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Police Occupational Stress and Its Impact on Community Relations

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INTRODUCTION

The research strongly suggests and most people would agree that a certain amount of stress is evident in most, if not all, professions; however, law enforcement has the dubious honor of being recognized as one of the most stressful professions in the world. The harmful effects and debilitating impact of stress, particularly chronic stress, can lead to a multitude of physical, emotional, psychological, and behavioral problems that not only affect the individual officer, but also the officer's family, partner, fellow officers, and of particular interest, the community with which the officer has sworn to serve and protect are also at risk. Chronic stress, if left untreated, will likely continue to fester to a point where it could conceivably lead to a number of destructive behaviors, which include but are not limited to aggressiveness, violence, and suicide.

Most people have a general elementary understanding of, and are intimately familiar with, stress and the behavioral and physical symptoms commonly associated with having too much stress in one's life. According to Anderson, Swenson, and Clay (1995), stress can be defined as any event or situation that requires individuals, which in this case are police officers, to make adjustments in relation to how one thinks, feels, or

behaves. In addition to the distinctively familiar emotional, psychological, and behavioral responses to stress, there are also powerful physiological reactions, which collectively make it tremendously difficult, but not necessarily impossible, to avoid all stress (Anderson, Swenson, & Clay, 1995). Stress is unfortunately the inevitable outcome of the officer's perceived inability to cope with anticipated and unanticipated events and situations common to police work. Stress only becomes problematic when an individual is confronted with so much stress that the individual perceives it to be overwhelming and unmanageable (Anderson et al, 1995).

A vast amount of research has been conducted over the past 45 years in reference to the relationship between the police environment and job-related stress (Zhao, He, & Lovrich, 2002). After all, police officers encounter a wide assortment of criminal offenders, some of which are particularly aggressive, violent, and sadistic (Zhao et al, 2002). This constant exposure to violence, destruction, and human misery, coupled with an unpredictable work environment, produces a considerable amount of stress for many police officers (Zhao et al). However, the literature consistently points to the bureaucratic

nature and organizational structure of most police agencies as a major source of police officer stress, more so than the perceived dangerousness of the job (Oliver & Meier, 2004).

STRESS AS A POSITIVE MOTIVATOR

This writer is under the assumption that everyone has experienced stress, to a certain extent, at some point in life, and most would describe the experience negatively even though a small amount of stress has been shown to improve overall peak performance. Selye coined the term “eustress” in 1974 to describe the positive attributes associated with stress (Anderson, Swenson, & Clay, 1995). Stressful situations can be highly influential in fostering creativity and resourcefulness in times of dire need when the situation initially seems intolerable, impractical, and unattainable (Anderson et al, 1995). Striving to meet what appears to be an unrealistic deadline could conceivably lead to better productivity in that one is essentially forced to forego trivial matters in favor of what is perceived to be important. Police officers are particularly resilient in that police officers have chosen to work in a profession that is admittedly dangerous, yet incredibly exhilarating, especially to those who enjoy and are attracted to the so-called “adrenaline rush” of police work. Many officers find the handling of challenging assignments or the constant threat of danger exciting in that it defines and adds to the officer’s professed level of confidence and self-esteem (Anderson et al, 1995).

ACUTE STRESS

Stress can be either acute or chronic. Acute stress is often momentary, yet it can either assist or hinder an officer’s

performance (Hess & Wroblewski, 2006). When an officer is confronted with a dangerous or challenging situation, the officer will notice an increase in one’s blood pressure, heart rate, brain activity, breathing, and metabolic rate (Champion & Hooper, 2003). The officer’s auditory and visual senses are in a heightened stage of physical and mental alertness in which the officer is highly attentive and keenly observant of one’s immediate surroundings. The officer’s body is essentially preparing for either a fight or flight, a situation commonly referred to as the “fight or flight response,” whereby the officer’s mind and body go into basic and somewhat instinctual, survival mode.

Police officers are frequently called upon to make critical split-second decisions that may ultimately determine life or death for the perpetrator. If the officer shoots and kills the suspect, the experience may be particularly stressful and traumatic for the officer even though the event lasted only a few seconds. Champion and Hooper (2003) refer to this as “burst stress,” whereby the stress is caused by a single, brief event as opposed to continuous low-grade stressors such as those encountered in conjunction with police bureaucracy or politics.

The emotional response and reaction to a deadly shooting can be quite profound. For example, it is not unusual to hear of an officer experiencing posttraumatic stress from a single, isolated incident even though officers are believed to be mentally prepared and trained to cope with such situations. No one can determine with certainty how one will react in such a situation until one is confronted with a similar situation. Exposure to a single, traumatic event can bring about Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in which the officer may continuously relive the

experience, avoid situations associated with the traumatic event, and remain in a state of hyper arousal and fearful when in future situations (Violanti, 2004).

CHRONIC STRESS

Chronic stress, as the term implies, is constant and perceived to be relentless. The officer is literally in a chronic state of agitation. Chronic stress is particularly debilitating because it can lead to severe physical, emotional, behavioral, and psychological problems that can be quite profound and destructive if not tended to in a timely manner. Police officers who work under such stressful conditions tend to be more cynical, frustrated, and emotionally and physically fatigued (Manzoni & Eisner, 2006). Chronic stress has also been linked to excessive smoking and drinking, abuse of prescription and illicit drugs, and marital problems that often become the basis for a divorce (Manzoni & Eisner). Officers under stress, particularly chronic stress, are at a significantly greater risk of human error, are more prone to accidents while performing one's duties, and tend to over-react to situations in routine citizen encounters (McCraty, Tomasino, Atkinson, & Sundram, 1999).

As mentioned, PTSD can have a profound emotional, physical, and psychological impact on even the most highly trained, experienced police officers (Hess & Wroblewski, 2006). The majority of traumatic incidents that police officers frequently encounter occur unexpectedly and suddenly; therefore, it is quite conceivable that PTSD, if left untreated, will likely worsen (Hess & Wroblewski). Champion and Hooper (2003), suggest that as many as one-third of all officers may be suffering from untreated PTSD. Some suggest that if the PTSD is left untreated,

many will contemplate or attempt suicide (Champion & Hooper).

Prolonged bouts of stress can also lead to a debilitating condition commonly referred to as "burnout." Hess and Wroblewski (2006) defined burnout as a condition in which the officer experiences emotional exhaustion, depersonalization of others, and reduced feelings of self-accomplishment. What makes burnout so interesting is that it is more likely to affect highly productive officers who enter the profession full of enthusiasm and vitality (Hess & Wroblewski).

