RCMP
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Corruption

in **Policing:**

Causes and **Consequences**

A Review of the **Literature**

Research and Evaluation Branch

Community, Contract and Aboriginal Policing
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Corruption in Policing: Causes and Consequences
A Review of the Literature

by

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Introduction

Corruption is a term which conjures up many images and stereotypes in whatever context it is used. In the media it is not uncommon to encounter references to corruption in businesses, in professions, in politics and in many other areas of societal life. Each in its own way contributes to how ordinary citizens view the individuals and organizations referred to in the stories and reports and can contribute to changed perceptions.

However, in most western and industrial societies, reports of corruption in police services or involving police officers are often given particular prominence and attention. There are a number of reasons for this. The police, who have a mandate to serve society, have also been given powers by that society that are not given to others - the power to stop, detain, and arrest ordinary citizens. Alone in society, they have the power to use deadly force in the performance of their duties. As a consequence of their role, responsibilities, and powers, reports of corruption in police services are particularly disturbing for many as they are often linked closely to abuse of power and privilege. The police are accountable to the society for their actions and reports of corruption raise serious questions about this relationship and its oversight. Citizens, and communities, are often left with questions such as – can we trust the police? Is this incident merely the tip of the iceberg? Are there other instances of police corruption that we do not hear about? What is being done? What are the links between the police, "politics," and crime groups?

> *Police corruption is the lack of police integrity. It also constitutes one of the most significant obstacles to positive police-public relations in today's society. (Grant, 2002:12)*

This paper examines the literature on police corruption with four purposes in mind. First, we want to explore and describe factors which lead to, or contribute to, corruption within police

departments. Second, we will examine the consequences of such corruption on several levels; individual, organizational, community and society. Third, we will attempt to provide an overview of what can be done, or what needs to be done, to prevent or reduce corruption in police services. Fourth, we will examine the consequences of not taking action to address the issue of corruption. Finally, we make a number of recommendations for future action.

What is corruption and how much is there?

It is difficult to discuss police corruption without a clear definition or even a common understanding of the term in general and how it can be applied in the very specific environment of policing. Without such a definition, whether it be a conceptual, policy or legal definition at the national or international level, the measurement of the extent of corruption and determining its causes is very difficult (cf. Skolnck, 2002). This level of definition is necessary in order to establish an operational definition of corruption (Moran, 2002: 137). In the absence of the ability to provide an accurate measurement of corruption, Ivković notes that "...the degree of success of a reform is often determined on the basis of its political appeal and the absence of subsequent scandals, rather than on the true impact the reform has had on the actual corruption in the agency." (2003: 594)

In addition, significant elements of police culture, an organizational reluctance to collect data or even to admit that the problem exists, and pressures not to report also make obtaining good data difficult. In this context, Skolnick (2002:7) refers to the "Blue Code of Silence" as an unwritten "normative injunction....embedded in police subculture" that hinders efforts to deal with corruption.

Many variables or actions have been included in the discussion of what constitutes police corruption. These include:
- the abuse or misuse of position or power for gain (Grant, 2002; Soreide, 2004; Sayed and Bruce, 1998a; Sayed and Bruce, 1998b; Punch, 2000; Moran, 2002);

- breach of public trust (Moran, 2002);

- personal profit and/or group or organizational gain (Sayed and Bruce, 1998; NSW, 2002);

- an inappropriate relationship between at least two positions (Sayed and Bruce, 1998a; Punch, 2000);

- acts forbidden by "law, rule, regulation, or ethical standard" (Withrow and Dailey, 2004).

A number of other dimensions have also been mentioned in attempting to determine what constitutes police corruption. Sayed and Bruce note that corrupt behaviour can include the "Blue Glue" dimension – covering up or protecting colleagues - as well as behaviour which is specifically designed not to offend businesses or politicians (1998a, 4). Kleinig (2002, 288) differentiates between "process corruption" and "noble cause corruption," and argues that "the pragmatics of policing foster situations of genuine moral ambiguity."

One of the most inclusive and clear definition of police corruption, and one which is frequently cited in the literature (c.f. NSW, 2002:8, and Newburn, 1999:7) is that advanced by Kleinig (1999:7).

> *Police officers act corruptly when, in exercising or failing to exercise their authority, they act with the primary intention of furthering private, departmental/divisional advantage.*

A slightly more concrete working definition is proposed by Sayed and Bruce (1998:8).

> *Police corruption is any illegal activity or misconduct involving the use of occupational power for personal, group, or organizational gain.*

There are several definitions of corruption, including police corruption, found in various international conventions which illustrate the need for good operational definitions. The OAS Convention, for example, defines active corruption as:

> *the offering or granting, directly or indirectly, to a government official or a*

person who performs public functions, of any article of monetary value, or other benefit, such as a gift, favor, promise or advantage for himself or for another person or entity, in exchange for any act or omission in the performance of his public functions.

Passive corruption is therefore:

the solicitation or acceptance by a government official of such a benefit in exchange for any act or omission in the performance of his public functions. (Cited in Stessens, 2001:901-902)

For a number of reasons, getting good data on the extent of police corruption and integrity problems in general is extremely difficult: problems of definition; organizational reluctance to collect data or even to admit that the problem exists beyond a few "bad apples"; pressures not to report and so on. While major scandals can receive much media attention, information about the larger reality of police corruption, or its absence, is scarce.

Ivković summarizes the major reasons for this rather succinctly. First, why would we expect those who know about, or are involved in, corruption to talk about it? (2003:296) Blockages can be expected from those in the organization who are motivated to keep the lid on. Second, chiefs and administrators often find it more "rational ... to sweep corruption under the rug." If it does become public, they may "downplay its extent and importance as much as possible and swiftly punish a few officers" – the "bad apples" (2003: 297). Third, the "code of silence" which it is argued, is a part of police socialization imposes negative consequences for those who break it (2003: 298).

