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Counseling needs of police officers

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Counseling needs of police officers

Abstract

For many years business and industries have been slow to identify and provide for many needs of workers. Because of union movements in the last fifty years, the worker has achieved a variety of benefits: increased wages, comprehensive medical care, retirement programs, etc. The evolution of mental health coverage has grown from worker pressures to simple economics. A healthy worker is a productive worker and a productive worker increases corporate profit.

COUNSELING NEEDS OF POLICE OFFICERS

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A Research Paper

Presented to

the Department of School Administration

and Personnel Services

University of Northern Iowa

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

_____

by

Gehrig K. La Velle

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

For many years business and industries have been
slow to identify and provide for many needs of workers.
Because of union movements in the last fifty years, the
worker has achieved a variety of benefits: increased
wages, comprehensive medical care, retirement programs,
etc. The evolution of mental health coverage has grown
from worker pressures to simple economics. A healthy
worker is a productive worker and a productive worker
increases corporate profit.

Job-related stress is no longer just emotional
or personality problems, but also cost factor efficiency
(Territo and Vetter, 1981). Stress is now seen as not
only troublesome, but expensive (Slobogin, 1977).
Government usually lags behind the private sector in
employee benefits and innovations, and provision of
counseling services is no exception. Criminal justice
authorities are also concerned with job-related stress
and its effects on law enforcement, especially the toll it
takes (Kroes, 1976; Stratton, 1978, 1980; Reiser, 1970,
1972, 1974, and 1976; Territo and Vetter, 1981).

The beginning of these concerns manifested itself
through the loss of experienced officers to health related

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matters, job performance loss, and high divorce rates. More specific concerns were absenteeism, alcoholism, suicides, chronic disease states, job accidents, and others (Kroes, 1976). In an attempt to label causation of these problems, researchers have systematically observed the police officer's role.

The results revealed the extent of stress involved with some studies that claimed policing was the most stressful job in this country (Kroes, 1976, 1978). Others focused on the toll it takes on individuals and the insights into the difficulties of police work itself (Stratton, 1980). These studies have also raised questions as to how well individuals entering the profession are prepared physically, emotionally, intellectually, and psychologically to deal with the profession they have chosen.

The Counselor and the Police Department

To the counselor or psychologist working in the helping profession, the basis for assisting these officers is a thorough understanding of the police officer's role. What are the psychological and physiological effects of police stress? How can the counselor work in a continuing role with these officers? What about the selection procedure for counselors, and what of the administration responsibilities? All of these questions must be addressed and, as each department is an autonomous unit,

the department must be prepared to follow through with decisive backing of the concept of counseling.

Some researchers and practitioners have found that administrative practices have heavily contributed to stress of the officers (Stratton, 1978; Wallace, 1978; Blackmore, 1978; Grenick, 1975) and have classified these general areas into family, personality, health, and job-performance stressors.

A number of departments have established "in-house" psychological service units using "intervention" and/or "prevention" models. The Dallas Police Department has guidelines for supervisors in detecting areas of concern for referral to specialists (Territo and Vetter, 1981).

For a department to choose to employ a specialist, two concerns present themselves: the role that the organization wants the counselor-specialist to play, and whether his functions as counselor to the employees are to be of an evaluative nature or supportive (Stratton, 1980). The counselors own view of their role is very important, as well as their understanding of law enforcement. It is very important to be able to relate to the individual one is working with and to understand their functions and procedures.

The departments themselves may be skeptical about hiring of counselors, but, due to recent court decisions, some have decided to employ counselors. The need has been

shown to the departments through these decisions holding

departments responsible for employees' actions under the

legal heading of "vicarious liability."

Stratton (1980) indicated three areas that appear

with this concern:

1.   Negligent admission. Accepting individuals
who are not properly fit for the job, whether
physically or psychologically. In this area
psychologists assist by testing job applicants on
stress tolerance and other abilities to determine
their probability of success in the police
profession.

2.   Negligent training. Because law enforcement
agencies can be held responsible for inappropriate
preparation for field situations, some training in
the area of understanding human dynamics and diverse
behaviors appears not only important but necessary.

3.   Negligent retention. Police agencies and
supervisors who have indications that some employees
are not functioning adequately but do nothing about
it are held liable for the actions of employees. The
legal accountability was based on the courts'
decision that retaining employees having difficulties
without offering any assistance or removing them from
work jeopardizes the citizenry (p. 32).

The last area appeared to be the most prevalent in

department concerns evaluating their positions regarding

counselors and psychologists for potential employment in

policing. In preparation for a career in law enforcement

counseling, a study by Levitov and Thompson (1981)

indicated the importance of offering students more inter-

disciplinary training. Counselors in nonschool settings

will be more credible and effective if they are familiar

with administrative practices of the agencies. As an

example, counselors in police agencies must be familiar

with criminology, industrial psychology, criminal law and procedure, and community relations, as well as counseling procedures and methods.

Scope of the Problem

Being in a stressful occupation can lead to physical illness. Many instances of this have been recorded, but, as it pertains to policing, Monat and Lazarus (1977) have differentiated it by three indicators:

1. Disruption of tissue function through neuro-humoral influences under stress (stress can cause abnormally high levels of certain hormones, creating physiological changes such as heightened blood pressure and sweating).

2. People under high levels of stress may choose coping activities that are inappropriate and/or damaging to health (such as heavy use of alcohol or tobacco).

3. Stress might lead to disease by physiological and/or sociological factors which can lead the person to minimize the significance of these disease symptoms (a person may interpret pain or illness symptoms in such a way as to neglect to seek medical assistance) (p. 5).