STRESS-RELATED RESEARCH IN RELATION TO POLICE OFFICERS

The research into stress and its influence on police officer behaviors is extensive. Stress is a confusing and widely misunderstood concept in that many officers do not recognize the signs and characteristic symptoms associated with stress (Champion & Hooper, 2003). Contrary to what most people believe, the two leading stressors associated with police work are organizational structural issues within the police agency and weak or inconsistent management practices, not necessarily the dangerousness of the profession as many believe (Hess & Wroblewski, 2006). Most incorrectly assume that it is the dangerousness of police work that causes the most stress. There is denying the fact that officers are often called upon to confront high-risk and emotionally charged situations that are, at times, also deeply disturbing (Champion & Hooper, 2003). However, the dangerousness of the job is not necessarily the catalyst to chronic stress. Chronic stress is more likely attributed to the ongoing, yet low level, stressors associated with and stemming from within the police organization itself.

Police administrators have historically not been empathetic to the plight of police officers who complained about or exhibited stress-related symptoms. Many administrators still believe that police officers are expected and trained to handle the stress and pressure that coincides with being a police officer and this perception is often reinforced amongst one's fellow officers and within the police subculture (Amaranto, Steinberg, Castellano, & Mitchell, 2003). Moreover, police officers, for the most part, lack the coping skills and abilities necessary to effectively manage and control occupational stress and its adverse effects simply because most do not recognize the characteristic signs of stress.

The occupational stress associated with being a police officer is so widespread that, if left untreated, will have an adverse affect on not only the individual officer, but also the police organization (Morash, Haar, & Kwak, 2006). High levels of occupational stress have been consistently correlated with a high incidence of health related problems that affect the officer's overall work performance, which jeopardizes the safety of the officer and the community which the officer serves (Morash et al, 2006). As mentioned, chronic stress may lead to depression, a number of physical ailments, divorce, and suicide to name a few (Morash et al).

As mentioned, continuous exposure to stressful situations may have an adverse affect on police – community relations in that chronic stress may strain existing police- community relations. Moreover, these officers tend to receive the most citizen complaints (Manzoni & Eisner, 2006). According to Manzoni and Eisner (2006), police occupational stress has been consistently linked to aggressive behaviors and excessive use of force complaints from community members, an area that is particularly widespread and problematic.

POLICE SUICIDE

There have been several prominent studies pertaining to police suicide and the behavioral symptoms that are believed to be associated with such suicidal ideations. The evidence strongly suggests that the availability of firearms significantly increases the risk for suicide (Amaranto, Steinberg, Castellano, & Mitchell, 2003). In fact, the suicide rate for police officers is twice that of the number of officers killed in the line of duty (Hess & Wroblewski, 2006). Police officer suicide is more than three times greater than the national average suicide rate (Hess & Wroblewski). To make matters worse, police suicides outnumber police murders (Champion & Hooper, 2003). The statistics concerning police officer suicide suggest that the number of self-inflicted deaths is on an upward trend; therefore, it is imperative that police departments provide education through preventative intervention strategies to decrease the number of police suicides (Amaranto et al, 2003).

According to Champion and Hooper (2003), one officer commits suicide every 24 hours. It is difficult, however, to acquire accurate information on the number of police suicides because this information is rarely maintained or tracked by the police. Nevertheless, some researchers believe that the number of police suicides is largely underreported since fellow officers are typically the first to respond; therefore, the responding officers could quite possibly "cover-up" the suicide as a tragic accident (Hess & Wroblewski, 2006). The reason or thought behind this notion is that concealing evidence of a suicide may save the family from further pain or embarrassment and it will likely detract from insurers who refuse to pay if the subscriber commits suicide (Hess & Wroblewski).

PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF POLICE OFFICERS SKOLNICK'S WORKING PERSONALITY

Jerome Skolnick coined the term "working personality" to explain how police officers cope with three elements that are believed to contribute to the working personality: authority, danger, and efficiency (Champion & Hooper, 2003). The working personality is believed to emerge from the dangers commonly associated with police work, which, in turn, leads to the formation and participation within the police subculture (Champion & Hooper). It is essentially a mixture of the individual officer's personality with that of the police subculture (Champion & Hooper). According to Aramanto, Steinberg, Castellano, and Mitchell, the need, ability, and to a certain extent, the right to use force defines the police officer's personality (2003). Suspicion of others is basically a learned behavior that can be attributed to the officer's attention and alertness toward potential violence and other law-breaking behaviors (Aramanto et al, 2003). Suspiciousness is undoubtedly a valuable trait in police work, but it often leads to cynicism, skepticism, and a number of issues relating to trust (Aramanto et al). Problems emerge when these valuable police traits transcend into other facets of the officer's personal life (Aramanto et al).

REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROFESSION

Police officers are continuously challenged with a number of internal and external stressors, most of which can wreak havoc on the officer's physical and emotional well-being over time. Police work is essentially a dangerous profession in which danger looms in virtually every call

for help. The profession requires someone with distinctive personality traits to be both law enforcer and social worker, which is not as simple as one would think.

Police officers work in an environment where the world, from the officer's perspective, is one filled with human misery and misfortune. After all, police officers see, hear, and are exposed to the worst of humanity (Amaranto, Steinberg, Castellano, & Mitchell, 2003). These negative experiences influence and shape the officer's personality and perception of others in that the officer becomes more suspicious, pessimistic, cynical, and jaded toward members of the community (Amaranto et al, 2003). Over time, these perceptions and attitudes toward the public will likely worsen as the officer develops a general dislike for people (Amaranto et al).

THE POLICE SUBCULTURE

There are a number of theories that have been proposed to explain the behavioral manifestations of police officers who may succumb, whether directly or indirectly, to the negativism of the police subculture. For the most part, these officers distrust and become suspicious of virtually anyone, including one's fellow officers. Griffin and Bernard (2003) suggest the police subculture is often depicted as an occupational environment that fosters deviancy, secrecy, cynicism, and more important, silence. Moreover, it is believed to be partly responsible for the formation of the pathological personality, one that is characterized by suspiciousness, narrow-mindedness, authoritarianism, ultraconservatism, and to a certain extent, bigotry, and racism (Griffin & Bernard, 2003).

Because of the dangerousness of police work, officers tend to remain socially

isolated from most others, especially those who the officer perceives to be potentially dangerous or threatening (Griffin & Bernard, 2003). The police subculture also isolates police officers from those within the same police organizations; including supervisors, fellow officers, and command staff (Griffin & Bernard). The police officer eventually grows intolerant, apprehensive, and distrustful of not only civilians, but also others who work for the criminal justice system, including judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys (Griffin & Bernard). The officer will begin to associate only with other officers and the officer's spouse will likely be introduced to and eventually befriend other spouses who are married to fellow officers (Champion & Hooper, 2003). It is difficult to say how or why this phenomenon occurs, but it does and it occurs relatively quickly. High school and college friends slowly disappear, but the brotherhood of officers grows or remains steadfast throughout one's career.