There have been a number of recent studies that have attempted to examine the extent of corruption as well as the perception of corruption in policing. Although the data are limited and should not be extrapolated beyond the studies themselves, they do point to some important issues. One study in the United Kingdom, which looked at eight Professional Standards Units and the National Crime Squad, reported that the indication is that "between about half and one per cent of police staff (both officers and civilians) were potentially (though not necessarily)

corrupt." (Miller, 2003: ii).   In this study, corrupt activities were considered to be "leaking information to those outside the force (an activity dominating the intelligence picture); using their power to obtain money or sexual favours from members of the public (e.g. from prostitutes); conspiring with criminals in the committing of crimes; carrying out thefts during raids; and, using their position within the organization to undermine proceedings against criminals" (Miller, 2003: iii).

In 1993, a random sample of 700 officers from over 150 police departments in Ohio were asked to rate the seriousness of a range of behaviours, some related to police integrity and corruption (Knowles, 1995). They were also asked whether or not they had observed officers engaging in questionable behaviour. On a scale of 0 - 15 (15 = extremely serious) displaying a badge to avoid a traffic citation had a mean of 3.3, falsifying an arrest report had a mean of 12.2, and giving false testimony in a criminal case had a mean of 12.9 (Knowles, 1995:5).

Conducting an unauthorized record check for a friend had a mean of 6.8 (Knowles, 1995: 8). When asked if, in their career, they had "ever personally observed a police officer...." accept payment to overlook illegal activity, 2.2 per cent said yes. Over eighty-seven percent said that they had seen a police officer accept free coffee or food (Knowles, 1995: 15), and 68.1 per cent had seen an officer use their badge to avoid a traffic citation while off duty (Knowles, 1995: 7).

Another study asked a representative sample of 925 officers from 121 departments in the U.S. a number of questions about the abuse of authority, several of which are relevant to the definition of corruption (Weisburd, 2000). For example, questions related to the code of silence found that "more than two-thirds (67.4%) reported that police officers who report incidents of misconduct are likely to be given a 'cold shoulder' by fellow officers..." (Weisburd, 2000: 3). Sixty-one percent "indicated that police officers do not always report even serious criminal violations that involve the abuse of authority by fellow officers" (Weisburd, 2000: 3-5).

In a study using a sample of officers in 30 U.S. agencies, officers were asked to consider the

seriousness of 11 hypothetical cases involving "the abuse of police authority for gain" (Klockars et al. 2000:1). They found that the perceived seriousness of the misconduct was related to both the willingness to report it and the discipline expected. Accepting free meals, discounts and holiday gifts from merchants were activities that the majority said they wouldn't report while most would report another officer who stole from a found wallet, accepted a bribe from a motorist, or stole from a crime scene.

Other research has examined public perception of various facets of police corruption, an important dimension given the accountability of police services to the community and the importance of such perceptions in police-public relationships and trust. In a small random telephone survey in Reno Nevada examining petty corruption, defined as the offering and acceptance of small gratuities, Sigler and Dees (1988:16) found that over half (56%) of the 116 respondents felt that the police should not be allowed to accept anything and that 44.9 per cent felt that "officers reciprocate by giving special favors."

Although they note that the acceptance of gratuities is officially proscribed in most departments, Prenzler and Mackay (1995:16) point out that many officers feel "that gratuities are an acceptable part of the job." While not necessarily "corrupt," gratuities are a "grey ethical area" which can lead to expectations about behaviour and what some consider to be the "stepping stone to corruption" (p. 17). For example, while two-thirds of the citizen respondents in their Australian study felt that an occasional coffee or discounted meal while on duty was acceptable, 76 per cent felt that this was unacceptable on a regular basis and 95 per cent said that accepting free meals while off duty was unacceptable. (p. 22) Similarly, Son and Rome (2004) found that accepting free coffee or food was the most common form of police misconduct observed by both citizens and by police officers in a study in Ohio (p. 186).

The importance of dealing with both the perception and the reality of corruption is highlighted at the global level in a recent Transparency International report (Hodess and Wolkers, 2004). In surveys of more than 50,000 people in 64 countries, political parties were perceived to be the

most affected by corruption followed by parliament/legislature and the police and legal system (Hodess and Wolkers, 2004: 3). This ranking indicates

> *a particular disappointment with lawmakers and others who represent the public in political life. Financial corruption scandals, abuse of the privilege of immunity, and nepotism appear to have taken their toll on public trust towards political parties, and towards political leaders. Furthermore, the public have singled out as corrupt the very law enforcement bodies – such as courts and police – with which they are likely to have regular contact. (Hodess and Wolkers, 2004: 3)*

It is significant that respondents with low income saw the police as more corrupt than those with high income – 40 per cent with low income, 32 per cent with medium income and 29 per cent with high income rated the police as "extremely corrupt" (Hodess and Wolkers, 2004: 6).

A major challenge in assessing the extent and hence the implications of corruption, as mentioned earlier, lies in developing operational indicators. A simple definition, as discussed earlier, begins with the intent of corrupt behaviour, that is, the use or abuse of an officer's power or position for personal or organizational gain. This is expanded to include "noble cause" corruption in which the intent is of a higher level – or the activity is so rationalized.   Methods whereby these ends are achieved have been identified by many in the literature and can be used to measure corrupt activity.

The intent of corrupt behaviour	The methods / measures of corrupt behaviour[1]
The use or abuse of power, position, etc., for: a) personal gain	bribery, extortion, fraud, embezzlement, obtaining money or sex, criminal acts, theft during work, undermining investigations, internal payoffs, gratuities, kickbacks, protection of illegal activities, opportunistic theft, shakedowns, etc.
b) organizational gain	leaking information, falsifying evidence, planting evidence, perjury, coverup or protecting officers, politicians, etc. NOTE. Personal gain could also be involved in this context as well.
Noble cause (for neither personal nor organizational gain)	any or all of the above.