Putting this further into the police context, Kroes (1976) identified these psycho-physiological effects by recording unusually high rates for suicide, alcoholism, cardiovascular disorder, and ulcers in police personnel. He compared professional occupations and concluded that police, sheriffs, and marshals have higher mortality rates in categories of arteriosclerotic heart disease, diabetes mellitus, and suicide than any other profession. He divided these stressors into a two-stage process. The

first stage is a "short-term response" to a specific

stressor, and the second stage a "chronic reaction" to

strain. Four areas that are affected in each stage are:

family, personality, health, and job-performance. The

counselor would work with these areas to assist the

officer in relieving those stressors.

Levitor and Thompson (1981) have completed a needs

assessment, having done research concerned with officers'

perceptions and willingness to use counseling. They have

also determined factors that may predispose officers to

seek assistance. From their findings, they indicated that

about 60% of the officers surveyed would seek assistance

if it was available. However, another researcher (Owens,

(1978) concluded that officers tend to relate to other

officers and may be more amenable to help made available

through the department. Fenster and Schlossberg (1979)

appeared to confirm this by stating that the counselor who

is department connected would be more desirable due to

knowledge of police procedure and routine. Levitor and

Thompson (1981) interpreted a stress and nonstress client:

> Nonstress clients are more likely to be
> supervisors than patrol officers. The basis for
> this pattern is difficult to discern; the finding
> may reflect a more positive growth orientation on
> the part of supervisors having more control over
> their job routines and, consequently, over job-
> related stress . . . a reticent client, as opposed
> to a nonstress client, is more likely to be a
> patrol officer and experiencing high anxiety
> (pp. 166-67).

One researcher (Eisenberg, 1975) actually spent two years as a patrol officer attempting to identify those sources of psychological stress. As an officer with the San Jose Police Department, he noted such sources as: poor supervision, absence or lack of career development, inadequate reward reinforcement system, poor equipment, offensive administration policies, excessive paperwork, law enforcement agency jurisdiction isolationism, unfavorable court decisions, ineffectiveness of correctional agencies to rehabilitate or warehouse criminals, misunderstood judicial procedures, ineffective courtroom management, distorted press accounts of police incidents, unfavorable attitude by the public, derogatory remarks by neighbors and others, adverse working schedules, fear of serious injury, disability, and death (Eisenberg, 1975).

This is an illustrated list of concerns by officers and the stress that was felt. External, internal, and task-related stressors may be grouped under the more general title of "job-related." A review of literature revealed the existence of at least 53 stressors associated with police work and its organization (Terry, 1981).

Some authors related personal experiences, others reported similar findings from nonrepresentative samples such as Jacobi's (1975) analysis of disabled officers referred to him for counseling. Kroes and Gould (1979)

found a similar group that had been referred to them for counseling. One of these findings, as a consequence of stress, is a high rate of alcoholism. Alcoholism in government and industry is not only widespread but also extremely costly--a fact established most convincingly by many independent researchers. Some 6.5 million employed workers in the United States today are alcoholics.

Loss of productivity because of alcoholism has been computed at $10 billion (Dishlacoff, 1976). Although precise figures are not available to substantiate a high incidence of alcoholism among police, department officials have reported informally that as many as 25 percent of the officers in their departments have serious alcohol abuse problems (Hurrell and Kroes, 1975).

Alcohol may be involved in many different aspects such as higher than normal absentee rates just before and after the officers regular days off, complaints of insubordination by superiors, misconduct complaints for verbal and physical abuse, intoxication during working hours, traffic accidents while under the influence both on and off duty, and reduced job performance. Hurrell and Kroes (1975) suggested that policing is especially conducive to alcoholism since police frequently work in an environment where social drinking is commonplace. The nature of police work and the environment provide the "stress stimulus" and alcohol the "stress relief." It

has been past practice to adhere to the "character flaw" theory of alcohol abuse by most police departments. This philosophy is one of denunciation and dismissal of the officer involved so it does not reflect on the department. What is not considered is that alcohol abuse is most likely the result of job stress and that eliminating the officer does not eliminate the source of stress.

Suicide is another factor among police officers, resulting from stress and the inability to cope. For the young officer it is not particularly common and when it does occur it is usually associated with divorce or other family problems. Among older officers suicide is more common and may relate to alcoholism, physical illness, or impending retirement (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1975). One study by Lester (1970) concluded that the data available indicated that male officers are more likely to kill themselves than men in other occupations. Six possible clues have been listed to help comprehend the high police suicide rate: (1) police work is a male-dominated profession, and males have demonstrated a higher successful suicide rate; (2) the use, availability and familiarity with firearms by police in their work make for a higher lethal factor, with little chance for resuscitation; (3) there are psychological repercussions to being constantly exposed to potential death; (4) long and irregular working hours do not promote strong friendships and strain family ties; (5) there is constant

exposure to public criticism and dislike for "cops"; and
(6) judicial contradictions, irregularities, and
inconsistant decisions tend to negate the value of police
work (Nelson and Smith, 1970).

Some authorities indicated that agressive behavior
does not stem from internal drives, but from societal
frustration. In one sense it is stated that suicide and
homicide cannot be differentiated with respect to the
source of the frustration generating the aggression.
Moreover, when the aggression was legitimized by the
aggressor and directed outward because of social
frustration, homicide occurred. Suicide, or "self-
orientated" aggression, becomes a residual category for
which outward expression against others is deemed
illegitimate (Henry and Short, 1954). For the counselor
in police departments, suicide has been shown to be a
serious alternative for distressed officers. It has been
suggested that police suicide phenomenon be viewed from a
psychological emphasis that looks at both the unique and
multideterminant aspects of an individual's behavior
(Territo and Vetter, 1981).