KNOWN SOURCES OF POLICE OFFICER STRESS ENCOUNTERING AND COPING WITH DEATH AND INJURY

Unlike most other professions, police officers are frequently exposed to actual or perceived physical danger, the threat of serious injury or death, and contact with others who have been seriously injured, murdered, or otherwise harmed to some degree (Aaron, 2000). For obvious reasons, encountering and coping with death and injury, especially prolonged exposure and contact with such human atrocities, is a known source of police officer stress. Police officers clearly expect to encounter death and injury at some point in one's career, but it is far more challenging to cope with these images and experiences of death and destruction once it occurs,

especially if exposure to such incidents strikes with increasing frequency. As Champion and Hooper (2003) note, it is much different to observe a dead body in a funeral home than at a crime scene. Police officers are, by definition, required to enforce the law. That may require an officer to be placed in a potentially volatile and dangerous situation in which the officer may be in harm's way; thereby requiring the officer to take action. Officers are required not only to protect themselves, but also those in the community.

ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

As mentioned, organizational issues have consistently been linked to police officer complaints about stress, especially in relation to, but not limited to, meager pay, excessive paperwork, erratic shift work, insufficient training and inadequate equipment, limited or biased opportunities for advancement, and lack of managerial support and guidance. As a profession, police officers are typically underpaid and underappreciated, especially when one considers what the profession entails (Champion & Hooper, 2003). Even though the salaries have increased considerably over the past few decades, the pay remains relatively low in comparison to many other professions. The stress associated with the organizational structure of the agency typically results in lower productivity, job dissatisfaction, and health problems (Scott, 2004).

Despite what is depicted on television, police work is not always glamorous and exciting. Arrests require documentation, but the paperwork associated with an arrest can be time-consuming to complete, extremely mundane, and obviously excessive in that some forms need to be completed in

triplicate (Champion & Hooper, 2003). Police officers also tend to work erratic shifts; therefore, it would not be unusual for an officer, even a senior officer, to work evenings, weekends, and holidays. Moreover, officers may be mandated to stay and work a second shift if there are not enough officers available to satisfactorily cover the shift. Budgetary constraints can lead to inadequate training and equipment, which can cause unsafe working conditions (Champion & Hooper). Many police officers will openly admit that the criminals outgun the police. Contrary to what is depicted on television, most police departments lack the necessary crime-fighting equipment to adequately enforce the law and protect society. Lastly, promotions are often based more on favoritism and politics rather than the officer's skills, ability, and knowledge of police work.

LACK OF ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

The research consistently points to the organizational structure of the police agency, inadequate leadership, and inconsistent or weak management practices as a significant source of stress for many police officers (Manzoni & Eisner, 2006; Zhao, He, & Lovrich, 2002). As noted, lack of administrative support and guidance is a common complaint amongst many officers and the source of much stress. Without the backing and support of one's supervisors, it becomes very challenging to perform one's duties to the fullest potential. Even though the organizational issues typically rank as one of the primary sources of officer stress, emphasis is also placed on non-supportive, non-participative practices and controversial leaderships styles of the department's supervisors and administrators (Scott, 2004). The organization's mission, values, goals, and objectives are often

clouded by role conflict and ambiguity amongst the officers in understanding and fulfilling the mission, values, goals, and objectives (Champion & Hooper, 2003).

According to Champion and Hooper (2003), poor supervision can lead to officer misconduct or to the development of the police subculture, whose mission rarely reflects that of the agency. There is an obvious lack of employee input into policy and decision-making, which often results in low morale in that officers must abide by and enforce ineffective and unpopular policies (Champion & Hooper). The quasi-militaristic model of policing favors rigid administrators to enforce departmental policies and standards, yet this managerial style discourages and inhibits officers from voicing one's opinions for fear of reprisal from the administration (Champion & Hooper). Since most vertical channels of communication are severed, for the most part, officer's experience role conflict and role ambiguity, which may affect morale (Champion & Hooper).

DISPARAGING COMMUNITY ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS

Community attitudes and perceptions toward the police vary from community to community; however, it is a well-known fact that the relationship between the police and the community has not always been a blissful one. From a historical perspective, there has been a long standing and somewhat tenacious relationship between the police and the African American community. The African American communities, particularly those who reside in lower income neighborhoods, feel as if the police disproportionately target young African American males, which in turn, have a tendency to perpetuate the tension between the community and the police assigned to those communities.

FRUSTRATION WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

One source of frustration is that the police, for the most part, do not have control of the criminal justice system process, particularly in relation to the eventual outcome of the officer's arrest. Officers are frustrated in response to having to arrest the same offenders, which raises questions about the criminal justice system's effectiveness in reducing crime and deterring future criminality amongst potential offenders and chronic offenders (Champion & Hooper, 2003). Furthermore, court cases are postponed, delayed, or simply thrown out for a variety of reasons, most of which are based on legal technicalities or loopholes in the legal system (Amaranto, Steinberg, Castellano, & Mitchell, 2003). The perception among many police officers is that the courts are simply too lenient and that the courts tend to favor the criminals by placing more restrictions on police authority and control in initiating an arrest (Amaranto et al, 2003).

Officers are frustrated with the blatant abuse of plea bargaining and other pre-trial negotiations in which the officer has no input and no control in deciding what criminal charges are dropped or reduced to a lesser charge (Champion & Hooper, 2003). Police officers, for the most part, are angered by the number of "guilty" defendants who are set free on minor technicalities or procedural errors that are beyond the scope of the officer's control (Champion & Hooper). It is no wonder why many officers look the other way or simply give up in arresting repeat offenders.

MEDIA'S NEGATIVE DEPICTION OF THE POLICE

As mentioned, the media's portrayal of the police has not been depicted

favorably. The grainy images of Rodney King being "restrained" by the police are still fresh in the minds of most Americans even though it has been nearly 20 years since the incident took place. Positive events involving the police are rarely televised, yet those events alleging police officer misconduct receive a considerable amount of attention from the news media. Simply stated, the criminal justice system is bound by the legal doctrine in which the accused is innocent until proven guilty, yet the media is not bound by this same doctrine (Champion & Hooper, 2003). The media has a lengthy history of depicting the police as rogue cops (Champion & Hooper). The newspaper headlines can be quite damaging and, more times than not, misleading (Champion & Hooper).

The police have responded by limiting access to journalists who may be investigating allegations of police misconduct; however, this is not suggestible simply because it frequently results in additional negative press (Champion & Hooper, 2003). It may be best for the police agency to be forthright with the public and admit when a mistake has been made, even if it results in additional negative press (Champion & Hooper). In response, many police departments, particularly the larger departments, have created public relations offices within the police organization to specifically address police issues with the media (Champion & Hooper).

BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY OBLIGATIONS

Balancing work and family is extremely difficult for individuals in any profession; however, it is especially challenging for those who work in law enforcement. According to Amaranto, Steinberg, Castellano, and Mitchell (2003),

becoming a police officer is more than just a career choice; it is often a lifestyle preference. The officer's personal and professional life essentially become one in that the stress at work often transcends into the officer's personal life and vice versa (Amaranto et al, 2003). Erratic shift work is a common complaint amongst officers because the constantly changing work schedule disrupts normally routine patterns in one's personal life, thereby perpetuating the stress even further (Amaranto et al).

Police work typically requires officers to be in constant control of everything without revealing one's emotions, even in the most emotionally charged circumstances (Amaranto, Steinberg, Castellano, & Mitchell, 2003). Emotional detachment is a highly regarded attribute in police work, but it may prove disastrous in one's private life (Amaranto et al, 2003). The divorce rate among police officers is estimated to be between 60 and 75 %, which is significantly higher than the national average (Champion & Hooper, 2003). To make matters worse, officers who divorce are five times as likely to commit suicide in comparison to those in the public (Champion & Hooper). Communication or lack of communication is partly responsible for most marriages ending in divorce (Champion & Hooper). In recent years, a great deal of attention has been focused on domestic violence within police families (Champion & Hooper). Although most incidents of domestic violence involving police officers are suspected of going unreported, it is believed to be widespread and worthy of further review (Champion & Hooper).

CHRONIC STRESS AND POLICING PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECT

Chronic stress can lead to an increase in blood pressure, chronic

headaches, gastric ulcers, weight gain, fatigue, and other damaging effects that could conceivably deteriorate one's body and overall physical health (Hess & Wroblewski, 2006). Other physical ailments commonly associated with chronic stress are chronic back or neck pain, gastrointestinal distress, skin rashes, constipation, heartburn, and irritable bowel syndrome, to name a few (Hess & Wroblewski). Hess and Wroblewski (2006) claim that nearly 70% of all doctor visits are stress related. There is also evidence suggesting that police officers maintain a poor diet that is often coupled with a sedentary lifestyle in that most police work is confined to sitting in a patrol car or behind a desk (Champion & Hooper, 2003).

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

Stress causes notable changes in behavior that are often visible to family members, colleagues, and close friends. Such notable changes in behavior may include excessive worrying, pretentiousness or elitism, misuse of one's sick time, and abuse of drugs and alcohol (Champion & Hooper, 2003). In addition to noticeable behavioral changes, stress can also trigger a number of psychological disorders, namely posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), burnout, anxiety, fear, helplessness, and depression (Amaranto, Steinberg, Castellano, & Mitchell, 2003). These feelings may lead to hostility, rage, excitability, and violent behavior, especially in situations where the officer has a perceived sense of power and control over others (Amaranto et al, 2003). Chronic stress has also been attributed with police suicide. Chronic stress can have an adverse affect on mental functioning; thereby leading to slower, and often irresponsible, decision-making that could jeopardize the officer's

safety as well as that of innocent civilians (Anshel, 2000). Amaranto, Steinberg, Castellano, and Mitchell (2003) note that constant exposure to traumatic incidents may contribute to violence and psychiatric problems among police officers. Policing can be a thankless career, whereby the officer must justify or rationalize one's actions with statements such as "they owe me" or "nobody cares."

OFFICER STRESS AND ITS IMPACT ON COMMUNITY POLICING OFFICER PERCEPTIONS OF THE PUBLIC

Police officers often encounter difficulty controlling the adrenaline rush and the state of disequilibrium that often follows responding to an emotionally charged situation. It is admittedly difficult to maintain a calm demeanor when faced with an uncooperative individual or group of individuals, especially those who choose to ignore the officer's directives, vehemently resist arrest, or otherwise present a clear and present danger. This writer, as a former Prison Administrator, became somewhat paranoid of everyone outside of the profession. By all accounts, these individuals were perceived to be potential perpetrators. It becomes very apparent that a problem exists when one perceives the Santa Claus in the local mall to be a pedophile or the Girl Scout selling cookies as thief who is simply going to pocket the money and never deliver the cookies that were ordered. Sadly, some police officers view most citizens as potential criminal offenders; thereby perpetuating the "us against them" mentality even further (Anshel, 2000).

PUBLIC'S PERCEPTION OF POLICE OFFICERS

Contrary to what most people think and assume, the public's perception of the police is, for the most part, positive with the exception of some African American communities, specifically those consisting of young African American males residing in lower income neighborhoods who feel as if the police use racial profiling to purposely target this particular group. However, as repeatedly mentioned, chronic stress is often associated with job dissatisfaction, organizational commitment, and burnout (Manzoni & Eisner). It has been argued that officers who feel dissatisfied and no longer committed to police work may be more likely to exhibit aggressive verbal and physical behaviors toward citizens (Manzoni & Eisner). The citizen may feel slighted by the officer's moody, short-tempered disposition, which could conceivably provoke the officer even further, which may increase the likelihood of using unnecessary force (Manzoni & Eisner).

Burnout, on the other hand, is a phenomenon that may emerge in professions with intense and demanding interactions with citizens (Manzoni & Eisner). Burnout is defined using three interrelated but distinct categories: Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Manzoni & Eisner, 2006). Emotional exhaustion represents the feeling of being emotionally depleted, especially when interacting with demanding and unappreciative citizens (Manzoni & Eisner). Depersonalization refers to the dehumanized, jaded, cynical attitudes and feelings that some police officers have toward citizens (Manzoni & Eisner). Reduced personal accomplishment denotes a negative evaluation of oneself and one's

work, thereby leading to perceived feelings of inadequacy and inefficiency in fulfilling one's duties and responsibilities as a police officer (Manzoni & Eisner). As such, officers who exhibit high levels of burnout are more inclined to resort to violence as a means of conflict resolution and are less likely to use one's de-escalation skills and abilities to quell or resolve a situation peacefully (Manzoni & Eisner).

Excessive Use of Force

Police occupational stress can either have a direct or indirect influence on the use of force in that the perceived stress may affect the manner in which an officer handles certain routine citizen encounters and situations within the community (Manzoni & Eisner, 2006). Exposure to chronic stress may significantly increase the odds of an officer using excessive force in situations that do not require force to necessarily quell the situation (Manzoni & Eisner).