Recorded incidents and/or charges related to any of the above measures can and should be collected and used to provide at least a minimal quantitative measure of the extent of corruption. Unfortunately, this reflects only those incidents which come to the attention of the authorities and are so recorded and not those which are undetected or unreported. Alternative qualitative measures can be used to assess the extent of the latter, in the same way that victimization surveys provide an indication of unreported crime.

Contributing or supporting factors

There are a number of inter-related issues or factors within the police organization itself, as well

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[1] (Cf. Grabowsky, 2000; Grant, 2002; Punch, 2000; Prenzler & Mackay, 1995; Klockars et al. 2000; Verma, 1999; Carter, 1990; Bayley, 2002; Weisburd, 2000; Quinton & Miller, 2003; Sayed & Bruce, 1998b; Sigler & Dees, 1988; Knowles, 1995; Son & Rome, 2004; Miller, 2003.)

as in the environment within which policing functions that have been identified as possibly contributing to, or facilitating, police corruption.   Some of these are considered to be organizational in nature while others are more specifically related to the nature and context of police work itself. What is clear, however, is that there is no single factor or simplistic explanation that explains corruption and that there are potentially strong connections between many, if not all, of them. None of this is to say that any one or any combination necessarily results in corrupt behaviour but that they certainly increase the likelihood of such behaviour and contribute to its hidden nature.

Culture

In general, some major elements of the police culture or subculture are amongst the most frequently cited factors in discussions of police corruption. A report of the General Accounting Office (GAO) in the U.S. looked at patterns of police corruption in a number of major cities and noted that the police culture is "characterized by a code of silence, unquestioned loyalty to other officers, and cynicism about the criminal justice system" (GAO,1998: 4).   Skolnick (2002) refers to the "Blue Code of Silence" as an unwritten "normative injunction...embedded in police subculture."   While it has been argued that it can provide legitimate protection in some circumstances, it can also "sustain an oppositional criminal subculture protecting the interests of police who violate the law" (Skolnick, 2002:7). It is this code of silence, based on group loyalty and pressures for group acceptance that makes it difficult for officers to report the misconduct of others (Klockars et al. 2000; Stoddard, 1995; Pederson, 2001; Kappeler et al. 1995; Carter, 1990; Punch, 2000).   Skolnick (2002: 8) notes that this ethos of loyalty is introduced during training and constantly reinforced. In addition, he points to the fear of retribution that can be a product of the code and thus also inhibit reporting (2002:11).

The "code of silence" is often considered to be predominantly a lower-level phenomenon within police organizations. However, as a report by the NSW (New South Wales) Committee on the Office of the Ombudsman and the Police Integrity Commission points out, it can be found at all

levels. "(W)ithin the ranks of senior officers...it was marked by more altruistic notions of maintaining morale and protecting the reputation of the service" (NSW, 2002:12).

Another significant element of the police culture, reinforcing the "code" or the "ethos of secrecy" and linked to the nature of the work as well, is a "we-they" perspective in which outsiders are viewed with suspicion or distrust (Kappeler et al, 1995; Williams, 2002).

Organizational structure and process

As several authors have noted, the reality of a great deal of police work involves small groups or units working closely together. This can facilitate the effect of the cultural dimensions mentioned at the sub-cultural level. For example, Moran (2002: 142) notes that "being part of a specific team" can lead to pressures to conform to the team culture with the possibility of pressure to engage in corrupt behaviour.   Quinton and Miller (2003:5) refer to this as "internally-networked corruption," involving groups or squads working closely together.

On another level, in an analysis of police corruption in India, Verma points to the opportunities for corruption that are created by the rank structure. Senior officers are in a position to ensure that "trusted" individuals fill subordinate positions, they may have a "lavish life style maintained from official expenses" (cars, travel, entertainment, etc.), and they are part of a structure which reinforces elitism and a distance between senior officers and other ranks (Verma, 1999: 270-274). Corruption amongst senior officers has an impact throughout the organization and, as Verma notes, will make it difficult for them to exercise control over subordinates who may also engage in such activities. (1999:275) In other words, the hierarchical and rank-conscious structure of policing can contribute to not only the presence of corruption but can create problems in dealing with it.

Historically, police have operated using a command and control structure with a rigid hierarchical foundation.   Donahue notes that "police hierarchy inhibits discussion and debate,

not only of performance standards, ... but of standards of ethical conduct as well" (Donahue, 1993:347).   While there has been some alleviation of this in recent years with the introduction of the community policing philosophy, it remains a serious issue. As Owen and Pfeifer note, police leaders need to recognize that rigid hierarchical structures affect moral reasoning, and take appropriate action. "Specifically, results indicate that the more rigid the hierarchy, the lower the scores on a measure of ethical decision-making" (Owen and Pfeifer, 2002: 126). Confounding this is the fact that within the hierarchy, police officers often operate with considerable independence and little direct supervision. This may in part account for the strength and influence of the cultural values that govern behaviour.

Finally, deficiencies in internal accountability mechanisms (including internal investigation processes) can also contribute to corruption within police departments,(Williams, 2002; GAO, 1998; Kersten, 2000). In this regard, Tulley (1999:25) points to the importance of appropriate training, responsibility and regular rotation of those working in internal affairs, as well as those in positions or units especially vulnerable to corruption. These include, for example, drug units, undercover operations, and witness protection units.

Leadership

This is a critical area and has an impact either directly or indirectly on all of the other contributing factors. Those in leadership positions exercise considerable influence within the organization, directly in terms of their action or inaction in their role, and indirectly in how they and their actions are perceived by others. If they do this, as was the case in New South Wales where for many years police commissioners did little to deal with police corruption (Tiffin, 2004), the problem can spread. "Leaders" are role models and, in many ways, the perception that others have of them can be equally or more important than actual behaviour (Trautman, 2002:21).   Differences between perception and reality, when they do exist, are related to such things as inadequate communication, communication that is not believed, and mistrust in the "hierarchy." Open communication is essential (HMIC, 1999:6).

Leaders have thus a critical role in promoting integrity and combating corruption. A report by the UK Home Office Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) makes this point rather succinctly.