The American police officers are like health
professionals: they come into contact with the
behaviorally and socially ill of society as part of their
work. When the police suffer, they often fear loss of
their jobs (perhaps realistically because of past beliefs
and practices by departments). The parallel linking

police and health professionals is the reluctance of their respective colleagues to get them involved in treatment (in spite of their coworkers' awareness of their difficulties) because they feel it is none of their business. It has been observed that a troubled officer, like a health professional, is of no use to the public or to the profession if the officer does not seek assistance (Heiman, 1975).

A review of the literature using the Educational Resources Informational Center, National Council of Mental Health, and Criminal Justice Periodical Index data bases was implemented to focus on needs of police in counseling.

CHAPTER TWO

Intervention-Prevention Concepts

There appear to be two theories of police counseling that have intervention or prevention as a base model. Some departments (Los Angeles Police, Dallas Police, and New York Police) use intervention models when an officer displays emotional or physical distress. In these cases the condition has become chronic and the officer is referred for evaluation. The other model, prevention, relies on voluntary counseling and workshops in prevention techniques (Los Angeles Sheriff, Austin Police, and Boston Police). These departments are also using some peer counseling with success in areas concerning alcoholism.

Most departments who offer some type of counseling or psychological service unit are using the intervention approach, relying on supervisors to refer those who exhibit symptoms of stressed behavior. This concept may be best described as "post-facto," or intervention after an "act" or "behavior" has been displayed. Some of the concerns of this model are that it occurs too late, is not broadly preventative, depends on first-line supervisors, and most often presents the counselor with a resistive client (Stratton, 1980; Farmer and Monahan,

1980). Most job evaluations are conducted by first-line supervisors who see behavior as part of the job of policing. This makes referral harder due to the partner or "buddy" system pervasive in policing which makes the supervisor reluctant to pressure another officer, as the supervisor depends upon the officer for their lives during the course of employment. Stratton (1980) stated that this "hesitancy" to fully evaluate officers may allow things to deteriorate to extremely unacceptable levels. Some supervisors require assistance in psychological areas to evaluate fitness of officers, others came too late and end up "passing the buck" to the psychologist for months or years of questionable behavior.

Farmer and Monahan (1980) have listed some concerns about "counseling" models:

1. The "client" must admit to needing help and actively seek it despite the clearly stigmatizing connotations of going to "the shrink". (Regardless of how closely confidentiality is guarded, many individuals avoid going into therapy because of the stigma in their own minds.)

2. Seeking help from a professional for stress related problems implies that such problems must be pathological, rather than merely a misdirected but normal, or possibly even a psychologically healthy, attempt to reduce stress. (Heavy drinking from time-to-time, for example, is not a totally unrealistic way to obliterate momentarily a particular horrible experience.)

3. The nature of counseling experience tends to engender a time-specific and situation-specific attitude. (Many people are not able to generalize what they have learned in therapy to situations later on in their life and are dependent on periodic therapeutic shots in the arm.)

4.   Counseling is usually focused on the individuals involved in the therapeutic relationship and the material which is dealt with is rarely of the type which can be shared with family members or colleagues. (The benefits which are derived by those people involved with the counseled officer are usually indirect.) (p. 56)

While these concerns were valid, getting to the distressed officer early can alleviate much concern. The intervention model is treatment oriented rather than preventive. The weakness of this model has been presented but strengths appear to be evident also, in that some officers will not be reached at all without some treatment methods. In viewing a preventive approach the focus is on individual control techniques, peer group interaction, family support, and most of all, awareness of one's own self (Farmer and Monahan, 1980; Kroes, 1976). Kroes (1976) addressed other aspects, including three postulations on stress. He made an analogy, comparing stress and the individual as a lens and light. The light is the stress, the individual the lens, and the focus is the result, or diffusion of the light/stress. The preventive measures are much like removing the source of stress and conditioning the individual is preparation for stress yet to be received. We all endure some stress in our lives, work, and families, and some is helpful. The danger is the continued harmful stressors that become chronic, leading to health, personality, family, and job performance problems.

There are departments that have both preventive
and intervention approaches such as Stratton (1980)
described:

> Some agencies, such as the Los Angeles Police
> Department, have both mandatory and confidential
> counseling out of the same office. In these
> situations, the psychologist generally sees people
> on a voluntary basis. However, if there are
> supervisory concerns or indications that something
> has gone wrong, the psychologist can be requested
> to do a mandatory evaluation on the behavioral and
> psychological fitness of the employee with reports
> back through the chain of command to the top
> administration (p. 34).

He saw the situation as being a double-bind, in
that the counselor/psychologist is both the "good" guy
and the "bad" guy. You can't be an advocate for the
personnel and an evaluator of employee fitness. In the
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department only voluntary
counseling is administered and supervisors are instructed
in identification of signs of stress with the
psychological services unit being available for
consultation. When supervisors believe a formal
evaluation is necessary, outside consultants do the
evaluation (Stratton, 1980).

