program. It is hoped that this research will provide additional details or insight into internal communication and employee engagement within the CPS. The literature review and additional case study exploration may complement already available data such as the annual Calgary Police Commission Employee Survey. The resulting report can be utilized by the organization however it wishes.

CPS corporate email and tele-conference software (MS Teams) will be used in this research for basic communication with participants.

Reporting and Dissemination:

The resulting research will be carefully anonymized where required and documented in a MA Capstone project.

If requested, the researcher will provide advance copies of the report to CPS prior to dissemination.

Please see attached Information Letter and Consent Form for details of the intended interviews.

The report will be provided to instructors and supervisors at the University of Alberta. The resulting project will be available publicly once complete at the following link:

<https://era.library.ualberta.ca/communities/db83e5e6-729b-4dd0-8014-d5c288300426>

<https://www.ualberta.ca/media-technology-studies/programs/mact/our-program/capstone-project.html>

The capstone project will also be available to anyone within the Calgary Police Service that requests it.

Please note as x,y coordinates allow data to be individually identifying, disclosing such information is subject to the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA). Under Section 17(1) of the Act, "the head of a public body must refuse to disclose personal information to an applicant if the disclosure would be an unreasonable invasion of a third party's personal privacy." Section 1(n)(i) of the Act defines "personal information" as "... recorded information about an identifiable individual, including the individual's name, home or business address or home or business telephone number". As an x,y coordinate is an alternate way of recording an address for mapping purposes, any CPS data including x,y coordinates would fall under this definition. Section 17(4)(b) of the Act defines "an unreasonable invasion of a third party's personal privacy" as the disclosure of personal information that "... is an identifiable part of a law enforcement record..." Associating charging information or a 'crime' to an address is identifiable as a law enforcement record and therefore, disclosing such information would meet this threshold. As a result, CPS is not able to provide data by x,y coordinates.

Appendix D – Recruiting Email



Research Project

Organizational Communication Usage by Police Sergeants: A Case Study

Research Investigator:
Philip Hoetger
hoetger@ualberta.ca
phoetger@calgarypolice.ca
403-813-5711

Supervisor:
Dr. Stanley Varnhagen
stanley.varnhagen@ualberta.ca
780-492-3641

Sergeant,

As a part of a research study through the University of Alberta I would appreciate your assistance in participating in an interview. This study is independent of the Calgary Police Service (CPS), however CPS will receive a copy of results as detailed in the consent letter.

Request:

The purpose of this research is to analyze the impact and usage of organizational communication by supervisors in the Calgary Police Service. This is a case study research project for the Master of Arts in Communication and Technology Program at the University of Alberta. You are being requested to complete a single interview that will take approximately one (1) hour of your time. You have been invited because of your role and insight as a patrol sergeant.

Please review the attached information letter and informed consent for full details. After reading the information please contact the researcher if you have further questions or if you wish to participate. If you do not wish to participate no further action is required from you.

This research will explore the following research questions:

How do front-line supervisors choose and utilize organizational communication channels and what impact do these choices have on how supervisors communicate with their members?

How does a supervisor's use of organizational communication affect communication with their teams?

How do current supervisors utilize communications systems and technologies in communicating with their team?

The Calgary Police Service will receive anonymized results of this study and will not be able to identify who participated in the research. The Calgary Police Service has approved this research proposal. The University of Alberta Research Ethics Board has independently approved this research.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Philip Hoetger

Appendix E – Information Letter and Consent Form



INFORMATION LETTER and CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Organizational Communication Usage by Police Sergeants: A Case Study

Research Investigator:
Philip Hoetger
hoetger@ualberta.ca
phoetger@calgarypolice.ca
403-813-5711

Supervisor:
Dr. Stanley Varnhagen
stanley.varnhagen@ualberta.ca
780-492-3641

Background

- This study is being conducted by Philip Hoetger, a student at the University of Alberta. It is being used in partial completion of a Master's of Communication and Technology (MACT) graduate degree.
- This study is independent of the Calgary Police Service (CPS) and is conducted through the University of Alberta. The CPS will receive the final report. Details are listed below under Confidentiality & Anonymity section.
- You are being invited to participate in this research because of your position within the Calgary Police Service (CPS).
- Before you make a decision, the researcher will go over this form with you. You are encouraged to ask questions if you feel anything needs to be made clearer. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Purpose

- The purpose of this research is to analyze the impact and usage of organizational communication by supervisors in the Calgary Police Service.
- Organizational communication includes the ways you hear about updates from CPS such as email, meetings, policy and legal updates.
- Specifically this research will focus on front-line police sergeants and how they interpret, use and disseminate the organization's communications to their teams
- Front-line supervisors (sergeants) have been chosen because of a need to further understand internal communication usage of supervisors and impacts on their teams.

- This research will also include a review of relevant organizational documents (i.e.; Employee Engagement Survey)

Interview

- You are being asked to participate a one on one interview with the researcher
- The interview will take place remotely via video on Microsoft Teams. This will allow for increased flexibility for you and ensure all COVID-19 health restrictions in effect at the time are complied with.
- The interview will take up to 90 minutes of your time and is planned to take place in _____ 2022
- The interview will be audio recorded to allow for transcription and follow up analysis
- The researcher will ask a series of open questions designed to enable discussion. You will be provided with these questions in advance of the interview
- Your personally identifying information will be removed from transcripts and will not appear in resulting reports
- You may choose to have your video turned off during the interview.
- The recording will be retained only by the researcher and deleted five years after the completion of the research
- Anonymity: Information from the research will not be associated with your name. Any comments, quotes or information used will be anonymous
- The researcher will take all reasonably possible steps to ensure your anonymity but this cannot be completely guaranteed

Study Procedures

- You may choose the timing of your participation on personal or work time in a way that does not impact your work or personal commitments
- This study will include interviews with between 3 and 5 sergeants
- The interview will be guided with some questions but allow for conversation, exploration and discussion.

Benefits

- The final report will be provided to CPS to use as the organization chooses.
- There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research

Risk

- There are no known risks to your participation in this research
- Any comments or information you provide will be anonymized in transcripts and resulting report so that it is not tied to your name
- The research makes every attempt to separate your choice for involvement so that your supervisor, peers or others in the organization will not know of your involvement. However in a singular small organization this cannot be guaranteed.