> *Any efforts to raise the level of integrity of junior staff will not succeed unless chief officers and other senior managers set the right example. Accepting free invitations to major sporting occasions, civic entertainment and even perceived lavish official facilities is seen by junior staff as 'double standards.' (HMIC, 1999: 5)*

The reality, or even the perception, of politicization of police departments and chiefs, as Tulley (1999) notes, can set an example for behaviour in the lower ranks. This linkage between police and politics is a problem that was a significant factor in New South Wales (Tiffin, 2004). In his typology of corruption, Punch refers to the pressures put on police "to engage in serious offences for political purposes" as "State-Related Police Crime" and clearly links this to the leadership in the organization (Punch, 2000: 305).

However, in policing there is a tendency to equate the term "leaders" primarily with officers in senior management positions. While these individuals no doubt play a significant role, at least at the macro-organizational level, supervisors and others also have a responsibility to exercise leadership and influence in this context (cf. Anon., n.d: Code of Ethics for the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Article 10.3). Different supervisory styles have been shown to be closely associated with officer behaviours, and even with misconduct. For example, a supervisory style that shields officers from accountability can lead to misconduct (Engel, 2003:5).

Personnel-related factors

A number of personnel-related factors have been linked, at least tentatively, with police corruption. Weak background screening has been identified in both general terms (HMIC, 1999:4) and in specific examination of corruption in cities such as Miami. In the latter it was noted that "...weakened screening procedures combined with the urgent need for new officers, affirmative action mandates, and inadequate supervision permitted a number of marginally

qualified individual to become police officers, including the River Cops" (Sechrest and Burns, 1992:305). Some specific factors that have been mentioned in this regard include the use of drugs and gambling (Moran, 2002) and domestic problems, family background or social networks with criminals (Moran, 2002; Miller, 2003). Carter (1990:92) stresses the opportunities related to drug work in particular: access and the ability of users to obtain drugs cheaply or for free as a result. He notes that the exposure and type of corruption varies between patrol officers and those working on drug squads.

Another issue raised in the literature, but one which is difficult to quantify, is that of real or perceived career limitations (Skogan and Meares, 2004; Sechrest and Burns, 1992). Inequity in career mobility or opportunities, real or perceived, may provide officers with a rationalization for "getting back at the system" or meeting personal goals by illegitimate means when they believe that their access to the legitimate means is limited unfairly. In other words, when the principles of fair exchange or distributive justice are deemed to have failed, and rewards are allocated on criteria other than merit, alternatives may be sought (cf. Blau, 1967:156-159).

Other Issues

Bad apples or rotten barrels

The notion of what has come to be known as the "bad apple" paradigm has often been used, especially by senior police officers, as an easy way out when they are called upon to explain corruption within their organization (Newburn, 1999:15; Kersten, 2000: 241). It is a simplistic explanation that permits the organization and senior management to blame corruption on individuals and individual faults – behavioural, psychological, background factors, and so on, rather than addressing systemic factors. Given this premise, the remedy is also simplistic and individualistic, usually focusing on psychological tests and other screening, lie detector tests, and so on. Corporate and systemic issues can thus be either ignored or downplayed.

The bad apple idea essentially sees police corruption as a moral failure or a defect of individuals and hence it becomes treated as an administrative problem (Klockars et al., 2000:1). However, this explanation is inadequate in terms of the reality of the organizational and occupational culture of policing in contributing to the development and continuation of corruption (Klockars et al., 2000:1; Kersten, 2000: 241). Corruption, like other behaviours, is learned and it is essential that we examine it, and remedies, "within the structure and culture of police work and the police organization" (Punch, 2000: 304). We need to get beyond the bad apple and look at where it occurs: the barrel. Swope (2001:1) notes that while a few bad apples may indeed get in, the real and much more serious problem is that corrupt behaviour is "nurtured in the barrel." However, the "rotten" barrel is a much more complex concept and thus much more difficult to address and much more problematic for the organization and senior officers. Publicity becomes focused on systemic and cultural problems which are much more difficult to deal with than the moral defects of an individual officer. Serious examination of corruption beyond the bad apples can challenge the "leadership's ability to manage the agency" (Ivković, 2003: 297).

Noble cause corruption

Whether this indeed refers to behaviour that occurs with "noble" intentions or is merely used as a rationalization for unethical, illegal or corrupt behaviour is a debatable question. Nonetheless, the idea of noble cause has been used to explain at least some activities that most would consider corrupt. In most corruption, the behaviour is deemed to have a benefit of some form for the individual or individuals involved. Punch (2000:305) defines noble cause corruption as "using illicit means for organisationally and socially approved ends." Similarly, Grabowsky and Larmour (2000: 1) define it as "the abuse of power for institutional ends, where there is no explicit personal gain for the offender." For example, an indicator of this is found in a study of over 900 police officers, in which 3.8 per cent strongly agreed and 39.1 per cent agreed that "always following the rules is not compatible with getting the job done" (Weisburd, 2000: 2). O'Connor sees within the police culture a self-perception of "noble individuals who represent a thin blue line of virtue positioned against the evil forces in society" (2000:92).

Noble cause corruption can take many forms but is generally based on the notion that the ends justify the means (Harrison, 1999). Specific actions have been noted, for example: false testimony, planting evidence, excessive force, illegal surveillance, racial profiling and so on (Kleinig, 2002). However, there is general agreement that the ends do not justify the means, no matter how well intentioned (Tulley, 1999; Harrison, 1999). Harrison (1999: 2) perhaps states the problem most succinctly:

> *...does an officer have the duty to infringe on an individual's liberty for a laudable outcome? Should society excuse police officers for breaking fundamental laws, not for personal gain but to serve a greater moral imperative?*

The response to this question, from the literature at least, is certainly "no".

