

Identifying and Reducing Organizational Stress: Recommendations for Law Enforcement  
Leaders

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Identifying and Reducing Organizational Stress: Recommendations for Law Enforcement  
Leaders

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Randy Allen Kramer

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*One of the most difficult and rewarding tasks that I have taken on is earning my Master's Degree. For some reason when I was much younger I thought dropping out of school was the thing to do. Once I dropped back in I can't stop learning. At first my thoughts were that it would take a miracle. However with the love and support of my friends and family, coworkers and the guidance from the staff at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville I have now earned my Master's Degree in Criminal Justice Administration.*

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## **Abstract**

### **Identifying and Reducing Organizational Stress: Recommendations for Law Enforcement Leaders**

Randy Allen Kramer

Under the Supervision of Dr. Michael Klemp-North

## **Statement of the Problem**

Prior research has typically identified two significant types of stress within the law enforcement profession. These stressors are classified as occupational and organizational (McCreary & Thompson, 2006). Occupational stress, also known as external stress, is stress that police experience in the field, such as high speed chases, shootings and other traumatic events during the course of their work. Shane (2010) suggests that occupational stressors, such as unpredictability, boredom, and traumatic events occur infrequently for most police officers. Occupational stressors are typically not experienced by the officer on a daily basis and are over rather quickly. Organizational stress, also known as internal stress, refers to the interdepartmental issues which include, but are not limited to, unfair discipline, favoritism, poor leadership and management (Cruickshank, 2012). This is stress that is experienced on a daily basis and potentially causes law enforcement officers greater harm.

The majority of stress research in law enforcement has been focused on occupational stress. However, according to a 2004 study of over 2500 police officers by Neal Trautman, it was revealed that police administrators are a common denominator to the top ten sources of stress among officers (Cruickshank, 2012). This study also indicated that unfair discipline, favoritism, poor communication, and supervisory politics were among the top ten sources for stress among police officers (2012).

Numerous agencies have implemented programs to assist their staff in coping with negative stress. However, according to Stinchcomb (2004), many of the remedies for police stress are person-centered and utilize clinical interventions or individual coping techniques. Although very necessary, they are reactive in nature and fail to address the source of the chronic everyday organizational problems, which take a far greater toll on police personnel (Gillan, 2011). Gillan (2011) explains an organizational-centered approach, whereby identifying the interdepartmental problems and providing appropriate solutions, may have a greater influence on reducing police stress.

### **Methods of Approach**

This paper will utilize secondary research from peer reviewed articles, scholarly journals, text books, statistics from government websites and other respected internet sites concerning police organizational stress. This research will assess the applicability of the general strain theory and social learning theory as it relates to the law enforcement profession and stress. Leadership styles and leadership theory will also be discussed to provide for a foundation of understanding leadership techniques to utilize for empowering and assisting subordinates with personal, professional and organizational goals while strengthening organizational commitment. Strategies to identify and reduce the causes of organizational stressors will be discussed.

### **Summary of Results**

The results of this study has revealed the traditional methods of treating stress by utilizing clinical and or individual models severely fail to address the cause of organizational stress. These models are very important, however, an organizational approach is necessary to effectively identify and reduce the cause of workplace stressors. In addition, the use of

organizational centered approach has been shown to be effective in agencies that disperse power and leadership and include lower line staff in the decision making process.

This paper provides an overview of an Oklahoma Police Department and the utilization of the shared leadership management style which proved to be successful for the agency. In addition, the Leadership in Police Organizations Program developed in cooperation with the International Association of Chiefs of Police and U.S. Justice Department will be discussed. These strategies are a model for which other agencies can utilize and experience a reduction in organizational stress and an increase in organizational commitment.