Voluntary Participation

- You are under no obligation to participate in this study. The participation is completely voluntary. Your supervisor will not know whether you chose to participate in the interview or not.
- You are not obliged to answer any specific questions.
- Even if you agree to be in the interview you can choose to stop participating or leave at any time.
- Even if you complete the interview, you can choose to have your data removed by contacting the researcher within two weeks of the interview.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

- You will not be personally identified in the resulting research
- Other than the researcher, no other members of CPS will know whether you choose to participate or not.
- The resulting report will be used in a capstone project for the Master of Arts in Communication and Technology Program at the University of Alberta
- The report will be ultimately made available publicly at this website in the fall of 2022:

<https://era.library.ualberta.ca/communities/db83e5e6-729b-4dd0-8014-d5c288300426/collections/a90e4a76-2220-4a21-b69e-68184c8c58a4>

- If you would like a copy of the final report, please email the researcher at the above address.
- The final report will be shared with the Calgary Police Service and may result in further review, presentations or projects by CPS at their discretion.
- CPS will not receive names of participants. They will only receive anonymous aggregate information
- Research notes, recordings and data will be secured electronically personally by the researcher. After five years the data will be securely deleted.

Contact Information

- If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher or research supervisor listed at the top of this document
- The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have questions about your rights or how research should be conducted, you can call (780) 492-2615 or email reo@ualberta.ca. This office is independent of the researcher.

Consent Statement

- At the start of the interview, you will be asked for your verbal consent to the procedures and information listed above. You may ask any clarifying questions.

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact.

Verbal Consent Obtained : Participant Name _____

Date/Time: _____

Appendix F - Interview Questions

Part 1: Opening

Review of Information Letter and Consent form. Answer questions and gain verbal consent

1.1) Please describe your position, seniority and organizational experience

1.2) Please describe how you see work related communication within the Calgary Police Service? This includes communication with your supervisor, the rest of the organization and the people you supervise. How would you describe the ways communication occurs within the Calgary Police Service?

Thank you for that. For the purpose of this interview, I will be referring to organizational communication. I will ask a series of questions surrounding organizational communication and your experiences. What you just described such as...

Much of what you just said would be considered organizational communication. For this research lets use these components and examples of organizational communication: (Check off those that participant describes)

- Information traveling down the chain of command
- Information traveling up the chain of command
- Work-related communication between individuals
- Communication between teams
- Supervisors communicating to their employees
- Policy and process updates
- Organizational changes
- Significant human events (deaths, births, sickness, etc)

- a) Organizational communication you may have heard called internal communication or employee communication. For this interview, within CPS I am interested in exploring all of the ways you received information about policies, process changes, significant events, etc. It also includes the different ways you communicate with your employees. Examples could include informal conversations, memos, the employee newsroom among many other ways.

1.3) Do you have any comments or questions?

Part 2: Personal Experience

The effectiveness of organizational communication and experiences of supervisors

2.1) Please describe the ways in which you normally receive organizational communication?

Probe: email, meetings, employee intranet (Newsroom) or other methods

2.2) How do you normally hear about organizational change?

Probes: From where? From whom?

Probe: If required, examples of organizational change might be: A new computer system, a major policy change, a update to the organizational structure.

2.3) Would your preferences stay the same for different types of organizational communication?

- Policy or legal changes,
- new systems or processes,
- significant events (hirings, firings, employee crisis)
- Employee Discipline matters
- Criminal Investigations (Dangerous offenders, crime trends, etc)
- Wellness news (fitness, mental health supports, employee resources, etc)

Do you think your preferences might vary from one type of communication to another?

Probe:

Probing with examples listed above (re-list to walk participant through list)

Describe similarities or differences based on list above

2.4) What types of CPS related news do you receive from sources outside the organization?
Describe

Probes: Social Media, politicians, friends and family.

2.5) Do you have any examples of organizational communication that could have been handled better that you would like to share?

2.6) As you are aware some organizational communication is shared with you to be further shared with your team. What proportion of that do you actually share?

2.7) Please describe how accurate you find organizational communication to be.

Probe: Defining and discussing “accuracy” if required

2.8) What types of organizational communication are generally handled well?

2.9) Can you share examples of when organizational communication could have been improved by using a different method of communicating?

Part 3: Systems and Processes

How supervisors utilize the various communication systems to digest, interpret and share communication with their teams (ie; email, intranet, memos, etc)

3.1) How do you typically communicate with your team?

3.2) Please list the different tools, systems and methods you use to communicate with your team:

Probe: Based on participants understanding and responses we can probe/discuss with examples such as;

- Personal face to face conversations
- Parade (shift start meetings)
- Email
- Telephone
- Text based apps
- CAD
- eParade
- Newsroom

or a variety of other examples. Based on participants response

3.3) From what we just discussed, what do you find as the most and least effective systems for communicating organizational news?

3.4) Based on the systems we just discussed, what organizational information systems do you use the most?

Probe: Re-addressing the systems discussed above

3.5) What factors did you consider in determining the most and least effective systems?

3.6) How can organizational communication tools be improved?

3.7) Which of those improvements do you see as a priority?

Part 4: Team Impact

Ways in which supervisors interpret and share organizational communication with their teams

4.1) Think of your team (Constables), how do you typically share

- A policy change with them?
- Significant or serious organizational information with them?

Probes:

When is the best time to share information with them?

4.2) Do you think that these methods were the best option for communicating with your team?

4.3) Why did you pick X tool? (Based on answers in 4.1)

4.4) Consider a new controversial policy that you are expected to discuss and share with your team. How would you handle it?

Probe:

What about this makes you uncomfortable? (if it fits with participant response)

- 4.5) What barriers in systems do you have to sharing information with your team?
- 4.6) What types of organizational communication do you perceive as most useful to your team?
- 4.7) Presume an experience you have had learning major unexpected organizational news. Examples are a likely emotional death, emergency or crisis situation. Please discuss how you would share that information with your team?

Part 5: Closing

- 5.1) Do you have any other comments or experiences related to CPS organizational communication that you would like to share?
- 5.2) Do you have any final questions for me?

Thank you.

Appendix G - Collated Summary of Interview Responses

Responses have been combined to this document to support confidentiality. Any redactions are for anonymity and confidentiality purposes.