Political environment

Police services do not operate in a vacuum, isolated from the social and political realities of the countries within which they function and the communities they serve. It is certainly quite likely that there is a relationship between corruption of police officers and their view of the society as a whole; especially their perceptions of overall corruption in that society (Punch, 2000:315). In other words, police behaviour is closely linked to what they see as common values and practices in the society and/or community. Deviance and corruption amongst the police will therefore likely reflect, in some measure at least, the practices in the community (Stoddard, 1995:203). Shelly (2001:216-217) discusses this in the case of Mexico, noting links between police corruption and corruption in the political and public sector, exacerbated by low salaries, drug trafficking, and so on. At the extreme, serious problems can arise when the police are aligned with powerful economic or political elites in a given country or community (Williams, 2002: 90). The pressure on police at all levels, but especially at the senior ranks, may be considerable and difficult to resist and can occur regardless of the size of the organization.

Consequences of corruption

As discussed earlier, identifying the actual extent of police corruption, internationally, nationally, or within any given organization, is very difficult given the problems of operational definitions, dealing with police culture, and actually collecting data. As a result, an examination of the consequences of police corruption is even more difficult. However, when we consider the issue of potential consequences in the context of what we do know about causal or contributing factors, some ideas do emerge even though there is little hard data in support.

At the level of the individual officer, the most obvious and significant consequence may involve the loss of a job, criminal charges, and even prison. This will occur only if the individual is caught and if the organization and society deem such behaviour to be serious and are willing to take action. If the offence is considered by the organization to be less serious – e.g. a breach of regulations – the consequences for the individual may well be much less severe; loss of some pay, a demotion, career limitations, and possible humiliation internally amongst those who may find out about it.

Police officers seem to regard some types of corrupt behaviour as much less serious than others. These will likely not be reported, since they are seen as not deserving serious consequences, if any at all (Klockars et al., 2000). For example, accepting free meals or discounts on the beat, or taking holiday gifts from merchants, were considered to be relatively minor, most likely would not be reported, and merited only a verbal reprimand. On the other hand, taking a bribe from a speeding motorist or stealing from a crime scene were considered to be very serious, were much more likely to be reported, and merited dismissal (Klockars et al., 2000).

The costs to the individual of engaging in corrupt behaviour, at whatever level, can go well beyond the legal or administrative. Once such activity commences, for whatever reason, the individual may be subjected to a variety of threats and intimidation by others involved to

continue or expand the activity. Threats against members of the officer's family or threats of
exposure may be used as part of the process. It may thus be difficult for an individual to get out
of the cycle, once started, with the consequence of increased stress on the person and possibly the
family.

Corruption at any level, but especially low level corruption by individuals, may well affect other
unit or team members who do not agree but who feel the cultural pressure of the "blue glue" and
the "code of silence" not to speak out. The work of the unit may well be compromised as
individuals lose trust and confidence in each other. In the worst case, others may be drawn into
the process, thereby exacerbating the problem for the organization and for the community.

There is considerable agreement that the most severe consequences of police corruption are to be
found in its negative impact on the relationship between the police and the public – the
community. Perceptions, attitudes and relationships are affected whether the corruption is low
level but well-known in the community, and involves the acceptance of gratuities or minor pay-
backs or whether it is the cause of major, well-publicized incidents as we have seen in New
York, Los Angeles, and Toronto. Police brutality and corruption, widely reported, can have a
significant impact on public perception and confidence in the police as studies have found in
New York (the Mollen Commission) and in Los Angeles (the Rodney King incident and
Ramparts) (Weitzer, 2002). In both cities, public disapproval of police after the reported
incidents was much higher among blacks and hispanics than whites.

Public sector corruption has not only a financial impact on taxpayers but, more importantly, it
has a significant negative impact on the legitimacy of government in the eyes of citizens
(Grabowsky and Larmour, 2000: 2). In societies that purport to be democratic, this is particularly
negative and trust in politics and politicians suffers accordingly. Because of the unique powers
of the police in democratic societies, accorded them by the citizens through their government,
police corruption is even more significant in the eyes of citizens. "When police act beyond the
law, they lose their moral authority" (Bayley, 2002: 7). Police corruption may also have an

impact on the institutions of government. As Harrison notes (1999:5), when there is an erosion of public confidence in the police "the ability for government to fulfil its legitimate aims also becomes decimated." The maintenance of public confidence in the police is important in democratic societies and police corruption can seriously threaten it (Punch, 2000: 322).

The results of a study in Australia which examined how the public viewed police gratuities "support the claim of many theorists that acceptance of gratuities undermines confidence in the impartiality of the police and is incompatible with the concept of democratic policing" (Prenzler and Mackay, 1995: 15). The public expects high standards of conduct from the police in democratic societies. It follows therefore that a professional police service that expects to maintain its legitimacy "must be prepared willingly to accept their obligation to adhere to these high standards. Sometimes the fundamental proposition that police are empowered **by the community to serve the community** is overlooked" (Crooke, 2001: 3, emphasis added).

What is especially important to note here is that while a diminished trust and confidence in individual officers may be one result of corruption, the negative consequences for the organization and the institution of policing are far more serious. Citizens look at and assess the police organization as whole, as well as individual officers. The rationalization of corruption as the product of a few "bad apples," so often advanced by police leaders, is insufficient to counter the perception of organizational failure and loss of confidence in policing, as well as the reality within. While acts are committed by individuals or small groups, they do not occur in isolation from the culture, structure and leadership of the organization which can support, tolerate or even attempt to hide them. Restoring confidence in the police requires more than merely focusing on individuals and individual inadequacies or failures. As Punch (2000: 321) notes, it is important to deal with systemic problems in the police organization and culture and get away from a focus on the narrow measures designed to deal with the "bad apples."

Addressing the problem

Data collection - what is going on?

Three things are fundamental to any discussion of what can or should be done to address police corruption: (1) establishing an acceptable definition of police corruption: (2) agreeing upon the indicators which will be used to operationalize this definition; and (3) beginning a rigorous collection and analysis of data. In the absence of one or more of these, efforts to deal with the realities of corruption become moot. In particular, without good data it is impossible to determine the extent of the problem and therefore to evaluate the effectiveness of any measures that are taken to reduce it.