The Dallas Police Department (Territo and Vetter,
1981) has developed "warning signs" for supervisors in
their assessment of job-related stressors. The following
are the 15 most prevalent signs:

1. Sudden changes in behavior, usually directly
opposite to usual behavior.

2. Gradual change in behavior in a way that
points to deterioration of the individual.

3. Erratic work habits.

4. Increased sick time due to minor problems.

5. Inability to maintain a train of thought.

6. Excessive worrying.

7. Grandiose behavior.

8. Excessive use of alcohol and/or drugs.

9. Fatigue.

10. Peer complaints.

11. Excessive complaints (negative citizen contact).

12. Consistency in complaint patterns.

13. Sexual promiscuity.

14. Excessive accidents and/or injury.

15. Manipulation of fellow officers and citizens (p. 198).

In both the prevention model and the intervention model the stressors are present and the strain is the result. The ideal situation has been presented by the removal of the stressors from the officer in a preventative manner. Since police work itself deals with constant stressors, this may be impossible to do. The best example of the ideas that support this was expressed by Kroes (1976):

> The administration is afraid to "rock the boat" by looking into the human element in policing and the few police officers with good ideas, interested in improving the situation are negatively labeled and shut out of the system. These blocks are a luxury police departments cannot afford as stress has serious consequences and cannot be allowed to continue (p. 102).

In the research presented, these were important considerations for the counselor. The issues of prevention or intervention became "dead issues" if all progress is not made. Four specific areas mentioned that are affected by stressors are family, personality changes, health concerns, and job performance stressors.

Stress and Strain: Four Areas of Effect

Family. The effects of stress are tied in with support systems of need by the officer to function as a whole person. The inclusion of family in the orientation process is important from the start, as there are no simple solutions to the complex marital and family problems that afflict law enforcement personnel. The counselor that addressed stress at orientation sessions had the opportunity to introduce prevention techniques. Since prevention is a rare approach, some insight into results of stress should be considered. There is considerable evidence that police officers as an occupational group have one of the highest divorce rates in the country. Divorce seems especially high among young officers as Schwartz and Schwartz (1975) pointed out:

> In large departments, it is easy to find numbers of patrol officers who are on their third marriage before age 30. There is no particular mystery with regard to the breakup of marriages existing prior to entry into police service. Many police officers are married within a few years after finishing high school and typically neither spouse had any realistic notion of what police service would mean in terms of its effect on family life. Police agencies that provide any orientation or counseling

for spouses are increasing in number but they are still the exception rather than the rule (p. 134).

One exception was the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Dr. John Stratton, psychologist for that Department, had developed a program for spouses which addressed stress areas that carry into family life. The 400 wives that participated in the program evaluated it as "Excellent" (62 percent), "Very Good" (38 percent), "Good" (5 percent), "Fair" (0 percent), and "Poor" (0 percent) according to Territo and Vetter (1981). Some of the written responses from spouses that attended the program included:

> It helped me realize that I was not the only one having problems. It rather relieved the tension that has been building up inside. It was nice to air out problems that others had in common with you.
>
> It lessened the fear that I have for this type of law enforcement work. The more you know about something, the less you will usually fear it.
>
> The friendships that developed among the spouses were really great. It helped make spouses more enthusiastic towards their husband's work, which in turn makes it easier to understand problems that might be involved with their work. Also I know that I now don't feel "apart" or "distant" from my spouses work experience (p. 206).

Although orientation programs are extremely beneficial, it is prudent to supplement them by marriage and family counseling services within the agency or by referral to professionals in the community.

The officer deals every day with people suffering from a variety of unsolvable social and mental ills. The police has failed to deal with "closure" to these problems

which has resulted in his carrying these problems home into family life, and in emotional exhaustion. As the officer came home to family problems, everyone's patience may have reached the limit and two extremes emerged: negligence or infuriation. Displaced aggression may have surfaced to an outburst directed at the family. The family unit became the loser.

Changing work schedules may have also caused disruption in family routine. Studies and surveys indicated that not enough time was spent with the children, weekends and holidays are missed with the family, the spouse dislikes being alone at night, and social events with family and friends were hard to plan (Territo and Vetter, 1981). Besides the physiological effects on the officer during changing shifts, the shared experience was lacking between spouse and children. There was a built-in dysfunctional stage which could result in seeking other needs fulfillment and a breakdown in communication. Stratton (1980) stated another effect:

> Because of the trauma and degradation they observe each day, law enforcement officers also tend to become overprotective of their spouse and families (p. 45).

Some job stressors, like being constantly observant and suspicious, are integrated into personality and, probably without realizing it, the officer has these traits carried into family and personal relationships. The over-concern then becomes dysfunctional in that the

family had perceived the concern quite differently; often

as a lack of trust or confidence, driving wedges into the

family as a unit. When this factor was allowed to build,

it became hard to overcome. Children of law enforcement

personnel experienced unique problems, as Somodevilla, et

al. (1978) stated:

> Many times it is apparent that the officer is
> overprotecting his children and creating such an
> inhibiting home environment that they rebel. This
> phenomenon is far more common with adolescents who
> may feel trapped and stifled by their parents
> protectiveness and act out in a manner that
> reinforces the parent's reason for overprotecting
> them (p. 13).

Traditional roles of men and women in marriage

have undergone rapid changes in recent years. Many women

seek fulfilling experiences to facilitate personal growth

and self-actualization outside the home. Marital problems

have occurred when the wife believed she had outgrown her

husband and her social station as police officer's wife.

One police psychologist (Somodeville, et al., 1978) stated

a case concerning an officer's wife whose job involved

circulating in highly sophisticated circles where her

husband felt he did not belong:

> This caused a serious strain in their relationship
> and they eventually sought counseling. If the
> officer's wife views his position as being one which
> does not have the degree of status or prestige she
> views as important to her own self-concept, then
> difficulties may emerge in the relationship
> (pp. 13-14).