Part 1: Opening

1.1) Please describe your position, seniority and organizational experience

Note: This question was not transcribed to support confidentiality

1.2) Please describe how you see work related communication within the Calgary Police Service? This includes communication with your supervisor, the rest of the organization and the people you supervise. How would you describe the ways communication occurs within the Calgary Police Service?

- There's a lot of different platforms for communicating, then there's communicating within the district from the command group, and then communication from the ELT and SLT.
- As far as the platforms, there's a variety within the district, there's NCO meetings, email, phone conversations, lots of different Signal chat groups within the Sergeants and within the teams, with the Inspector, and the Staff Sergeant.
- Outside of the district, there's communication coming from the RTOC down to patrol (such as the Sunday meeting that's going on right now at the RTOC). Then there's, communication coming from the Inspector, from the Commanders' meetings. There's communication coming from the Duty Staff on personnel. There's communication coming from the Intranet, from the Newsroom, from APM's. So, the communication is coming from a lot of different, a lot of different directions.

- I think the primary kind of method of mode of communication is email. Generally everything kind of gets sent through email which then would either result in a phone call with somebody. But I think primary communication, at least for me, is just something done on paper, whether it's through email. It is generally how I find the communication is done and 90% of my conversations takes place online, messages sent back and then if it warrants a further discussion, then I find that then we're going into phone calls or maybe a closed-door meeting face to face.
- I've been fortunate enough where my supervisors really, truly removed that whole rank structure and it was that open door policy. I like speaking with people and I think it was a nice trend for some people to just see when you can just walk into the staff's office and have a conversation. It doesn't mean you're talking about business- It just might be its Monday morning (How was your weekend?) and so I've brought that back from my time in a specialty unit and I think it's really afforded some opportunities for me within the organization.
- Here in District-, I have a very open relationship with my supervisor, my Staff Sergeant, as well as my Inspector. I look to them for advice, obviously for a multitude of reasons, but also, they come to me for certain things due to my previous working in the covert capacity, so it's kind of that give and take.
- What I've seen a lot now through, COVID is kind of what we're doing right now is we're speaking through an electronic means. And I think we've gotten proficient at being able to communicate this way and not maybe having to be that old style mentality where we're all together in the same room, we're still talking, but it's not through email or text messages where we know sometimes you can't get everything out through that way.

- I think that's the biggest thing for me is we have parades with strictly majority of just our team and then everything is disseminated now through teams, you know, PDF documents of need to identify and things of that nature. Everything has been put on to teams where the information can be given to everybody, not just the Sergeant, to hand out in a parade.
- I would say a large portion of our communication is done by emails and PM's. The website has a lot of information and various platforms to share information depending on what information it is. If it was regarding calls for service and stuff like that, we use Microsoft Teams in District, the pass on book, and everyone has access to that and can access it on their phones. If it was passing on information regarding officers and feedback for their development, we use peaks and training partner.
- So, with communication, we've been doing a large portion online, and our just went back to our monthly NCO meetings in person. Until two months ago we were still online on Microsoft Teams, which is nice because then you could do it in your pajamas.
- As far as direction for my team in the officers and myself and then and then, I passed that along to our team and usually I'll make notes from that. And then there's the formal minutes and then every shift we're back to in person parades, so at the beginning of the shift, we'll meet in person. We'll go through the pass on book and stuff to share, and emails that I've gotten from various units and whatnot, what's going on in the district and then usually we'll do a round table. So in person, I guess talking with the team and then there's lots of informal meetings just individually with the different officers on figuring out what's going on with them and their investigations and then ultimately where they want to go (as far as career wise) and then just kind of monitoring to their mental health

as far as their family and stuff, as you know, it's a pretty dynamic job specially in the last couple of years.

- We also use WhatsApp too, so the Sergeants and the District have a group, and then we have one for our specific team. So that is a huge way we communicated as a team as far as if there's an upcoming event or passing on information, or even at a call passing, pictures and information. I find that it's mainly me passing on information, but that depends on the group. There's some stuff, but for the most part it's pretty professional.

1.3) *Do you have any comments or questions?*

- I think most organizational like broad organizational messaging comes down from the ELT and the SLT. It comes down from an official APM, or attached to Service wide emails.
- That's how we would receive most broad information and make sure that make sure that all districts are unified.
- No, that's pretty straightforward.
- No
- No, I don't think so.
- That makes sense.

Part 2: Personal Experience

The effectiveness of organizational communication and experiences of supervisors

2.1) Please describe the ways in which you normally receive organizational communication?

Probe: email, meetings, employee intranet (Newsroom) or other methods

- I think most organizational messaging comes down from the ELT and the SLT. Official APM's, or like PM's attached to service-wide emails. That's how we would receive most broad information and make sure that make sure that all districts are unified.
- Primarily the way that I receive it is generally through emails, whether that's an, All Personnel Memo from Westwinds/Headquarters or some type of a bulletin, they release.
- Often, I go and research on my own to get more information.
- There was recently an email sent out about SENTRY, and oftentimes we'll all get the same message, and then it'll be a face-to-face conversation of, "hey, did you get that email?" and, "what do you think of this?" Then we both will then get a better understanding of what the author of that message is trying to convey, which we'll downline to our members. I find that it's more effective instead of just hitting forward.
- There is a time and place for forwarding messages, but I find that, if there's a message to be sent to the broader membership through my team, I find that I can accomplish that better by talking to them in parade and explaining what it is that I learned or explaining the direction that was given to me.
- In in my role, obviously through electronic means email, where information from the organization is provided through emails that go to all the members, which is valuable in itself.

- What's been a really big thing in the last few years has been the live streams that have had a multitude of different subjects, and ideally, they have been brought up with major issues going on. COVID was a big one where we had a multitude of information being disseminated to the organization (not just patrol), and I found that to be a really good way for people, because we can obviously do it remotely- we can do it via our mobile device, our cell phones, or we can do it in the office. So, it gave that opportunity for everybody to view it. We are police officers, and so sometimes reading isn't the best way that we can send it out. Livestreams, we are able to watch, and it's actively engaging with questions. I think that is something that the organization did really well.
- Teams has given us the ability to have reach within the organization where you don't have to be in the same room- we are a large service with many different units working together on a multitude of different things, and so it's really quite nice when you don't have to drive across the city to have meetings anymore. The information is provided now, not just to the Sergeants, not just during parades, but every street officer, every member gets this information, and they can actively look at it at their own time. And I think that's something that's valuable to members as well that are actively or proactively trying to help with them or if they need to confirm something, it's readily available.