THE APPLICATION OF STRAIN THEORY TO POLICE OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

Agnew's general strain theory expanded or broadened Merton's original strain theory by looking beyond economic goals and success by suggesting that strain emerges not only when one fails to achieve economic goals, but also when one fails to achieve non-economic goals (Barkan, 2006). Non-economic goals, according to Barkan (2006), necessitate the removal of positive stimuli and the introduction of negative stimuli. Moreover, repetitive stressful events lead to several negative emotions including, but not limited to, anger, frustration, and happiness (Barkan). Anger is likely to emerge when the officer begins to blame others for causing the officer's

stress (Barkan). Anger increases the desire and motivation for revenge and it often impedes one's ability to maintain self-control.

General strain theory's explanation for deviance is simplistic, but nonetheless appropriate in explaining how some officers may be adversely impacted by occupational stress. The theory essentially argues that if the organization or the public treats a police officer poorly, the officer may likely get angry and engage in deviancy (Barkan). However, crossing the proverbial line from legal to illegal would truly depend on a number of variables, namely the absence of social support networks, one's relationship with deviant peers, and personal characteristics such as self-esteem and self-efficacy (Barkan).

According to Manzoni and Eisner (2006), general strain theory suggests that violence stems from stress. General strain theory explains how individuals react to strains, or in this case, stressors, in fostering deviant behavior (Manzoni & Eisner). The theory claims that exposure to strains or certain stressors could conceivably lead to deviant adaptations coupled with negative feelings such as anger and frustration, which become the psychological mechanism that links strain, or stress, to deviance (Manzoni & Eisner).

Some forms of deviant behavior in relation to policing include retaliatory, escapist, and instrumental adaptation (Manzoni & Eisner). Manzoni and Eisner (2006) claim that violence is an example of retaliatory adaptation whereas drug use is an example of an escapist adaptation, and finally, property offenses are an example of instrumental adaptation. In short, general strain theory sees violence as a deviant adaptation in response to stress generated by negative emotions (Manzoni & Eisner). It is in this writer's opinion, that Agnew's general strain theory effectively explains

how stress can cause an officer to use excessive force or engage in deviant, illegal acts.

STRESS REDUCTION PROGRAMS

Title XX, Subtitle B, Law Enforcement Family Support of the *1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act*, directs state and local law enforcement authorities to provide educational training programs that are intended to familiarize the officers with police occupational stress and its causes (Aramanto, Steinberg, Castellano, & Mitchell, 2003). More important, officers are taught how to effectively cope with internal and external stressors common to the profession. To minimize the adverse affects of police occupational stress, it is imperative that appropriate prevention, intervention, and treatment methodologies and strategies are introduced, preferably before the problem escalates further (Aramanto et al, 2003).

Police organizations have responded by establishing Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), programs which are designed to assist police officers with stress, depression, anxiety, and a host of other personal problems that may require crisis intervention services (Aramanto, Steinberg, Castellano, & Mitchell, 2003). EAP programs also assist police organizations by reducing money and labor in lost productivity (Aramanto et al, 2003). Unfortunately, there is a strong stigma associated with anyone who seeks mental health or psychiatric treatment within the law enforcement field (Aramanto et al). Even though the programs are available and accessible, only a small percentage of police officers actually take full advantage of these services, which is truly unfortunate. It might be best if the police organization provided an anonymous hotline number that

police officers could use as a resource in times of need (Aramanto et al). It may not be the panacea to the officer's problems, but it would likely provide short-term crisis intervention at the very minimum.

In theory, police officers should anticipate the stressors commonly associated with police work, and if possible, try to avoid or minimize the amount of stress in one's life. That is unfortunately, a simple answer to a complex problem. It is imperative that the organization be held accountable by taking action, particularly because organizational stress is the most frequently cited source of police occupational stress (Morash, Haarr, & Kwak, 2006). Unfortunately, police organizations rarely provide effective stress management programs to assist officers in coping with internal and external stressors (McCraty, Tomasino, Atkinson, & Sundram, 1999). It is imperative that police organizations recognize and understand the sources of police occupational stress and implement useful and practical strategies for eliminating, or at the very minimum, reducing occupational stress (Morash et al, 2006). Morash, Haarr, and Kwak suggest that if the stress continues, the organization must assist officers in learning how to cope effectively with such stress (2006).

After all, the research findings show that workplace issues within the police organization have an important influence on police occupational stress (Morash, Haarr, & Kwak, 2006). Morash, Haarr, and Kwak (2006) suggest that organizational psychologists pay particular attention to workplace conditions that need be changed in order to diminish such stress in the workplace. It may be best to concentrate on the organizational culture and management practices, then find and repair those areas that need the most attention. Since organizational structure and poor management practices are mainly to blame

for occupational stress, police organizations must bare the burden of eliminating or reducing the occupational conditions that are attributed to police officer stress (Morash et al).

According to the Institute of Heart Math's website, stress management techniques have been shown to be highly effective in reducing the damaging psychological and physiological effects of both acute and chronic stress in police officers (McCraty, Tomasino, Atkinson, & Sundram, 1999). Several studies have shown notable improvements made in relation to one's physical and mental health as well as within one's personal and social relationships shortly after intervention was sought (McCraty et al, 1999). One's coping skills are critical to minimizing the amount of stress in one's life. Exceptional coping skills have shown to be highly effective in reducing the intensity and frequency of stressful situations commonly encountered in police work (Anshel, 2000). One cannot effectively control all sources of job-related stress; however, coping strategies can make even the most unpleasant events controllable (Anshel). Maladaptive coping skills often lead to excessive drinking, drug use, smoking, overeating, anger, violence and social withdrawal (Amaranto, Steinberg, Castellano, & Mitchell, 2003).

CONCLUSION

Police occupational stress is widespread and particularly troublesome, yet it can be eliminated, or at the very minimum, controlled as long as police administrators admit that a problem exists and commit to making changes within the police organization. Avoiding stress is unlikely, but learning to cope with the internal and external stressors commonly associated with police occupational stress

will minimize the potentially damaging effects of chronic stress. To be truly effective, change must begin within the organization since this appears to be the catalyst to police occupational stress. The dangerousness of the profession is something beyond the organization's control; however, police administrators can begin by creating an organization-wide culture that is committed to reducing stress within the organization. Education and awareness are two key elements that must be factored into any strategic plan in that officers need to understand and recognize the symptoms commonly associated with stress and the coping skills necessary to combat stress.

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Behind the Blue Curtain: Domestic Violence Perpetrated by Police Officers

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Over the past two decades, there has been an overwhelming interest among scholars on intimate partner violence issues. Initially, researchers studied battered wives, which generated inquiries to other victim-offender relationships, such as dating couples, gay and lesbian couples, and battered husbands. One type of victim-offender relationship, which has largely been ignored is that of battered wives of police officer husbands. While these battered women would appear to fall under the category of battered wives, their husband's occupation creates a unique category of victim. For the purpose of this paper, the terms, "battered wife" and "battered woman" will be used interchangeably. Police spouses' will include police wives and police girlfriends. In addition, police officer will refer to male officers only. It is understood that policing is a male-dominated profession coupled with the fact that females are at greater risk of domestic violence, for these reasons, this paper will solely address male police officers and their female intimate partners (spouses and girlfriends).