Sexual problems have also emerged as major

problems between the officer and spouse. It is difficult

to say whether these problems are symptomatic or the cause

of emotional conflict, or both. One of the first losses

has been intimacy, due to the pressures the officer has

experienced. This has been hard to replace once it is

gone from a relationship and the consequences have been

a "vicious circle" in which frustration created anxiety,

self-doubt, and more anxiety. One group of police

psychologists (Somodevilla, et al., 1978) found that:

> Sexual promiscuity can also be a problem when the
> parties, out of frustration, seek release outside
> of marriage. Some of the sexual problems emanate
> from factors relating to police work. For instance,
> the officer who works nights, whose wife works days,
> and both have different days off, encounter the basic
> problems of scheduling their sex life. In addition
> if they also have children at home, the problem is
> exacerbated. Too frequently the couples do not put
> forth the effort to understand and tolerate these
> difficulties and to work out a compromise solution.
> Instead, they engage in open hostility toward each
> other and this creates feelings which in time can
> result in one or both partners seeking sexual
> partners elsewhere. This course of action, if
> discovered by the non-offending spouse, frequently
> results in the dissolution of the marriage (p. 12).

In total consideration, the family problem became

police administrations problem with far reaching effects

on job performance. Old views of marital problems being

a private concern are no longer valid and some departments

have been addressing this concern with orientation

programs and "in-house" counseling programs.

Personality changes. Most officers, and those

working with the police in supportive roles, have taken

the negative aspects of the job as "part of the job."

Few researchers have taken a systematic look at documenting the negative effect of police work on personality. The officer's spouse has probably noted these personality changes as the spouse is in the best position to view them. Part of this change may be related to stages of job-enculturation, one stage has been labeled by a police psychologist (Reiser, 1973) who called it the "John Wayne Syndrome," and described it as:

> . . . a condition in which the individual tends to swagger and talk tough. He is somewhat badge-heavy in manner, feels that emotion is unhealthy and tends to keep his feelings locked inside under tight control. He feels he must always be right and cannot admit his fallibility or making a mistake. The philosophy is to shoot from the hip and ask questions later (p. 86).

This is usually a short-lived stage and most officers go from being idealistic, eager, wanting recognition, and desiring responsibility to being cynical, overserious, emotionally withdrawn and authoritarian in a relatively short period of time. These are then the realities of being a police officer (Kroes, 1976). This metamorphosis is a working personality which has undergone a hardening process through job stressors. Another study (Kornhauser, 1965) found that a similar "deadening of emotions" in auto workers was noted. The study, conducted in Detroit, found workers had lost much of their zest for life, felt beaten down, and existed at a level below their human potential.

Selye (1973), in his medical studies, found the body physiological response to stress developed in three stages: (1) an initial alarm reaction, followed by (2) resistance, and finally (3) exhaustion. Personality changes followed closely in what he called General Adaption Syndrome (G.A.S.). He described a biological syndrome which closely related to the human response, (especially the personality) and that of personality changes in the police officer.

In the "resistance" stage, the police officer maintains self by developing a working personality, and in doing so builds certain defense mechanisms. The only way of maintaining the defense is at some "cost" to the personality. Other researchers in this area of stress (French, Rodgers and Cobb, 1975) postulated this stage of resistance in terms of "Person-Environment." They saw this defensive distortion offset by an "equal amount" of decrease in two other criteria of mental health: a sense of reality and an accessability of the self. Few officers escape Selye's (1973) stage one and two (alarm and resistance) and, with all the pressures of the job, it remains remarkable that more avoid the third stage (exhaustion).

In describing the effects on personality one more point has been emphasized by Kroes (1976) who talked of the myth the said policing attracts the psychotic, disturbed personality:

As research studies have shown, the mental health personality makeup, and social concern of the police recruit is above average. It is the pressures of the job, the stressors, which cause the young and healthy individual police officer to develop neurotic and maladaptive behavior patterns. It has been one of this author's [Kroes] major crusades to attempt to reverse this trend in policing. Too much effort, money, and attention has been spent in selection and screening measures for police candidates (in hopes of eliminating the potential psychotic), and too little effort has been expended in considering the organizational and community stressors on police, which turns a good officer bad, and means by which the stressors can be eliminated (pp. 90-91).

Health concerns. The last stage of extreme health-strain is death, and there are possible relationships between work stress and three particular cuases of death: arteriosclerotic heart disease, suicide and diabetes mellitus. Another often overlooked disease is alcoholism (as already indicated) which some researchers estimated affected about 25 percent of officers (Hurrell and Kroes, 1975). Another study (McQuade, 1972) concluded that stress was a more important factor in the etiology of coronary heart disease than diet, smoking, and exercise combined. If these conclusions carry validity, a review of unusually high mortality rates should be evident from heart attacks in high-stress occupations. Kroes (1976) made studies of that review and noted data which showed police ranked higher in heart, diabetes, and suicide than all other occupations.

The high incidence of health problems have been shown in a study cited by Blackmore (1978) in which he stated a survey of 2,300 police officers in 29 departments had shown 36 percent having serious health problems. Blackmore (1978) also added a hospital admissions and death certificate citation which ranked police officers seventeenth out of 130 occupations. Terry (1981) cited a study conducted in Tennessee which examined a sample of 23,976 workers, including 168 police officers. He reported that police officers had more health problems than any other occupation.