2.2) *How do you normally hear about organizational change?*

Probes: From where? From whom?

Probe: If required, examples of organizational change might be: A new computer system, a major policy change, a update to the organizational structure.

- I think most big changes would still come by way of APM. They would just come from their respective units or sections but would still be signed off by a member of the ELT. There is some messaging that I think comes down from the commander from the commanders' meetings about the direction the service is going, but anything important would be through an APM type things service wide.
- I find that a lot of it comes through word of mouth or meetings. I think the more involved you are with different projects and different committees or if you're in the know through other connections like the CPA. I feel like in this role as a Sergeant, it's usually coming through conversations with other Sergeants or Staff Sergeants or people that are in these kinds of areas that are in the know. If it's a message for the broad membership, then then I'm seeing it through email.
- I don't think so. I think that's pretty much it
- Word of mouth (cops like to talk, right?). Also, through friends, previous workplaces and the media (sometimes I'll find out through media before I find out through work).

2.3) Would your preferences stay the same for different types of organizational communication?

- *Policy or legal changes,*
- *new systems or processes,*
- *significant events (hirings, firings, employee crisis)*
- *Employee Discipline matters*
- *Criminal Investigations (Dangerous offenders, crime trends, etc)*
- *Wellness news (fitness, mental health supports, employee resources, etc)*

Do you think your preferences might vary from one type of communication to another?

Probe:

Probing with examples listed above (re-list to walk participant through list)

Describe similarities or differences based on list above

- I think for me personally I like the forums, whether it's from the Inspector or the Chief, in an auditorium where there's questions and some feedback as to the why we're making that decision. This is my preference rather than an email coming out with a lot of unanswered questions.
- As far as code 900's, I have kind of have my own opinion on how the service could do a little better job of communicating. My team was involved in a recent code 900 and I think there was media involvement and video of the incident. There were some officers that were struggling whether they were being supported by the service, so sometimes I feel like the most important organizational communication that needs to come down gets bogged down and the stuff that truly needs to be communicated never gets communicated. There's a lot of uncertainty on where we stand on certain things for years, and I don't think anyone really knew where the playing field was in dealing with stolen autos and we were going in different directions, and nobody really wanted to make a decision. Nobody knew what reasonable speed was. That type of thing. I think we could do a better job with significant events in communicating those and employing crisis events. But I understand there's more. There's more at play with a certain and certainly

things that are probably above my pay grade. But I find those events we never, we never talk about them. Even in this code 900, there's, a million different video angles of it and I would venture to say there's a high percentage of the population in Calgary that have seen the video, but as a service, we won't debrief it.

- My preference is in person, because there's something to be said about.

the human element of conversation and human interaction. My preference is to get information directly face to face. I think it's important to come directly from the source of the information, because we're at risk that the story could have warped two or three different ways. I think that's some of the problems that we run into organizationally, is that one person hears about a project that's happening, or a decision that may or may not be getting made at headquarters, and three degrees later, it's a decision that's been made on something else.

- Depending on what the topic of conversation is, or what the topic is, I think that as soon as you are emailing something it becomes wipeable. I think there are some things that shouldn't be voidable, and I think that my conversations with you or somebody else about my personal opinion about a person, you know, a person's performance are reserved for more of a face-to-face conversation with people that I trust in. If I'm coming to you for mentorship on leadership stuff, I don't feel the need to then email you about it. That's more of a "can we meet for coffee and can I bounce an idea off your head". I think that there's a time and place for official correspondence through messages that I think leave an official record. And if it gets spoiled, I have no problems with that versus wanting a personal opinion from a mentor or somebody that I look up to.

- It's nice when emails come out for us to be alerted that there's been some changes to a certain policy and to please go and make yourself aware of that update. From what I've seen in my role as a team Sergeant, is that having understanding is just one part of it. I've been fortunate my inspector came from PSS and so he's a valuable resource to clarify information based on policies that are within the organization, and that are provincial, like the police act. When you're having those conversations about clarifying, it's nice to actually speak with people, where if it's just for general knowledge, it's good to have that general knowledge base of what the policy is and what we can and can't do via that policy.
- I think in person is always best, but I understand that that's not always possible, especially for the big things. If it's a big decision that management made, then they can explain it and ask people. I think you feel more valued if they tell you in person and give you the opportunity to ask some questions and explain the process, whereas with just an APM, sometimes I think it seems pretty impersonal.
- I'd rather have an email than nothing at all. It's nice to communicate in person, but if that's not an option, at least an email gives you the opportunity to take a little sneak peek and you can do it when you have time. I always tell my team, I'll forward things that I think are applicable to them, and I'm not offended if you delete it. I'd rather they see it and maybe be annoyed, than then not see it.

2.4) *What types of CPS related news do you receive from sources outside the organization? Describe*

Probes: Social Media, politicians, friends and family.

- I made the conscious decision when Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat and all that stuff came around, that I didn't want to be a part of it. My social media presence is pretty limited. If anything, I hear from my people first who are on social media, but I don't really find that the information is coming to us externally before we hear something internally.
- You hear stuff if you're in a privileged position to work with external partners, I think that that is a regular thing that occurs quite a bit.
- even just biases about CPS compared to the RCMP. You have these kinds of talks when you compare different organizational policies and things like that. Recently I did pay duties with <outside agency> and there were a number of communication pieces that came up with them, such as, "Why doesn't CPS do this?", or "Why do you do that?", is the kind conversations that come up with members of other agencies.
- I think social media is a beast in and of itself because platforms open up a Pandora's box to a plethora of communication issue, that also lead to an overwhelming abundance of confirmation bias. I think it's also media, that has a huge potential to impact both positive and negatively on biases and how that impacts organizational stuff. We communicate through social media on our own Twitter and Facebook, and even the way we communicate certain things gets received well and received not so well by members of the public.
- I've been able to be a part of different working groups, and you're meeting people from other agencies when you're in those sorts of things.