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## **SECTION I: INTRODUCTION**

### **Identifying and Reducing Organizational Stress: Recommendations for Law Enforcement**

#### **Leaders**

##### **Statement of the Problem**

Stress is an unavoidable aspect of life as a police officer. However, stress that is high in frequency and continuous can be very debilitating and deter an individual from performing day to day activities and cause severe physical and mental health problems and cause death (Gobble, 2013). As a result of a decade long study by the University at Buffalo, it has been found that the risk for heart attack in officers over age 40 was above the national average standards, and police officers in general experience higher cholesterol levels, blood pressure, and pulse rates (Goldbaum, 2012). The research also found that police officers reported more thoughts of suicide than the general public (2012). Studies have also shown that police administrators are a common denominator to the top ten sources of stress among officers (Cruickshank, 2012). Further these studies have identified unfair discipline, favoritism, poor communication and supervisory politics to be among the top ten sources for stress among police officers (2012).

The effects of chronic stress are numerous and will damage the individual, the organization and community. There are physiological and psychological effects to the individual, ranging from headaches to heart attacks and alcoholism to suicide (Clarke and O'Hara, 2013). Organizational effects range from turnover, overtime cost to cover absent officers, to civil liability. The community will feel the effects through costs of officers placed on stress related disability and lack of confidence and trust in the agency. Community policing efforts will also suffer due to officer's lower tolerance levels and poor judgment.

Prior research has typically identified two significant types of stress within the law enforcement profession: occupational and organizational (McCreary & Thompson, 2006). Occupational stress, also known as external stress, is stress that police experience in the field, such as high speed chases, shootings and other critical events during the course of their work. Shane (2010) suggests that occupational stressors occur infrequently and are over rather quickly. Organizational stress, also known as internal stress, refers to the interdepartmental issues which include, but are not limited to, unfair discipline, favoritism, poor leadership and poor management (Cruickshank, 2012). This is chronic stress that is experienced on a daily basis and potentially causes law enforcement officers greater harm due to the constant wear and tear on their coping abilities.

Law enforcement leaders have recognized the importance of providing assistance to their officers regarding stress. Accordingly, agencies have in place access to a clinical model, whereas the officer seeks assistance through counseling or the individual model, whereas the officer seeks prevention techniques through training. Both models place importance on finding ways to cope with stress however fail to identify the causes of the stress. The clinical model makes no attempt to identify the cause of the stress or to eliminate it and the individual model improperly diagnosis the problem as an individual issue rather than an organizational dysfunction (Stinchcomb, 2004). Further, these two models place the burden to “get well” on the individual experiencing the effects from stress.

As the clinical and individual model fails to address the cause of the organizational stressors and only targets effects, it is imperative another solution in identifying and reducing organizational stress is put into place. Gillan (2011) explains that an organizational-centered

approach, whereby identifying the interdepartmental problems and providing appropriate solutions may have a greater influence on reducing police stress.

Organizational change by dispersing power and authority and including subordinates in the decision making process, policy development and closing the gap between lower level and administration, has several positive outcomes beyond reducing stress. Job commitment, worker satisfaction, quality of work, and productivity will increase (Bynum, 2008).

### **Purpose of the Study**

Stinchcomb, (2004) suggests that it may not be the nature of the work which causes the most stress for police officers. Typically, the officer's personality allows them to handle these events relatively well. Nonetheless, the daily stressors from within the organization are chronic and most law enforcement stress reduction programs do not address the core causes. While some agencies have implemented programs to assist officers in dealing with critical and traumatic stress events, greater focus must be directed at the organizational level (Schafer, 2010).

The goal of this research is to provide an understanding that organizational stress must be identified and reduced, if not completely eliminated. In addition, the clinical and individual coping models do not address these stressors and an organizational approach must be implemented for the health of our police officers and the organization. This research will examine the potential sources of organizational stress and recommend education and training, as well as organizational change to assist in reducing these stressors within the law enforcement profession.