Of all the health related problems alcoholism is one of the largest. As indicated, police departments traditionally adhere to the "character flaw" theory of alcoholism. This philosophy leads to the denunciation and dismissal of an officer with an alcohol problem because recognizing him as a symptom of underlying problems reflects on the department. What is not considered is that alcoholism may result from the stress of the job and that eliminating the officer does not do away with the source of stress as previously noted (Hurrell and Kroes, 1975).

There has not appeared a singular program to assist officers with a drinking problem, but some departments have had some success. The Denver Police have used closed-circuit television to reach officers who have drinking problems, encouraging them to join an in-house

program. A major portion of the in-house program was

designed to persuade the problem drinker, after he had

digested a sufficient amount of the educational aspect of

the program, to enter the Mercy Hospital Care Unit and

achieve the status of a recovering alcoholic (Dishlacoff,

1976).

Reports by the Denver Police indicated that the

organizational benefits had improved since the start of

their program. Dishlacoff (1976) listed some of the

specific benefits:

1. Retention of the majority of the officers who
had suffered from alcoholism.

2. Solution of a set of complex and difficult
personnel problems.

3. Realistic and practical extention of the
police agency's program into the entire city
government structure.

4. Improved public and community attitudes by
this degree of concern for the officer and his family
and by eliminating the dangerous and antisocial
behavior of the officer in his community.

5. Full cooperation with rehabilitation efforts
from the police association and unions which may
represent officers.

6. The preventive influence on moderate drinkers
against the development of dangerous drinking habits
which may lead to alcoholism. In addition, an
existing in-house program will motivate some officers
to undertake remedial action on their own, outside
the scope of the police agency program (p. 39).

Special programs also have been initiated in New

York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. These programs are often

based on peer support groups and tend to adapt the

Alcoholic Anonymous guidelines. The Los Angeles program,

also modeled after AA, is available to all law enforcement officers in Southern California (Stratton and Wroe, 1980). This program provided for a free sharing of problems and difficulties by peers, most of who had suffered from alcoholism.

Donahue (1977) conducted another experiment in peer counseling. He used officers from Massachusetts departments, trained them in counseling techniques, and measured their effectiveness in helping other officers deal with stress arising from police work. It was felt the high incidence of health related problems from policing could be dealt with through stress counseling programs within departments themselves.

Job performance stressors. There was very little empirical data found regarding job stressors themselves. Some researchers (French, 1975; Terry, 1981; Kroes, 1976) had put the stressors into "external," "internal," and "task-related" categories. Kroes (1976) mentioned some general speculation as to how stress affects police performance:

> Policemen, in unguarded moments, mention that they refuse to leave their patrol car under certain situations. This refusal arises out of the stress that they realize they will be under both during the incident and after, as in making an arrest in an area which may lead to a potentially dangerous racial situation. Here it appears that the officers are not so afraid of the racial situation and the hassles they will face, but they are quite concerned about the backing of their administration (p. 91).

Aldag and Brief (1978) presented more specific findings when they examined the relationship between role conflict and role ambiguity as measured by a number of affective and medical indices. Their summary of 99 officers revealed that "role conflict" and "ambiguity" were negatively related and statistically significant on 19 of the 24 measures they employed. Among these measures were: general satisfaction, job involvement, internal work motivation, experienced meaningfulness of work, experienced responsibility for others, knowledge of the results of their work efforts, organizational commitment, satisfaction with co-workers, satisfaction with certain job facets, satisfaction with pay, satisfaction with supervisors, satisfaction with leadership consideration and initiating structures. There was no statistically significant relationship between role conflict and internal work motivation, satisfaction with pay, and satisfaction with co-workers.

The prolonged effects of stress have eventually related to an officer's job performance. The officer also has had other specific stressors that contributed to stress in performance: courts, negative public image, conflicting values, racial situations, and line of duty/ crisis situations are but a few (Kroes, 1976). He cited one officer's response to court pressures on performance:

> As a policeman myself, I had to struggle on a
> daily basis through a maze of incredibly and
> incomprehensibly complex restrictions on how the

game of enforcing the law is to be played. And a
game I discovered it was indeed, with the odds
stacked heavily against the police and society
and decidedly in favor of the criminal. I well
remember one evening drawing my "Miranda warning"
card from my wallet and reading it slowly and
carefully to a known narcotics pusher whom we had
just arrested with a large quantity of heroin in
his possession, fearful that a recitation of it
from memory might be later transformed by a skilled
attorney into a violation of the suspects "rights".
"Lay it on me, baby" he said as he convulsed with
laughter halfway through my reading of his rights.
Still amused with the degrading spectacle of forcing
me to read a statement which I knew by heart from
previous arrests, he joined me in a word for word
recall of his "rights" as I methodically read them
off to him. Experiences such as this, which I
encountered time and again, led me to the inescapable
conclusion that we often allowed the law to be turned
into a mockery of justice, a tool to be used against
society by law violators who are its enemies (p. 43).

This citation illustrated one of the major job

stressors unique to law enforcement--that of restraints

and pressures put on officers by the court system. The

impact of this type of stress was viewed by Kroes (1976):

The toughest adversary a street cop must confront
each day is not the armed robber or enraged mob, not
the addict, the burglar or the mugger. Rather it is,
ironically, the very law which he must struggle
against increasingly difficult odds to enforce. It
is the smugness and complacency of courts and
legislatures, which spin out a hopelessly entangling
web of procedural restraints upon men who are charged
with the awesome responsibility of protecting our
society. This was a bitter discovery, one which the
liberal scientist within me had long refused to
accept (p. 44).