- The news is a big one for my time and priority crimes. I don't really watch it just because it limited the amount of work that I was potentially able to do.
- Social media has been heavily prevalent, but I'm not on social media and so I don't see anything there. Obviously, I know that we have a very big social media platform within CPS and it's just based upon the majority of people using it nowadays. Social media is just one of those things that is so prevalent out there, whether it's for the good or the bad, to be honest with you.
- I guess the media is the big one (as much as I try to stay away from it). Friends would also be an informal source.
- I really try to limit my social media. I am on Facebook, and I'm part of a group, but I can't say I'm very good with going on there and I definitely wouldn't get many, if any, of my updates from there, or trust the information that was posted there. I know CPS has a Facebook account too with updates, but I can't say I've ever looked at that. I don't have an Instagram account or anything like that. I just feel like we're on electronics all day at work. Social media is not a big piece for me.

2.5) *Do you have any examples of organizational communication that could have been handled better that you would like to share?*

- I don't think information that is communicated service wide always justifies a teams, or an auditorium-type meeting, so the APM's are fine. I'm not a big Internet newsroom guy, so I would say that's not one of my favorite ways of communicating things, and I think sometimes the messages that go on the News Group and the comment chats draw some

negativity from around the service. Some people complain about anything and so I don't know if I don't know if I'm really a fan of that. I like having like having that feedback, but it just seems like lately anytime you're on The Newsroom and you're looking at something, there's somebody that's got a comment and it just kind of spreads that negativity, so I'm not a fan of the messaging coming through the news portal, I'd prefer emails and APM's.

- During the pandemic there were a lot of unknowns, and so as a supervisor on the front-end of things, we were left with kind of just having to find our own answers. The hotline was set up, but oftentimes when you called the hotline there was really no kind of an answer. There was a lot of confusion around what we are supposed to be doing, what's happening with manpower and what was happening with staffing. What are we allowed to go to a call for? It really kind of left this feeling of like, what's the service doing?
- I think something that we could have done better was more open communication and more updated information to the frontline on decisions that were being made within the walls of Westwinds. I mean the whole thing kind of hit a head when this matter of Members working from home wasn't really overly communicated to the frontline members, and so what happened was in the absence of information people will fill in their own blanks. So, what started off as Members are working from home for this reason or that reason, and Westwinds saying there's benefits to this, the frontline guys started filling in their own information and it was those guys get to work from home and a lot of them are just doing yard work and posting them on social media while we're out here doing our full 12 hour shifts and exposed to this and that. I think that contributed greatly to polarization within the service.

- I think it really boils down to just communication. There's a disconnect sometimes. I know I can speak from my own experience that when we try to champion things up the line, the disconnect happens right away because the person receiving the information up top isn't truly hearing what we're trying to say, and then that gets disconnected right away, or their own biases come into play and it's like, no, we're not even going to understand this idea. Nothing ever gets communicated as to why that decision is made, either. You might involve people in the decision making process (like a focus group or a committee) and why we came at the decision to do certain things, because 90% of the time we're filling in the blanks with the wrong information.
- A beneficial thing could be everyone on a team attending a 2900 breakfast and everybody that shows up would have to bring something to the table to talk about (round table). In a recent 2900 breakfast, I brought up the issue of members vetting their notes due to a recent privacy breach incident involving Alberta Safe Roads. I was told by a traffic member that they don't submit their notes because of that reason, and they've recognized that this is a privacy issue and they're the notes are not a mandatory piece of the APIs process. So even though officers take their notes, they don't upload them, they've never been called out on that.
- The thin blue line. I think the communication surrounding it created a barrier. It took a very long time for our agency to communicate what was going to happen. There was a big lull in what was going on and nobody knew what the process was. I wish it maybe would have been a little bit more vocalized when it comes to pure information, especially statistical data.

- I think the thin blue line. I heard through the Grapevine that the CPA, the Chief and the Leadership committee have had a lot of meetings with the Police Commission over the last year in trying to find a resolution. For me it's a pretty big thing because Sgt. Harnett was brutally murdered on the job. I think it's important to have an option to put something on our uniforms for the Members who have given the ultimate sacrifice. That's something I feel strongly about
- There hasn't been much communication in from HR. There's no list as far as what districts numbers are like. To me, a constable should be able to go to HR and say, "where are there spots?". "If wanted to move positions today, where could I go?" There should also be a list of upcoming availabilities (retirement, tenure). Officers can try to plan towards where they would like to go and then there's transparency and making things fairer. Right now, there's just so much movement behind the scenes, and that there isn't even a plan for if somebody leaves CPS. Like, what's the process if they would like to come back? How do you re-apply?

2.6) *As you are aware some organizational communication is shared with you to be further shared with your team. What proportion of that do you actually share?*

- I would say most of it (90%). I don't think there's many things discussed in the NCO meeting that's sensitive, but I probably withheld some personnel decisions that don't need to be communicated. As far as the crime management strategy, or messaging from the command group, I think almost 100% of that gets filtered down through me to my people.
- I share everything that I am allowed to

- If it does relate to them, why not forward it? Especially if it's on email? That's an easy pass on, or I'll mention it in parade. Recently we just got the quarterly report, so I forwarded it as it shows each team and how many calls they did, how many SBR and all that stuff. Some of them will make comments that they kind of enjoyed seeing it, and I think it probably helps motivate them in some ways.

2.7) Please describe how accurate you find organizational communication to be.

Probe: Defining and discussing "accuracy" if required

- It's fairly accurate, although sometimes I wish we would improve on the speed in which we change. For instance, our missing person policy, which we have been hearing for a year it's coming but have no idea where it's at. It takes so long for these for these new policies to come down that Members are kind of in limbo and they don't really know what we're doing because it seems like it takes years to make change. I would say we know change is coming. It's just sometimes it takes years for that that change to be actually put into writing or approved and in that transition period there's a lot of confusion.
- I think it's pretty accurate.
- I hope I trust it's accurate.
- I don't think there would be a reason not to be accurate, but I think it it's better than the news.

2.8) What types of organizational communication are generally handled well?

- Most of our information sharing in the parade as far as NTI's, crime bulletins. There's a Teams channel for NTI's. There's district channels that type of thing.
- There's a lot of door to door conversations after calls and debriefing calls where we get better and we learn what we did well and what we can do better in those.
- Personally, I like how the chief had like video messages. I think as long as the service puts some effort into having more updated communications to the membership.
- Covid was handled well, as was information on the reintegration team, peer support and understanding how important our site therapy section is to our members, health, and wellness.
- I feel like the emails have been really good as far as updating on the changes with COVID the rules and then like what CPS is doing and what we're supposed to do. And I think email was the proper communication for that with lots of videos and stuff like that. If you needed more information and then flow charts for the supervisors as far as dealing with situations as they arose and I mean it was constantly changing so.