### **Methodology**

This paper will utilize secondary research from peer reviewed articles, scholarly journals, text books, statistics from government websites and other respected internet sites concerning

organizational police stress. The general strain theory and the social learning theory will be examined as it relates to the law enforcement profession and stress. Strategies for implementing an organizational approach in identifying and reducing organizational stress will also be discussed.

### **Contribution to the Field**

Upon completion of examining available research on organizational stress in law enforcement, my contribution will be strategic recommendations to law enforcement leadership in identifying organizational stressors and implementing strategies to reduce these stressors. This paper will be beneficial for department leaders to develop a better understanding of organizational stress in law enforcement and how it is tied to multiple negative issues within an agency and community. Strategies for increased awareness, as well as strategies to effectively manage organizational stress are the desired result of this research paper. This paper will explain new ways to conduct business and offer approaches for a healthier and more efficient working environment for law enforcement professionals.

## **SECTION II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

The following section will be broken into six subsections. The first section will define stress and the types of stress respectively as positive, negative, acute and chronic. The second section will discuss the sources of stress that police officers experience. The third section examines the effects of chronic organizational stress on officers. The fourth section will examine effects to the organization and community. The fifth section will discuss leadership responsibility and the final section will discuss leadership styles.

### **Defining Stress**

It is very important to understand what stress is, what it can do to the body and mind and how to identify its causes in order to reduce it effectively. Stress has a major influence upon our wellbeing, as well as maintaining homeostasis. In other words, stress plays a role in our physiological and psychological stability. Some stress is good; however chronic or prolonged stress will cause an abundance of health problems and can lead to premature death (Gobble, 2013).

The definition of stress varies, but simply stated, stress is the physical and emotional result in which the body responds to any kind of demand placed upon it. According to P. J. Rosch (2013), Hans Selye, a Hungarian scientist and the founder on the concept of stress, defined stress as “the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change” (p. 1). In other words, the demand for change is the stressor and the response is stress. There are typically two types of stress and two types of effects.

### **Types of Stress**

Stress is important, unavoidable and brings meaning to life. Too much stress is damaging and unhealthy. Too little stress provides for a feeling of no purpose. However, just the right

amount will provide optimal performance (Macabasco, 2015). There are basically two types of stress; positive and negative. Positive stress is termed *eustress* and negative stress is termed *distress*. Eustress is the stress we feel when we are capable of handling the demands presented. Examples of this type of stress are a sporting competition, a new work project, or a promotion. Eustress provides us with motivation and inspires us to succeed with new challenges (Macabasco, 2015). Distress occurs when the level of stress reaches the point where the body cannot deal effectively with the specific stressor and results in an unhealthy outcome (Stinchcomb, 2004).

Addressing stress one step further, we can identify temporary and continuous stress respectively as acute and chronic. Acute stress has a rapid onset and does not last long. An example would be being stuck in traffic, a high speed chase or delivering a death notice. This is not to suggest that acute stress is not damaging or lacks potential for serious long term illness. In contrast, chronic stress is when the stress becomes constant and is routinely experienced with high frequency (Stinchcomb, 2004). An example of chronic stress would be a boss that constantly micromanages. When stress becomes chronic, the body's stress response can become maladaptive by constant activation (Seyle 1956, as cited in Schneiderman et al., 2005). There are also several sources of police stressors which can be placed within two categories.

### **Sources of Police Stress**

Police officers experience stress from within their agency and from the work that they perform. These stressors can be placed into two categories as organizational and occupational. By understanding the stressors police officers face, and properly identifying their causes, proper strategies can be offered to address them. It has been thought that the traumatic events law enforcement officers experience in the field and the duties they perform provide for the most

harmful stress (Stephens & Pugmire, 2008). There is no question that a fatal vehicle crash, high speed chase and shooting situations are traumatic events that officers encounter. These events are low in frequency but are high in impact, which has the potential for serious illnesses, including severe depression. However the focus of this paper is on the chronic organizational stressors, occupational stressors will be discussed briefly.