Definition of Intimate Partner Violence

According to leading experts, Straus and Gelles, "[v]iolence is defined as an act carried out with the intention, or perceived intention, of carrying out physical pain or injury to another person" (1990, p 76). While this definition focuses on physical violence, scholars have recognized various other forms of abuse including, but not limited to, psychological/emotional abuse and sexual abuse. Intimate partner violence

(IPV) occurs when one partner engages in, or threatens to engage in, physical, psychological, and/or sexual violence against a wife or girlfriend. Physical abuse is characterized by the use of force, or threat of force, resulting in potential bodily injury (Gosselin, 2005). The terms abuse, violence, and battering will be used interchangeably throughout this paper. Initially, battering focused on physical violence, particularly hitting. Through continued research, it is now evident that battering may include psychological abuse and sexual abuse. Physical violence, as with all forms of violence, ranges from mild to severe forms of abuse. Examples of mild physical violence include, but are not limited to, slapping, pinching, squeezing, shoving, and grabbing. More severe forms of violence include, but are not limited to, punching, hitting, stabbing, biting, hair pulling, kicking, burning, stabbing, and shooting. Some obvious signs of physical violence include bruises, broken bones, burn marks, stab wounds, missing or pulled hair, ripped clothing, and bite marks. Invisible signs of physical violence also occur. Victims have endured back pain, headaches, gastrointestinal disorders, anxiety attacks, and sleep and eating disorders. While some victims may present with the aforementioned ailments, others may present with differing symptoms.

Emotional or psychological abuse, occurs simultaneously with physical abuse. Many times, however, emotional abuse occurs independent of physical abuse. Emotional/psychological abuse is the intentional, or unintentional, infliction of emotional injury through the use of threats, name-calling, verbal attacks, destruction of

property, harassment, belittling, constant criticism, humiliation, intimidation, and isolation. The primary purpose of engaging in psychological terror is to gain control over one's partner. Irrespective of the form of psychological battering, physical and non-physical indicators are recognizable among victims. These include, but are not limited to, depression, anxiety attacks, fear, dependence, gastrointestinal disorders, sleep and eating disorders, pregnancy difficulties, rapid weight loss, low self-esteem, and suicidal behavior. Unlike physical violence where injury is most visible, emotional violence does not reveal any obvious scars. This does not suggest that physical violence has a greater harmful effect on a victim than emotional injury. In fact, studies have shown that emotional injury may be just as damaging as physical injury.

Sexual abuse is the unwanted rubbing, touching, and/or stroking of a partner. Sexual violence appears in other forms as well, such as, forcing or attempting to force a victim to engage in oral sex, sexual intercourse, and/or anal penetration. The forcing of a partner to participate in and/or observe pornographic materials is another form of sexual violence. Moreover, offenders may make negative comments about their partners' physical appearance or criticize their sexual performance. At times, sexual victimization occurs when a partner withholds sex as a form of punishment. This is also a form of psychological abuse. Physical indicators of sexual abuse include, but are not limited to, sexually transmitted diseases, pelvic pain, bleeding, black eyes, burn marks, bite marks, bruising, gynecological disorders, and vomiting. Non-physical indicators of sexual abuse include, but are not limited to, anxiety attacks, depression, suicidal behavior and mistrust of others.

Domestic Violence Within Police Officer Families

Scholars have recognized that domestic violence cuts across all socio-economic, racial, and ethnic groups. It, however, has not addressed victims of police officer domestic violence. Only a handful of studies have focused on police wives as victims of domestic violence. For a variety of reasons, police wives have not been given special consideration within domestic violence literature. One explanation may be directly influenced by victims themselves, specifically, their lack of reporting the assaults, which will be discussed later in this paper. In addition, police wives who initially complain may withdraw their complaints due to reconciliation with their husbands. Another reason for the sparse data on police wives is the resistance of police departments to disclose this type of information involving their own officers.

According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), police officer domestic violence refers to any domestic violence incident wherein a sworn police officer is the suspected offender. The extent of police officer domestic violence remains unclear. The IACP argues that domestic violence among police officers occurs as frequently as it does among the general population. Some scholars, however, have found that domestic violence rates were higher within police families than civilian families (Johnson, 1991 and Neidig, Seng, and Russel, 1992). Regardless of which studies are more accurate, the message remains clear: domestic violence is a major problem among police families. As such, this paper will examine some explanations for police officer domestic violence, difficulties for abused police wives, strategies to assist victims, and strategies police departments should employ when handling these non-departmental issues.

Explanations for Police Officer Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a leading social problem within American families. In order to better understand police officer domestic violence, it is important to explore correlates of domestic violence at a societal level. Some of the strongest explanations of domestic violence argue that abuse against women is the result of a patriarchal belief system, inequality, and intergenerational transmission. The term patriarchy is derived from the Greek terms, “patria” and “arché.” “Patria” refers to fathers and “arché” refers to rule. Thus, patriarchy creates a structure where fathers are the rulers of the family, allowing them to have complete control over their wives and children. Historically, it was a husband’s duty to use corporal punishment on his wife when he perceived her to be non-compliant (Hart, 1992). Feminists have long argued that unequal treatment of women by men has resulted in power imbalance between the batterer (male) and victim (female) (Stark, 2007). Inequality is the result of socially approved power granted to men and withheld from women. Until gender equality exists, women will continue to suffer at the hands of men. Another explanation for domestic violence is rooted in the learning of violent behavior. Intergenerational transfer, or generational theory, argue that “living in a violent household increases the probability that an individual will grow up to be violent toward future family members. The family may actually serve as a breeding ground for violent behavior” (Jackson, 1999, p. 188).

While the aforementioned may explain domestic violence at a societal level, there are occupation-specific factors impacting police officers who abuse their intimate partners. These include, the nature of police work, the police culture, police

personality, and police stress. Let us first examine the nature of police work. Police officers often work in unattractive conditions, such as, undesirable shift work, rotating work schedules, days off spent in court, confronting violence on the job, witnessing pain and suffering, and dislike from the community. These conditions make it difficult for any individual to have a positive work experience, even the all powerful police officer. Eventually, these negative conditions may filter into an officer’s personal life, resulting in the officer being a poor candidate for marriage or other intimate relationship.