As noted earlier, a number of definitions of corruption, and specifically public sector corruption, have been advanced in the literature. What distinguishes corrupt behaviour from other illegal behaviour is the intent. A simple definition might therefore be that:

> *police corruption is the use or abuse of a police officer's power, position, status*
> *or authority for either personal or organizational gain. Police corruption also*
> *includes such behaviour where there is neither personal nor organizational gain*
> *but power is abused for purposes that are deemed to be socially acceptable – i.e.,*
> *"noble cause" corruption.*

Many operational indicators of such behaviour have been identified, some of which are clearly Criminal Code offences (e.g., bribery, extortion, theft, etc.) while others are perhaps better described as ethical problems (e.g., accepting gratuities, ignoring evidence, protecting other officers or politicians, etc.). It is necessary that the indicators include both the intent of the behaviour and the actual behaviour.

As discussed earlier, while many possible indicators have been proposed there are many difficulties in obtaining valid and reliable data. Such behaviour occurs out of public view of

course; those involved are generally unwilling to report it; and for the cultural and organizational reasons noted, it is frequently ignored internally. For these reasons, Ivković (2003: 595) argues that collecting the data necessary to measure corruption requires triangulation and provides an excellent model for doing so.   On the one hand, there are those data collection methods that involve events and behaviours that become known to the authorities and which are recorded and acted upon. On the other hand, given the realities of police corruption, there are methods which can provide an indication of the real extent of corruption, including unreported corrupt behaviour, albeit with the associated limitations of any such data collection.[2] Iković has developed a model that identifies possible indicators of the extent of police corruption and the course of data that can be used to determine each of these.

Funnel of Police Corruption and the Data Collection Methods (Ivković, 2003:602)

Offenders sent to prison	• Prison records • Court records • Prosecutor's Records
Offenders sentenced	• Court Records • Prosecutor's records
Offenders prosecuted	• Prosecutor's records
Offenders referred for prosecution	• Prosecutor's records
Offenders known to internal formal system of control in agency	• Complaints • Disciplinary records
Actual extent and nature of corruption	• Surveys: police officers, payers, citizens, experts • Observations • Interviews • Case studies • Investigations

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[2] Here we can consider the analogy of the useful comparisons that are frequently made between official crime statistics, based on reported and recorded data, and the results of victimization surveys which provide insights about the extent of unreported crime.

Recruiting and screening

Careful recruiting and pre-employment selection processes are commonly mentioned as being necessary to reduce potential future problems (Arrigo and Claussen, 2003; Miller, 2000; Williams, 2002; Conditt, 2001; Palmiotto, 2001). Family and personal background and lifestyle factors, relationships and so on that could make an officer susceptible to corruption have to be considered. "Weakened" screening practices in Miami were identified as one of the factors leading to major corruption problems (Sechrest and Burns; 1992).

The use of psychological tests has also been discussed as a method of screening applicants with personality factors that might be related to, or predict corrupt behaviour. While some such psychological tests are felt to have possible use in this area, more research is needed before they can be considered accurate predictors of corruption. Arrigo and Claussen (2003:278) argue that developing such screening instruments could be useful but note that "there is no pre-employment tool to assess the potential for corruption, even though specific behaviors can be identified."   In a review of 16 studies involving psychological screening, Sced notes that predictability is difficult without taking into account the organizational and cultural context and the "prevalence of corruption" in the work environment (Sced, 2004, iv).

Ethics and education

An emphasis on ethics, ethics "training," codes of conduct, etc., has been considered by many to be a necessary part of a strategy to deal with police corruption. This is something that begins at the recruit training stage but, if it is to contribute, this alone is insufficient. Ongoing ethical "training," linked to the realities of police work is necessary, if there is to be any significant impact (Conditt, 2001; Owens and Pfeifer, 2002).   One area of particular concern is the need for those who provide the initial field supervision, and the field trainers especially, to be educated in ethics and hence prepared to support the recruit training (Anon., 2001). In addition to ethics,

education about the risks of misconduct to individuals, organizations and communities is also important (Miller, 2003; Quinton and Miller, 2003). Owens and Pfeifer (2002: 132) specifically note the need to incorporate ethics into all training rather than using only specific ethics courses. Campbell et al. (2004: 19) note that while public complaints commissions and ethics advisors, such as in the RCMP, can help to ensure integrity in Canadian police departments, their impact is not yet known.

But training in ethics and ethical standards by itself is generally considered to be insufficient. It is critical that the ethical culture of the police organization be set and promoted by leadership both by example and by their response to incidents of corrupt behaviour (Miller, 2003; Punch, 2000; Owens and Pfeifer).   The reaction of leaders to ethical problems has a direct impact on the perception of all officers, hence the need for openness and good communications within the organization. In this context, it is essential to recognize that there may be differences between the perceived standards and the official versions and that the former, especially as they pertain to superiors, are often most important (Owens and Pfeifer, 2002; 127).

While training in ethics is important, it is also necessary to examine carefully and deal with the many other systemic, organizational and cultural issues that have been identified as being related to corruption (Newburn, 1999:48). Referring specifically to the structure of police organizations it has been argued that, for example "extreme hierarchical arrangements in policing invalidate bilateral discussion and agreement on occupational norms. This, in turn, ensures that ethical standards will always be viewed by rank-and-file police officers as externally imposed" (Donahue and Felts, 1993:347). There is, as a consequence often a disjunction between the standards set by the organization and the perception of reality in officers' daily work.

Integrity testing

Integrity testing has been proposed and used in a number of settings in an effort to counter police corruption. It can be either "targeted" or "random" and essentially places officers in "a

monitored situation with an opportunity for unethical decision making" (Prenzler and Ronken, 2001:321).