This is one example of how negative reinforcement

contributed to the officer's perception of the reality of

policing. Conflicting values have been another stressor

that contributed to job performance. Most police officers

have been from "mainstream" America and have shared

similar values and mores. The job of policing has shown that the work required officers to deal with subcultures and individuals who were not enculturated by values and goals that the officers shared. Kroes (1976) described this in terms of the constant stress of conflicting values; an example being the officers who experienced cultural shock in the form of domestic complaints. They had been required to investigate wife-beating in which the wife may drop charges against the spouse, continue living with him and have the same incident repeated a few months later. The new officer didn't, or couldn't, understand why people continued to live in this constant violent situation.

The new officer may, and probably will, encounter situations in which he will receive "freebies" (such as meals, discounts, or money). This "Serpico" effect (Maas, 1973) has caused much conflict between new officers who come to department with pre-set ethics and high moral standards. The officer soon learns to accept or reject these deviations, creating a new value structure for themself. Few can escape being changed by the conditions within which they work. Thus, the problem of conflicting values will be added to all the rest and stressors will continue to affect the family, personality, health, and job performance.

CHAPTER THREE

Model Program Development

What can be postulated from the information that
has been presented? It has been shown that "policing" is
a very complex job; that it affects the individual with
stressors that are unique and any counseling model must,
therefore, contain an element of flexibility. That seems
to be a built-in dimension for both preventive and
intervention programs. It has always been desirable to
be forewarned of stress effects, thereby attempting to
design programs to alleviate the known results before
they become unmanagable. In the area of police
counseling, it is known that whatever prevention measures
are attempted, some officers will succumb and need
intervention assistance. It appeared from the information
that administration and counseling must be in agreement
before any program was initiated. This required careful
consideration of the role the counselor would play. It
was determined at that time if counseling would be kept
confidential or evaluation of the client was mandated for
job fitness.

It must also be noted that the urban police are
a primary "caregiving" group, despite the loss of
recognition by the public to that care. When examining
the roles police play and the stressors involved, a
vicious circle is detected--that of primary assistance to

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those "in trouble," but having effect on those that give the care, especially in role conflicts. One of the first concerns of the counselor should be for education, through group facilitation and awareness. This can be implemented in orientation sessions such as Stratton (1980) has tried, or in preventive models such as Farmer and Monahan (1980) have put forth.

Group Sessions

This concept can be utilized in orientation sessions with new officers and their spouses, in continued in-service training and with specific problem areas. In orientation the counselor would act as facilitator by leading group activities. The first group meeting would involve the spouse (or significant other) in the officer's family. This would be an opportunity to bring together the goals of the department and those personnel that try to achieve those stated goals. The first group meeting can be a workshop format lasting three to five sessions of about four hours a session. In describing department goals, the introduction of counseling activities can be presented in the first session. The idea of a group is to participate and by introduction of these new officers and spouses, interaction begins and an educational focus has commenced.

At this time stress and stressors of police work can be addressed and a preventative model of stress

reduction introduced. The emphasis on family involvement would be essential for proper management of stress and role playing would be demonstrated for realistic situations the new officer would encounter. This would enable the spouse to view and "feel" the simulated stressors and to contribute to their understanding of the need for a management program. From the research it has been shown that four areas of stress management would be addressed: family situations, health concerns, personality effects, and job performance.

When presenting this data, the format should be one of examples to be given (or role playing) for each stressor area. This may be accomplished by dividing the group into teams of two, handing out description cards, and asking those teams to assume the roles. An example would be to present roles for known family situations such as the officer (role #1) coming home after witnessing his/her first family fight. The officer can't understand why the recipient of the beating won't file charges. Role #2 in that series could be spouse who had a bad day, where nothing had gone right. At this time the two roles would interact and what evolved would be the basis for comment. After a few minutes the role players would share their feeling, with the group, of the role they played, how it affected them, and what stressors they felt in that role. This would be the beginning of recognition of not

only the police role model, but that of the spouse in a support role.

After sharing these roles it would be important to have the group brainstorm ideas for resolving the problems that arise with differing roles. This could be an introduction to problem solving which may be useful as the new recruit comes home exhibiting some of the stressors which police work has been shown to encompass. Besides presenting the counseling role of the department and giving examples of role conflict, the facilitator has also introduced counseling services to the recruit and spouse. This introduction may be in a variety of formats depending on the department goals and counseling approaches. If individual counseling is to be provided, then that format should be presented, stating the confidentiality of that service, and the importance of respecting that relationship between counselor and client. As viewed in the research, most new recruits will probably not comprehend the counseling service need, but the presentation of that service becomes a later choice.

With the projected three-five sessions only stress related material would be presented concerning familial relationships and other area effects. Stratton (1980) also advised to enroll the spouse in firearms, patrol functions and staged "work realistic" situations. This is an important awareness area, but would be kept separate from workshop activities concerning counseling services

and role conflict presentations. The group dynamics
aspect would be within the framework of counseling
approaches to problem solving, rather than training
exercises.

The second emphasis area in the workshop approach
would be the introduction of spouses of experienced
officers to new spouses. Shared information and
experiences would contribute to the spouses' support
network, by letting them know they are not alone in
specific job stressors and the effects on the family. In
the research it has been shown (Donahue, 1977) that
peer-group support has worked well. This approach could
be expanded into the group workshop concept where the
counselor can bring perspective and focus by participation
and leadership.

One of the biggest formal/informal supports for
the officer is his/her family and by helping to formulate
these support groups the counselor may also bring shared
experience together for resolution of problems. If
problems are not resolved immediately at least spouses
have support for similar problem areas and can get ideas
from others within the same profession.