Scholars have suggested that, unintentionally, police officers create their own culture to deal with the stress and anxiety of their occupation. A police subculture may be defined as behaviors and attitudes that are distinguishable from the rest of society. The “Blue Brotherhood,” “The Blue Curtain,” and the “Blue Code of Secrecy” are common terms used to describe police subcultures. Due to their unique profession, police officers tend to spend most of their off-time hours with other officers. In fact, most police officers lose their nonpolice friends within a few years on the job (Wroblewski and Hess, 2006). Their on-duty and off-duty time is spent with other officers building a wall between them and the general population. Thus, their allegiance and loyalty remains with the department. Their personal identity is often marked with their professional identity. Outsiders, including family members, may become unwelcome and of secondary importance.

Much has been written about the police personality. Researchers have suggested that individuals seeking employment as police officers will develop a “police personality” (Skolnick, 1966 and Walker and Katz, 2005). Recognizable traits include, cynicism, aggressive, hostility,

secretive, suspicious, conservative, and insecure. Aggression, toughness, and a culture of violence are a daily part of an officer's occupation. These personality traits often follow them home. Officers on the job "24 hours a day." It is not an occupation that one can leave at the office. Being a cop becomes part of one's total identity. Therefore, police officers may bring their forceful attitudes and behaviors from the workplace into their family life.

It is well understood that policing is a highly stressful occupation. In fact, police experience high rates of suicide, alcoholism, drug dependency, divorce and heart attacks. This appears to be related to the stressful nature of their work. Police officers confront many hostile situations while on the job. The threat of danger creates a great deal of occupational stress. As previously noted, police officers work shift work, including nights and holidays, which creates a stressful environment. These examples are obvious forms of stress, however, there are hidden stressors involved in police work. For example, they are isolated, whether by intention or not, from the general population. They facilitate their own isolation by spending the bulk of their non-work time with other officers. This separation leads to mistrust of civilians toward officers and vice versa. In addition, Griffin and Bernard (2003) report that social isolation of police officers increases their tendency to dispense aggression onto visible and vulnerable targets in their immediate environment. Another hidden stressor officers experience is based on the notion that they must operate under a different moral code than the general population. They are subject to a different set of standards than civilians. They are expected to be morally superior to outsiders. When they are not, they are highly criticized for their wrongdoing. For the reasons previously discussed, policing

as a profession, may have a direct relationship between occupation and likelihood of intimate partner abuse.

Difficulties for Abused Police Wives

Dating or being married to a cop is an extremely difficult task. As already noted, dynamics of their occupation make them poor relationship partners. Upon coming home from a shift, officers typically do not like to discuss their workday. They are tired from a long shift and do not believe that a civilian can relate to the demands of the job. Intentionally, or unintentionally, they avoid conversations surrounding their work. This secretive life separates the intimate partners, creating a wall of silence. Unlike many other wives, those married to cops often face holidays and evenings apart from their husbands. At times, officer's wives argue that they are raising children similar to a single parent rather than as a team. Like all battered women, these wives feel a sense of powerlessness. In fact, some would argue that they may be even more powerless than other battered wives. Abused police wives face amazing challenges in their struggle to break free from the violence. One of the greatest difficulties police wives face is that their husbands legitimately carry a gun and are professionally trained to use the weapon. This creates a valid and real fear of being injured or killed. Her husband is also trained to be intimidating. He may use these tools to intimidate her as well. The police abuser may even use psychological guilt by telling his wife that if she reports the abuse, he may lose his job. He learns how to turn the tables by establishing that it is "her" fault if he gets fired rather than recognizing that it is "his" abusive behavior leading to his termination.

Police officers have access to domestic violence shelters. They know where the

shelters are located; thus, they can find the victim. In addition, if she leaves via car, he knows her license number and will be able to track her down. This makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for these wives to escape their abusive husbands. Officers also have available to them surveillance tools, allowing them to monitor the victim's whereabouts. In addition, police are most familiar with the criminal justice system; they learn how to manipulate the system so that their actions go undetected or dismissed. Due to their status, officers are viewed as credible while the victim may be considered a distraught housewife.

One of the greatest challenges police wives encounter is determining where she can turn to for help. It is evident through the "Blue Code of Secrecy," the "Blue Curtain," and the "Blue Brotherhood," that other officers will "look the other way" toward an officer's abusive behavior. Outside officers will attempt to resolve these incidents informally in order to keep the department from appearing tarnished. Even calling on family and friends appears to be futile for police wives. Family and friends may be afraid to get involved due to fear of retaliation by the officer, or even the department, leaving her completely vulnerable.

What Can a Police Wife Do When Exiting an Abusive Relationship?

While the news is not favorable for battered police wives trying to break free from their batterer husbands. Nonetheless, there are some tools that they may utilize in attempt to escape the abuse. Most battered women do not exit the relationship after the initial beating; they may not leave after many beatings. But, when a victim decides she is ready to leave, she must have a safety plan available to herself and her children. Oftentimes, women cannot flee with their

children for fear that they will be arrested on charges of child abduction. Thus, women must contact an attorney to learn what lawful steps must be taken to leave the relationship with their children. The safety plan includes saving enough money to support themselves and their children upon leaving the home. If there is no money available, she must find a way to get to an unfamiliar shelter to her husband. She should not go to the local shelter as he will find her there. She needs to get to a shelter some distance away from their town as it will be more difficult tracking her down. Another part of the safety plan is to have, readily available, phone numbers listed of attorneys, hospitals, schools, and transportation sites. It is also imperative that birth certificates, medical records, social security cards, and marriage certificates be taken with her for future reference.

Police wives should also try to find an independent agency from the police department to assist them during their crises. As evident, many police departments will attempt to minimize the abuse and suggest, or at times, coerce the victim to return to her husband. Therefore, it is essential that she find a victim's advocacy group to help her deal with the situation. Some victim advocacy groups are part of the prosecutor's office, making it difficult for her to seek help there. More desirable victim groups may be found in social service agencies, which may be completely independent from the criminal justice system. Currently, many departments have support programs available for police spouses. While it may seem that this would be an appropriate avenue to seek, this may actually backfire for the victim. They may find little empathy from their peers, even those who themselves are in abusive relationships. Other wives may place blame on the victim arguing that she should be able

to handle the stress of his occupation. In fact, they may even blame her for her own victimization.

It has been argued that going to the press is a viable option for victims, particularly, when no other option is available. While this appears plausible, it could also prove fatal. Turning to the media may backfire on the victim and she may suffer from societal, familial, and departmental backlash. Her abuser may become embarrassed that private, family matters are brought out into the open for all to hear. This may thrust the abuser into a fit of rage from which the victim cannot escape. It is wise to proceed with extreme caution when the abuse is publicized.