2.9) *Can you share examples of when organizational communication could have been improved by using a different method of communicating?*

- Yeah, I don't really know Any other examples right now except for except for the one that I gave you where operationally we were kind of lagging on how we were sharing all that photo and video. Video information and intelligence that was that was coming in.

- I think the thin blue line and stuff, could have had more visits to parade or even, like a video update from the leadership committees.
- I think a lot of what we do caters to the dayshift crowd at Westwinds, so shift workers don't have the opportunity to always participate in the video feeds, and chats with say the Chief, on a live feed. Often, members want to participate but they can't due to call load from the street. I think the frontline tends to be forgotten and we should be including them in the decision-making process.
- It's been a heavy past few years and patrol has not been able to keep up with their own career development, and morale issues are present. This ties back into disconnect and how members don't feel like they are part of the communication (they are unable to see live videos, and instead get a recorded message where they missed an opportunity to ask questions). It would be nice for the service to reach out and get some opinions from the frontline.

Part 3: Systems and Processes

How supervisors utilize the various communication systems to digest, interpret and share communication with their teams (ie; email, intranet, memos, etc)

3.1) How do you typically communicate with your team?

- *Through email, almost daily, and at parades at the start of shift. A lot through signal group chats and WhatsApp as well.*

- *Formal communication would be like an in-person PEAKS assessment. Informal would be through phone (ie. wellness checks or peer group meetings).*
- *Depends on the severity or nature of the information, but typically I share in person, especially if it is potentially upsetting and I can ensure we are in a safe environment and able to release emotion. Even in some situations that aren't sensitive (like welcoming a new person to the team) I prefer to do in person.*
- During parade when my team members can have all the information readily available. If there are any items that need highlighting, I'll highlight it for them. I like being together with them at my parade is. So, it's probably the one and only time in a shift that I will see all my members all in the same room and we're able to laugh together. I can ask people how their night was, or how everything is at home, how's their child, etc. I make sure that they know that I truly care about them, not only as police officers but as people.
- A big thing that I also do is I send an end of the week email and communicate things that are coming up in the next week, so they are aware. These are maybe things we need to work on after this past week, and then I'll include funny stuff from pictures from the week or certain quotes from the week that was heard. It kind of bookends the week and makes everyone feel involved. I had the very difficult task to take over Sgt. Harnett's team, and so coming together as a team was something that I felt was vital, and it brought back the human factor.
- Other than what I have discussed, In person, WhatsApp, and email are the biggest ones.

3.2) *Please list the different tools, systems and methods you use to communicate with your team:*

Probe: Based on participants understanding and responses we can probe/discuss with examples such as;

- *Personal face to face conversations*
- *Parade (shift start meetings)*
- *Email*
- *Telephone*
- *Text based apps*
- *CAD*
- *eParade*
- *Newsroom*

or a variety of other examples. Based on participants response

- *Through email, almost daily, and at parades at the start of shift. A lot through signal group chats and WhatsApp as well.*
- Formal communication would be like an in-person PEAKS assessment. Informal would be through phone (ie. wellness checks or peer group meetings).
- It kind of just depends on what the topic is really, but most commonly WhatsApp.
- In person, WhatsApp, and email are the biggest ones.
- During parade when my team members can have all the information readily available. If there are any items that need highlighting, I'll highlight it for them. I like being together

with them are my parade is. So, it's probably the one and only time in a shift that I will see all my members all in the same room and we're able to laugh together. I can ask people how their night was, or how everything is at home, how's their child, etc. I make sure that they know that I truly care about them, not only as police officers but as people.

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3.3) *From what we just discussed, what do you find as the most and least effective systems for communicating organizational news?*

- No answer on least effective, however most effective is the Signals app.
- It's a matter of just knowing what you're going to say and what form to use to get your message across.
- I like teams. It's given the ability to have multiple, you know, multiple chats going on, multiple different groups that you can be associated to disseminate information
- I'd say email is probably the less personable and effective, depending on what it is. If it's like a yes or no and you kind of want it to be anonymous. But if it's a long email and you ask for a few responses, you don't usually get them without numerous reminders. But I'd say that the most effective is an in person.

- The live streams were very new and some of the members that had had been around for a long time, I think it took a lot to understand why they were being done. But from a patrol Sergeant perspective, it afforded me the ability to watch it from home and to provide get information that it was important to me whether it was health and Wellness for members if they got COVID. How do simply input that into in time, right? Like it's it afforded a lot of different things in a very small window of time where. You know, save me from going through a multitude of emails and. It also gave me that ability to put sometimes a face to a name.

3.4) Based on the systems we just discussed, what organizational information systems do you use the most?

Probe: Re-addressing the systems discussed above

- E-Parade on Microsoft teams. most of the formal communication gets out in the parade
- So my team uses signal for day-to-day kind of day to day, just general communication that is not really part of a call and we also have WhatsApp that we use to kind of bridge the gap if we're all on a call, we'll use WhatsApp to share photos of offenders that type of thing that we know we know will be disclosed to the crown at the end of the investigation. So you know, we keep all the investigative stuff in one app forum and then the general yakking and that type of thing is on the signal group that is our group messaging
- Email and Teams. I'm a big in person, I want to make sure that I talk to my members and like I talked about it the start of parade. That's very important for me to see everybody to at least have a conversation with each person to understand. You know I know them well

enough now that they don't have to speak to me. I know if they're having a bad day nonverbal is I find much louder than verbal and that's just understanding the people that work for you. I think that's really it. You know, like MS Teams I don't usually I don't utilize that too much with my team per se. That's more for organizational information or meetings

3.5) *What factors did you consider in determining the most and least effective systems?*

- Parades are a good way of communicating is as well. And for my, for myself, we do most of our information sharing in the parade as far as NTI's crime bulletins?
- Where members are at, with investigations, what we're doing that day. If we're tied up on anything, we kind of get that out into the parade.
- And then I think the coffees are important too, but they're more of a, the coffees are more of a team building opportunity where we talk about what we did on our days off and how we're doing and that type of thing. Again, as you know, everyone likes their coffee talk and their rumors and they complain about certain things at coffee. I mean, I think we've already brought it up about the policy and that type of thing, but most of the formal communication gets out, gets out in the parade.
- As far as in the RTOC and being a duty staff, there's a lot of door to door conversations after calls and debriefing calls where we get better and we learn what we did well and what we can do better in those.
- I'll call it a roundtable, but the group discussion debriefs after calls, that type of thing that that happens quite frequently at the duty staff level.