> *Targeted integrity testing is directed at an officer or officers suspected of corrupt activities in response to other intelligence or complaints but where there is not enough proof to take action. Random integrity testing involves placing randomly selected officers in a situation where corruption is possible and monitoring their reaction. (NSW Committee on the Office of the Ombudsman and the Police Integrity Commission, 2002: 55).*

On the one hand, it has been argued, the mere presence of such integrity tests can act as a deterrent to officers as well as identifying potential problems or problem areas in the organization (Pogarsky and Piquero, 2004:382). On the other hand, serious questions have been raised about the legal and ethical nature of such tests themselves, as well as their effectiveness (Girodo, 1998). In particular, the question of whether they can be considered to be entrapment needs to be considered (Newburn, 1999:38; NSW Committee on the Office of the Ombudsman and the Police Integrity Commission, 2002: 55).

Physical and IT security

Opportunity theory suggests that reducing the availability of such things as drugs and exhibits, as well as access to sensitive information, will also reduce the risk of corruption on the part of individual officers. This attention to physical security also needs to be complemented by special screening and better supervision for those with such access or who are engaged in high-risk activities (Quinton and Miller, 2003).

Accountability

Anti-corruption measures taken in Australia have included both internal and external review of complaints; both are seen as necessary for the perception of both internal and external accountability (Prenzler and Ronken, 2001). It is important, therefore, that all such complaints

be taken seriously and investigated without attempting or vilify of pressure the complainant (Pederson, 2001:142). Nuala O'Loan, the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, notes that "people have gone beyond accepting investigation by the police of the police....there is a demand for openness, transparency, and independence in the investigation of allegations of misconduct by the police" (2001/02:25). Conditt (2001:22) emphasizes that both the process, and decisions that result from investigations be open and formally reported internally so that all are aware of what has happened and the consequences. He also notes the importance of keeping the public fully informed (with regard for privacy rights etc.), and thus assured, that institutional integrity is being maintained.

Gratuities

For many, this is somewhat of a grey area but, as studies have shown, the acceptance of gratuities by police officers can decrease public confidence in the police (Prenzler and Mackay, 1995:15). It has been argued that while usually minor, they can be problematic in terms of the extensive discretion that police officers have available and the potential abuse of such discretion in, for example, preferential services to businesses (White, 2002). It is generally agreed that police departments need a clear and well-publicized policy about gratuities that applies at all levels of the organization.

Supervision

Although part of the overall culture of police, the importance of supervisors in dealing with, and deterring unethical or corrupt behaviour merits special attention. As Swope notes (2001:3), it is important that supervisors not tolerate such behaviour and deal with it promptly when it is reported or observed. Failure in this regard only encourages more problem behaviour. This, it is argued, is part of a culture of accountability.

Culture and leadership

As discussed earlier, elements of both police culture and leadership have been identified as major contributing factors to the corruption of police officers at all levels of the organization. The overall culture, as well as the ability and willingness of the organization to undertake necessary change in the areas already identified, is strongly influenced by the leaders it has in key positions. At the same time, it is also important to note that most police officers in leadership roles are themselves a product of many years of participation in that organization and its culture. On the basis of a large, multi-organizational study, Weisburd (2000:6), while noting the key influence of front-line supervisors, argues that the attitudes and peer pressures of police officers at the street level are essentially the product of the larger organizational climate originating from the top levels of police leadership.

The actions of leaders are critical in breaking the "Blue Code of Silence," a major part of police culture that contributes to corruption (Skolnick, 2002:16). The reality of police work is such that questionable behaviour, including corruption, is difficult to hide especially at the operational level. However, conformity with the "code" makes reporting such behaviour difficult. The challenge to police leadership is how to change the organizational culture and enable reporting without fear of the consequences: ostracism, retaliation, retribution and even personal danger (Mink et al., 2000:25; Moran, 2002:146; Skolnick, 2002:11; Stoddard, 1995:188). As Skolnick notes (2002:18), citizen confidence in the police demands a high level of integrity which requires leadership and cultural change to break the "walls of silence."   In addition, as was noted earlier, in dealing with the police culture it is necessary for police leaders to take a firm stance against "noble cause" corruption which may be a component of that culture.

It has been argued that when officers feel valued and work in an open and trusting environment they are "satisfied, positive and productive in their behaviors and efforts towards achieving organizational goals" (Mink et al., 2000:22). However, when trust is lacking in the work environment, "it is not difficult to understand why some officers maintain their silence"

concerning corrupt practices that they see in that environment (Mink et al. 2000: 28). Trust is established through leadership and the actions of leaders.

On the practical side, reporting of corruption in all types of organizations may be encouraged by having whistle blower protection and perhaps even low penalties or rewards for those who cooperate in identifying or exposing corruption (Rose-Ackerman, 2002). A report from the U.S. Department of Justice goes somewhat further and suggests that police officers "should be required to report misconduct by other officers that they witness or of which they become aware. The failure to report such misconduct should be subject to appropriate discipline" (Anon., 2001:7). This report also notes the need for protection against retaliation. The importance of such measures in serving communities, as noted earlier, is clearly recognized by Attorney General Janet Reno in the foreword of this report. "Our goal must be professional law enforcement that gives all citizens of our country the feeling that they are being treated fairly, equally and with respect" (Anon., 2001:1).

In practice when dealing with issues of police integrity and corruption, it is difficult to understate the importance of leadership, both within the organization itself in within the larger community. In the United Kingdom, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) undertook work in this area "because it was recognized that public confidence was becoming seriously affected by the bad behaviour of a small minority of police staff..." (HMIC, 1999:6). One of the conclusions that they arrived at speaks clearly to the leadership issue.

> *Any efforts to raise the level of integrity of junior staff will not succeed unless chief officers and other senior managers set the right example. Accepting free invitations to major sporting occasions, civic entertainment and even perceived lavish official facilities, is seen by junior staff as "double standards". (HMIC, 1999:5)*

In a similar vein, an American report on drug-related police corruption by the GAO identified "the failure of top police officials to promote integrity" as a key management-related issue (GAO, 1998:4). It is those in leadership positions who, by their actions and examples, real and

perceived, set standards, promote and influence ethical behaviour, and reflect and promote the culture of the organization. Given this role, and the fact that such influence may have significantly greater impact than any formal code of ethics, it is important that police leaders themselves have effective ethics training (Owens and Pfeifer, 20002:124).