All victims of domestic violence must find the strength to leave an abusive relationship however possible. Each experience is isolated; therefore, there is no full-proof plan for a safe exit. Victims must determine what is the safest and smartest escape route for them. Regardless of how a victim leaves the relationship, she must gain control over her life. Once she feels empowered, she will become stronger and able to move forward. Empowerment is a key factor in achieving a successful future. The first step to empowerment is breaking free from the violence.

Strategies Police Departments Should Employ in Handling Police Officer Domestic Violence

A recent study conducted by Lonsway (2006) found that among 78 large police departments, only 23 departments had existing policies on police officer domestic violence. In addition, there are no universal policies on police officer domestic violence mandated by police departments. In fact, the most common provision in handling these cases was that a supervisor be notified when the situation arises. Thus,

most police agencies handle these cases informally, commonly without a formal investigative process. Informal handling of these incidents is often in direct contradiction with federal mandates. The reality remains that most batterer officers are informally disciplined. Informal sanctions include a verbal warning, counseling requirements, or time-off from the job. Unfortunately, most departments will not terminate an officer accused of domestic battery, even after repeated incidents are reported. Police departments across the nation, are creating a double standard by not arresting their own while citizens facing the same accusations are formally processed. Moreover, agencies' failure to formally handle these accused officers is putting victims at greater risk by allowing officers to legitimately carry a weapon. Laws have been created to specifically address the issue of firearm possession and domestic violence. "[O]ne of the most influential laws that have affected the issue of domestic violence by law enforcement is the provision of the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act of 1997, known as the Lautenberg Amendment to Title 18, United States Code 922(d)(9)" (Yamamoto and Wallace, 2007, p. 258). Specifically, the Lautenberg Law prohibits any person, convicted of domestic violence, from owning a firearm. While this law is commendable, the reality is that most police officers are not "convicted" of their domestic offenses. Therefore, they are able to legally continue their firearm possession.

One method of reducing occupational stress is centered around the work climate. Supervisors should do whatever is feasible to create a positive work environment. There should be on-going sensitivity training on domestic violence issues. Agencies may have to create outlets for officers, particularly when they are at the end of the

shift. Typically, officers are not ready to go home immediately after a shift, thus, for those working nights they may go to places, such as bars, which are open during those hours. Rather than have officers consume alcohol prior to going home, a more productive measure may be to have an area where cops can unwind. Departments should provide a place for officers to visit, watch television, or even exercise. Moreover, there should be sensitivity training programs on topics such as domestic violence, marriage to a police officer, and gender inequality. The above issues should continuously be discussed within the department; it should not consist of a one-time training unit. Learning is an on-going process; therefore, it is necessary to constantly remind officers of these concerns.

Individual and couples' counseling should be provided to any officer and/or his intimate partner when necessary. Couples' counseling should be available through an independent agency, so that the spouse does not perceive that the therapist is partial to the officer. It is essential to have an impartial party work with the couple. Some departments provide the assistance of police chaplains to officers. While this is beneficial, it may be more advantageous to seek help outside of the organization. This may allow the officer to speak more freely and not fear exposure to his fellow officers.

One of the greatest challenges departments face is handling officer misconduct. Most forms of misconduct are handled informally. Police officer domestic violence must be investigated formally. As such, department policies must be in place guiding supervisors on appropriate steps to follow and, if necessary, sanctions to enforce. The IACP has drafted a policy on domestic violence by police officers, which went into effect July 2003. The IACP clearly state that if an officer has been found

guilty through a criminal proceeding, that officer should be terminated from his position. The policy attempts to provide prevention tips and direction through the investigative process. The five key components of the policy include, prevention and training; early warning and intervention; incident response protocols; victim safety and protection; and post incident administrative and critical decisions. The policy argues that departments adopt a zero-tolerance policy toward police perpetrated domestic violence. Prevention and training guidelines will help agencies live up to the zero tolerance policy. It is imperative for departments to partner with outside victim advocacy organizations to help train officers on domestic violence issues. A second component of the policy is early warning and detection. It is imperative for agencies to properly screen potential police candidates prior to hiring, with the inclusion of a psychological examination. The policy suggests that when an officer is hired, the policy be provided to his family members, including intimate partner, allowing all parties the opportunity to be informed of the guidelines. Incident response protocols provide instruction to the dispatcher, on-scene officer, and supervisor. The protocols guide each of these individuals on how to document, evaluate and investigate a case of an officer accused of domestic violence. Victim's concerns are also recognized within the policy within the victim safety and protection component. Departments must understand the difficulty a victim faces in reporting such abuses. Therefore, agencies must provide community liaison information to the victim. In addition, victim's rights information and applicable laws must be provided to her. Due to the challenges of these cases, victims must be notified of a contact person in the department to guide her through the process. The last

component of the policy, post incident administrative and criminal decisions, addresses the handling of an officer who has been arrested on charges of domestic violence.

The agency must ensure that an accused officer's departmental, union, and legal rights are enforced during both the administrative and criminal investigations. The policy offers a three step process for consideration: administrative investigations and decisions; criminal investigations and decisions; and termination procedures. Administrative investigations and decisions should be assigned to an internal affairs division, and if there is no such unit, the chief shall delegate an experienced investigator onto the case. It is during this step, that victim, offender and witness interviews shall take place. Also, protective orders may be provided to the victim, if the chief determines it is necessary. The second step in the process is criminal investigations and decisions. The responsibility to investigate police officer domestic violence should fall within the domestic violence unit of the agency, and if no such unit exists, it should be handled by the investigative branch of the department. The unit should investigate the case as they would any criminal investigation. If the investigating party finds that the officer is criminally blameworthy, the case will be forwarded to the prosecutor's office. The final step in the process is termination procedures. When a decision is made to terminate an officer, department policies and state law must be followed. The officer must be informed in writing of the effective termination date. Any support services available must be explained to the officer. The department also has a responsibility to inform the victim, in a timely manner, of any assistance available to her, including a safety plan. The department must also notify,

within 30 days, the state licensing body the basis for the termination.

Conclusion

Police officer domestic violence is a challenging issue for spouses and departments alike. Marriage to a police officer brings with it additional problems than the institution of marriage itself. The nature of the job creates challenges for an officer and his intimate partner to maintain a healthy relationship. Rotating shift work, holidays at work, potential dangers on the job, to name a few, create stress within the relationship. For a variety of reasons discussed throughout this paper, police wives are vulnerable to partner abuse. Thus, it is imperative that these special victims be given consideration and assistance during this difficult time. Departments have an obligation to protect all victims of crime, including those who are married to one of their own. The first hurdle for all battered women is recognition. Through the publication of this paper, it is hoped that research on police officer domestic violence will continue to be explored.

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