- I think I've already covered that. Yeah, I just be probably continuing to talk when I probably say the same thing

3.6) *How can organizational communication tools be improved?*

- Communication's being filtered out through emails and not everybody's included in the emails. That type of thing and vital information is not being shared with everyone that it needs to be shared with. So our project is to use Microsoft Teams like just how we can all log on to a meeting. We can create a group and just attach reg numbers or Members that are involved in the call and everything gets filtered to one spot through the Microsoft Teams chat. It's kind of like a virtual whiteboard and nobody misses the communication. If you're coming in late to the call, you're you still get all of the information from the start of the call where right now, if you weren't on the call at midnight, when it started, you didn't get all those emails that that type of thing. So we're working on fixing that communication on major calls type thing and kind of maximizing the technology we have. So I really, I really like that and it's a better, better use of the technology than filtering through WhatsApp.
- No answer.
- Personally, I like how the chief had like video messages. I think as long as the service puts some effort into having more updated communications to the membership
- To develop and not stay constant with what we've always done.
- I think a lot of what we do right now is set up either directly or indirectly, it's catering to.

- The Dayshift crowd, you know if you're front frontline worker, you're working shift work. So right off the bat, if you're afternoons or you're on days off unless you have your own laptop like you're not gonna be partaking in the video feeds the video chats, right when the chief or who whatever group comes out with a live feed, let's say you know the percentage of people that work Monday to Thursday or Tuesday to Friday everyday and whatever office they're in, you will only draw a small percentage from frontline because they're out there doing the work. They don't have the luxury of just not taking calls coming back in and then hopping on teams and then being a part of this conversation,
- Yeah, I don't know what the best way would be. I think that's the challenge of any major organization. It realistically speaking, I don't know how we move away from our current setup of sending out a message through email or videos.

3.7) *Which of those improvements do you see as a priority?*

- and I mean this goes back to my frustration. (Referring to MS Teams comment in 3.6)
We started this maybe about a year and a half ago and everyone loved it and it's a very simple idea. We own the technology and it's close to being approved now. One of my guys has taken kind of the lead on it and is running with it but it's like a year and a half, two years in the making type thing and it's such a such a simple idea and we have Microsoft Teams already
- I mean years ago, as you know, the only information we got was by radio, by CAD, it was all written and now there's pictures and videos and everything is being shared while the call is happening, but we never really officially created a forum to share, to share all

that stuff or, you know, a policy on like where, where it's going, how we're sending all that information and sharing it. It's a big part of the investigation, a photo speaks volumes

- You know, I think as much as guys kind of roll their eyes at you learning something like this could probably be very beneficial in an E learning to like, learn to know how to deal with these kind of issues
- A beneficial thing, and I don't know what that looks like. Maybe, you task everybody like, hey, look, we want everybody to come to the to the 2900 breakfast and everybody that shows up. You have to bring something to the table and you want to talk about like we wanna do a round table something it could be something that your team encountered, right.
- I would say more details, but I think most people already think we get too many emails, so you know, so it's kind of one of those things I like to know I'm nosey so whereas other people probably don't want as many details.

Part 4: Team Impact

Ways in which supervisors interpret and share organizational communication with their teams

4.1) *Think of your team (Constables), how do you typically share*

- *A policy change with them?*
- *Significant or serious organizational information with them?*

- Policy changes are more of a face-to-face discussion in parade, as they are not coming directly through me (mostly through APM's and emails). Information on say a code 900 may also come through the Signal app.
- Depends on the severity or nature of the information, but typically I share in person, especially if it is potentially upsetting and I can ensure we are in a safe environment and able to release emotion. Even in some situations that aren't sensitive (like welcoming a new person to the team) I prefer to do in person.

When is the best time to share information with them?

- In person during parade, but I also never turn my phone off, so I read every email. It's just something that has been bred into me since being in <Specialty unit>, but I see value when it comes to things that happen on days off. A lot of times I create an email document and then I just throw it in drafts and then my first day back to work I will go through certain things that are very important to bring up to the team while we're on our first day back to work.
- Bring it up in parade, but if there was something formal, I'd probably refer to an email or document and talk to them about it and see if they have any concerns or views on it.
- Depending on how significant the subject was, I would get together in person as a group and have proper resources, or an expert, if there were questions. If we were on days off, I might put something in our WhatsApp chat, or call them, depending on what it is.

4.2) *Do you think that these methods were the best option for communicating with your team?*

- Remember when this pandemic first started and we started limiting in person parades and they wanted to use they wanted us to use Microsoft Teams on our phones and the direction we were given was, hey, go to your car and everybody books on in their car and then turn on your phone and stare at your phone, and we're gonna have this online teams parade. And to me, it was the most ridiculous thing ever because nobody, unless you versed in doing these online meetings and now we are two years later, we are.
- But nobody knew the concept of muting the conversation, so everybody was live, and then we're all cutting into each other. It's just the most ridiculous thing ever. And. And so you know. Before I was like, this isn't working. This is not working for my team.
- If there's something that I need to address to the group, I'd rather do it in person and those are things that you can really can't get over zoom or teams or emails. o there's a time and place to have those face to face meetings.
- But you know at the same time there's a there's a time and place where a scripted a written reply or written message to people and one and I had that a message once to the team about the lack of performance with tickets and how I've been. I'm hearing it from up top and everything rolls downhill and that was kind of a more of a scolding message that I had to send to them as a group in an email and it was pretty harsh. Like I said it if you know if this is not the team. If my leadership style is not for you then I would consider moving on looks like and that message was heard loud and clear.