The department would furnish meeting rooms for
the proposed workshop sessions and show continuing
interest in their development and support groups. These
do not always need to be formal sessions, but can be
scheduled as family sessions or workshops. This might

be the better format for introducing special problem
areas or continuing education topics. It has been shown
that family involvement is critical in stress survival
skills and the inclusion of the family or spouse at the
orientation level through in-service activities are
crucial.

Another support system mentioned in the research
is that for alcohol abuse. Many departments have their
own AA groups for follow-up after treatment and this
appears especially effective if the department is large
enough and can support small groups of 10-15 officers, who
can meet at least once a week on a continuing basis. For
the recovering alcoholic, or those who may think they have
a drinking problem, this can prove to be a valuable
peer-support session. For the counselor initiating a
program of this kind, many AA booklets and guides are
available. The counselor may still see individuals but
can utilize the AA group for peer support and continued
maintenance.

Other group sessions would introduce individual
control techniques for stress management. The counselor
may have had experience with some of these and he/she
could present the techniques. If the counselor hasn't
had experience, an expert can be brought in who is
trained in systematic relaxation, Transcendental
Meditation, yoga, Zen, biofeedback techniques, or
autogenics. Individual control techniques are

advantageous in that they may be practiced by the individual to counteract moderate stress. Once learned, they require little, if any, additional instruction. This allows the officer to have something available without the pressure of admitting to a particular problem and is preventative in structure. From the research presented these skills may better serve the officer and are just as important as accuracy with firearms.

Another area that the counselor could serve was the creation of Human Relations workshops, intended to introduce the officers to practice sessions with realistic street situations that are encountered. This shouldn't be limited to new officers, but should include those experienced officers who have confronted highly stressful situations. This interchange can be valuable to both experienced officers and the new officers, in that shared experiences can be presented and the introduction of alternatives presented. These sessions are similar to the orientation with experienced spouses of other officers and the realization that the police officer is both a "care-giver" and "care receiver" should be emphasized.

The group concept allows the sharing of experiences and stressors with others that are affected within the police experience. By demonstrating the stressors in the practice situation, better methods of problem solving can be discussed and methods for

relieving stress can be explored. This is certainly not
the only answer, but a beginning, using established
counseling methodologies within group structures. Too
often the police become enculturated within themselves,
rarely venturing out to seek assistance with problems
or interacting with the community for fear of negative
images in law enforcement. By bringing counseling methods
into the police structure a start is made by introduction
of successful methods. The awareness that these group
sessions provide may be the beginning of positive
reinforcement of the officer as a community member,
rather than being ostracized from it.

Individual Counseling

While group methods are an ideal situation, there
will still remain the need to counsel officers on an
individual basis. The counselor, by being involved with
group processes, will gain by understanding department
procedures and operation guidelines. This is most
important in understanding the officer as an individual
as the stressors remain the same for the individual as
for the group as a whole. Some individuals will respond
better to the group, others may require more time as
individual clients. The goal of the individual sessions
is to eventually get the officer into some group activity
for peer sharing and interaction, but being realistic,
those experiencing great distress may be hesitant to go

into group work. In some cases, the officer feels alone and doesn't believe anyone understands the problem. The counselor who can exhibit empathy and understanding will progress more with the individual officer by breaking the barriers of mistrust and resentment. In individual sessions the client may not know what is being experienced and may attribute this to some pathological problem.

The counselor who takes a holistic approach may overcome many of the fears and misunderstandings of counseling. By gaining insight into the officer's family, personality changes, health concerns, and job requirements, the counselor may better serve and assist the officer who experiences distress. It is known from the research that the effects of stress manifest themselves in the four areas of concern, as listed. If the health of the officer appears to be the immediate concern, a medical checkup is mandated, and follow-up could be made after the medical treatment.

In the holistic approach counseling focuses on needs of the officer and family. Some family counseling may be needed to explore the job stressors and problems involving policing and the family. It has also been shown in the research that there are short-term and long-term effects of stress. The counselor can profile those effects for a better measurement of the officer.

There are no "packaged" programs for every and all situations in group or individual counseling. There is not a total acceptance of counseling as an answer to those problems that law enforcement officers encounter. The research has shown that those departments who do employ counseling feel that they have gained a valuable tool for reducing stress and retaining officers.

CHAPTER FOUR

Summary

It has been shown that police personnel experience
unique stress in their job and that this profession is
one of the most stressful occupations in the country. It
is also known that programs have been implemented in
which counseling and helping services have played an
important role. For too long it has been assumed that
those in this primary "caregiving" profession will take
care of themselves and it has been past practice to
attribute some "character flaw" in those who did not
integrate the pressure of law enforcement and became
dysfunctional. It is now known that those engaged in law
enforcement have special needs which are just beginning
to be met through counseling methods and practices.

Psychological and physiological stressors have
been identified through studies that showed conclusively
their relationships to police work. Counselors who
choose to work in law enforcement need interdisciplinary
educations emphasizing not only counseling skills, but
also law, psychology, and criminology. Suggestions have
been put forth concerning sample programs for officers
and families as it has been shown that the family is an
important contributor to job satisfaction, personal

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well-being, and health. All areas are interrelated and none appear to operate to the exclusion of the others. Only recently have police departments addressed the need for ongoing mental health counseling. A few pilot programs were discussed, but the field is just now emerging and the empirical data has yet to be validated.

The paper was intended to provide the potential counselor, or one already in practice, with an overview of counseling needs of police officers. Many questions were hopefully raised which cannot be answered without further research and evaluation.

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