In a rather more pragmatic vein, leadership can be critical in dealing with, and being seen to deal with, some of the systemic issues that can contribute to corruption. One of the most frequently mentioned is ensuring that there is a fair, equitable and visible system of staffing, promotions, grievance procedures and other elements that directly affect individual officers (Miller, 2003: v; HMIC, 1999: 5). Career limitations (Skogan and Meares, 2004: 76) and real or perceived double standards can have a significant impact on moral accountability, hence behaviour (Perry, 2001:23).

Closely related to this is the importance of leadership in ensuring, in a visible manner, that the necessary resources are available to police officers on two fronts. First, they should be accountable for providing the financial and other requisites necessary for officers to accomplish what is being asked of them (Miller, 2003: v). Second, they should be accountable for ensuring that officers have a pay level that is reasonable in the societal context. Without this, corrupt behaviour may be necessary for the preservation of self and family (Williams, 2002: 89). Critical of course, here as elsewhere, is the necessity of full and open communication between the leadership and the rest of the organization or, in other words, accountability.

In dealing with the reality of police corruption, it is also important, for both internal and external credibility, that leaders stop using the "bad apple" or "rotten apple" notion in attempting to explain and deal with corruption. Kersten (2000:241) notes that this paradigm "qualifies as the theory of least imagination of police misconduct, but it has become one of the most fashionable theories among police chiefs, administrators and government officials during and after police scandals." It is essential that leaders address the "barrel," the systemic issues in the police culture and organization which contribute to corruption (Punch, 2000:321; Perry, 2001: 24).

Next Steps - Lessons from the Literature

While the likelihood of finding extensive corruption in police services is relatively low,[3] and the level of community confidence in police generally is generally quite high, we cannot assume that this will continue. In a recent report which assessed public perceptions of corruption in 62 countries,[4] there were some interesting findings about Canadians' views. For example, "four out of ten in Canada and the United States also reported that corruption affected their personal lives to a moderate or large extent" (Hodess and Wolkers, 2004:8). Compared to perceptions of corruption in political parties, parliament and the legal system, the police in Canada did not fare badly. Answering the question "to what extent do you perceive the following sectors in this country/territory to be affected by corruption?" on a scale where 1 = not at all corrupt and 5 = extremely corrupt, Canadians responded with 3.8 for political parties, 3.5 for parliament/legislature, 3.2 for legal system/judiciary and 2.8 for police. (2004: 18). While 41 per cent of Canadians expected the "level of corruption in the next three years" to "stay the same," 22 per cent expected it to "increase a little" and 16 per cent to "increase a lot" (2004:21).

It is important to consider the impact that high profile incidents of police corruption with extensive media reporting, such as we have seen recently in Toronto, will have on perceptions of police locally and nationally. Given the publicity of such events, it cannot be assumed that there will not be some "guilt by association" in the minds of many. In addition, it is also important to assess the impact of other small scale activities that may be perceived as corrupt, such as the acceptance of gratuities, on public perceptions and confidence at the local level based upon the

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[3] Cragg and Bailey (2001:15) report that "Based on RCMP research, police corruption is not a major issue in Canada." However, it was not possible to find this piece of research and hence not possible to determine the basis for this conclusion. They also point out the formal and independent mechanisms available to handle complaints of police corruption at the national level, noting however that "Most investigations take place at the city or provincial level" (2001:16).

[4] Over 50,000 people were surveyed in total. The Canadian data was collected in a national telephone survey in July, 2004 with a sample size of 1,000.

observations and experiences of individual citizens. (For example, see Son and Rome, 2004; Sigler and Dees, 1988; Weitzer, 2002; Knowles, 1995).

It is therefore important to address the issue of police corruption in a comprehensive and integrated manner. Without a useful and operational definition, and hence the ability to collect the necessary data, the extent of the problem will remain largely unknown and open to speculation. In particular, we will not have good knowledge about the areas of police work that are affected – the impact on police work, on the police organization, on the communities the police serve, and on the justice system as a whole.

Equally, or perhaps even more important, is the fact that without such data and the determination of what actions should or are being taken to reduce corruption, we will have no good way of assessing the effectiveness of any such activities. Data about perceptions of corruption, both unreported and incidents of victimization, in addition to those formally collected in the system will assist in assessing the extent of the problem and remedial actions. Such actions are necessary to maintain public confidence in the police as well as internal confidence within the police organization.

For police organizations that are serious about dealing with corruption, both the reality and the perception, there are a number of actions that would seem to be an integral part of any strategy and its assessment. This will not be inexpensive and will require a long-term commitment of resources.

a)   First, it is essential that the organization establish a clear, articulate and inclusive definition of corruption as well as the necessary operational indicators and measures of such behaviour.

b)   Given this, it will be possible to identify the data that are currently available for these measures as well any additional data which will be needed in the future. It is important that a data collection process be established that integrates past information where

possible. The longer the time line the better.

c)   Identify and evaluate whatever anti-corruption initiatives may have been implemented; their rationale, scope, and, where possible, their impact using appropriate available data. For example, if psychological testing of recruits was introduced, did it have any measurable impact? Did the introduction of specific training, or the public promotion of ethics, for example, have any effect? In looking at such initiatives, it is important to consider both preventive and reactive actions.

d)   Develop a comprehensive plan to address the areas of culture and leadership which are fundamental to any real change in the organization. This is critical and will undoubtedly take the most time and cause the most concern. It is essential that this be an inclusive process – not one that is uni-directional from the top.

e)   Implement a methodologically sound strategic process to identify changes in corruption patterns, future threats and so on, so that necessary preventive measures can be undertaken as appropriate.

f)   Design, and make a long-term commitment to, the ongoing assessment and evaluation of changes that are implemented as well as their effectiveness.

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