4.3) *Why did you pick X tool? (Based on answers in 4.1)*

- *Note: This question was not asked of all participants as they had covered why in other questions*
- I think there's value to communicating together and to not just me saying, hey, this is the change. Go do what you do, but actually making sure that everybody clearly understands it because there are there are changes that a lot of people don't understand just because it's something that they don't deal with on a daily basis
- I think just like more visits, more in person stuff

4.4) *Consider a new controversial policy that you are expected to discuss and share with your team. How would you handle it?*

Probe:

What about this makes you uncomfortable? (if it fits with participant response)

- The big thing is not to sugarcoat it- just be honest and try and have a good understanding about the why this decision was made. I also try and avoid talking down and instead “talk up” to the team.
- Procedural changes with Form 10's can be a problem as sometimes my team is waiting up to 3 hours on the phone for MRT when they (the officers) have already formed the grounds for the form 10. The system was supposed to decrease time spent on form 10's, not increase it.
- When everyone is together in person, so that a conversation can be had, and we work together to make sure everyone understands how a policy change is going to potentially

impact us on a daily basis. It's important everybody clearly understands just in case they don't deal with a policy daily.

- Bring it up in parade, but if there was something formal, I'd probably refer to an email or document and talk to them about it and see if they have any concerns or views on it.
- Depending on how significant the subject was, I would get together in person as a group and have proper resources, or an expert, if there were questions. If we were on days off, I might put something in our WhatsApp chat, or call them, depending on what it is.

4.5) *What barriers in systems do you have to sharing information with your team?*

- Sometimes there's a break in communication as to why the service is doing a certain thing, and then the gap is filled in informally through the district and chain of command.
- Being a new Sergeant is difficult and many don't talk in parade when they first start on a team, but I feel like my team is very comfortable with me.
- I manage a senior team (who are very comfortable sharing with me), however that also means they are very comfortable in challenging policy.
- Knowing that if I ask a question, sometimes they don't always have to answer as it's up to them. I do a lot of peer support and so I have conversations on and offline, making sure it's a safe environment for them. I make sure that even if they don't want to talk to me about it, they have someone else and other resources/supports.
- Once Upon a time, if you were brand new and you went into a parade room and you're Sergeant spoke, you didn't talk. Whatever you Sergeant had to say, it didn't matter if you agreed you just had to listen. My Sergeant has spoken.

- So you know, I have a fairly senior team. Most of whom feel like they can just kind of say whatever they want and so one of the barriers that I find is if I.
- We are in in the middle of, you know, culturally we've been telling our Members ask why and hey. That's what's been indoctrinated in their minds. And now all of a sudden it's like I'm explaining the purpose of my talk to you guys is to explain to you the direction that came down for the top that we have to do. And now I find myself having to justify to you why these decisions were made up top, right and some sergeants will just say "It is what it is". You have to do it because we're being told to do it, so I don't. I don't need to tell you why. It's just because we're being told to do so. I'm probably more guilty of this than some others because I do feel like I need to provide an explanation more as with the kind of Sergeant that I am. And so I find myself getting into this kind of situation where I feel like I'm a little bit backed up into a corner having to justify myself to the members on my team when they're asking me, well, why this is stupid. Why are we doing this? And I'm trying to explain to them to get them on board with the program, if that makes sense. So that that's one of the barriers that I run into, certainly with a senior team that feels very comfortable is they also feel comfortable in kind of fighting back.

4.6) *What types of organizational communication do you perceive as most useful to your team?*

- The best way they can, and in that process they are, you know, managing morale, managing performance, dealing with internal personnel problems, dealing with personnel problems from, you know, you got members that are going through divorces, Members that have sick kids, just everything across the board. And I know that other teams in other

specialty areas have the same some of the same problems but when you combine it to a frontline operation I think this is just the disconnect is that members, they don't feel like they're part of the communication, because they're not here to see those live videos.

They're not here you know, if we if we see anything, we gotta watch a recorded message, many of whom don't want to because they it's just kind of like.

- We miss our opportunity to ask a chief a question, so why, like why bother watching a recorded video? Right. And then in the absence of that, it would be nice then to see if we could see executive or the parties that are doing these communication talks. It would be nice if they can try to reach out and maybe get some opinions from the frontline. But oftentimes the frontline opinion is left out because they just by virtue of doing the, the primary mission of what the talking preserves is they're not able to have their say or give their speech because they're busy doing the work

4.7) *Presume an experience you have had learning major unexpected organizational news. Examples are a likely emotional death, emergency or crisis situation. Please discuss how you would share that information with your team?*

- I share that in person
- I think depending right, so depending on I would say the severity and the nature of what I need to talk about, I think if it's news that's gonna be upsetting to a member or members, that would be a conversation back to the building. If it was an information about worst case scenario knock on wood, but a workplace accident. Just to be safe, that we're in a safe environment to be able to release some emotion.

- I also like to welcome people prior to them showing up on day one. I usually like to get an email sent out to the team and then with that person on that list as well. We're kind of doing an official welcome and the same thing. We just got news a couple days ago that one of my Members is leaving the service because she's got hired by another agency. And if I had similar news, you know, if I was moving on, I probably would tell them in person.
- The problem with waiting is that people will always find out right and so and knowing my team, what will happen is somebody will hear something cause somebody knows somebody in the area and then they'll put her on the chat.
- I like to do it when I have everybody together and in person, so that if there is a conversation to be had everybody can hear the conversation and we can kind of work together to make sure everybody understands
- So I have a lot of those conversations, on and offline kind of. And then I guess just making sure that it's a safe environment for them. And even if they don't want to talk to me about it that they have someone for other resources. I know that they kind of have the supports. Not sure if that's is that kind of what you're looking for.

Part 5: Closing

5.1) Do you have any other comments or experiences related to CPS organizational communication that you would like to share?

- Hopefully I helped with the project.
- Nothing I can think of.

- No, I honestly, I've I think from my perspective. I really haven't had an issue with it and the biggest thing for me is I think we're growing as an organization when it comes to communication. We are adapting to you know, what is new nowadays, right? Like the social media, the electronic, those things are the way of the future. If you wanna call it that. And I think we're adapting to that and as much as maybe it's a little bit difficult for maybe somebody in my seniority to understand a lot of the new Members is probably gonna be pretty much second nature to them because this might not be their first career. They might have had something in the past, and that's exactly what they did. So I think we're adapting and I think we're doing a really good job to make sure that we communicate In many different mediums so that we can get the most information out.
- I think we communicate pretty good. Nothing comes to mind right now.

5.2) *Do you have any final questions for me?*

- No, not that I can think of
- Hopefully I could help with the project
- I think we communicate pretty good. I don't know. I'm really interested to see what you come out with.