Occupational stressors, also known as *external* stressors, are events that are experienced in the field such as a high speed chase, death notices, domestic violence calls, testifying in court and job related violence (Stinchcomb, 2004). These stressors are also called episodic or acute, as they are not typically experienced by an officer on a daily basis and rarely by officers with administrative duties (Shane, 2010).

On the other hand, organizational stressors, also known as *internal* stressors, such as being second guessed, unfair bias from supervisors, excessive policies, poor leadership and managers have been deemed more harmful to police officers, as these stressors are chronic in nature. Stinchcomb (2004) suggests that organizational stressors are routinely encountered and are far higher in frequency than occupational stressors, which thereby provide for the most harm. Additionally, according to Cruickshank (2012), organizational stress has proven to be more significant concerning job satisfaction and morale which is closely tied to job stress.

According to a study of over 25 hundred police officers by Neal Trautman, PhD, it was found that police administrators are a common denominator to the top ten sources of stress among officers (Cruickshank, 2012). This study indicated unfair discipline, favoritism, poor communication, and supervisory politics were among the top ten sources for stress among police officers (Cruickshank 2012). Further, research supports findings that inadequate and unsupportive leaders cause a significant amount of stress (Schafer, 2010). These leaders micro-

manage and second guess their subordinates activities and decisions. Research also indicates that there is a mutual relationship between poor leadership and employee mental health issues such as stress, anxiety and depression (Schafer, 2010). In fact, when the supervisor, leader and/or manager encourage participative decision making, communication and inspirational motivation, feelings of emotional exhaustion can be reduced (Schafer, 2010).

The police organization is typically bureaucratic with very rigid rules; the chain of command and communication is strictly from the top down (Stojkovic, Kalinich, & Klofas, 2008). Because of this, law enforcement is categorized as paramilitary in nature with orders that are sent down from the top, in which subordinates are expected to obey. Policies are developed at the top with no input from subordinates. These policies affect how subordinates perform their duties; however, subordinates are not given opportunity for input to their development. Officers may feel alienated as they are expected to make life and death decisions in the field but are rarely involved in the decision making process within the organization.

When discipline is unfair, inconsistent, and not based on the facts of the infraction but instead with bias, severe damage occurs to the agency and community. The San Diego, California Police Department has experienced ridicule from the community and costly monetary effects of practicing favoritism first hand. In 2013, several civil law suits were filed against the SDPD costing \$1.5 million, due to command staff providing special privileges to certain officers which included failing to discipline (Gormlie, 2013). Favoritism typically comes into play when the subordinate and superior have a personal relationship and/or share the same viewpoints, or political affiliation (Gormlie, 2013). Favoritism is especially stressful for officers concerning special training opportunities, promotions and discipline. When new equipment, special training, special assignments and promotions are handed out without notice to all officers or perhaps only

to the chosen few, senior officers who have longevity with an agency, or officers that have diligently worked hard and believe they have earned these special privileges, may become angry and indignant with management.

Micro-managing superiors are also a major source of organizational stress. Police officers make decisions daily in the field only to have them repeatedly scrutinized by supervisors. In addition, when managers require subordinates to request excess permission and approval for routine duties, stress levels rise and morale declines. A message of distrust is then perceived by the officers (Gormlie, 2013). When these organizational stressors are not addressed, they can lead to numerous physiological and psychological effects.

### **Effects of Chronic Organizational Stress**

Every police officer expects to catch the bad guy, drive the squad fast with lights and sirens blaring and be placed into some type of dangerous situation. During the police academy and throughout their career, law enforcement officers are constantly trained for these types of situations. However, officers do not expect to cope with the daily stressors from within the agency such as the micro-managing supervisor or the constantly changing policies and mistrust within the agency (Stinchcomb, 2004). To this end, physiological and psychological effects begin to emerge.

### **Physiological Effects**

When a stressor is presented, the body will react to the stressor physiologically or psychologically (Stinchcomb, 2004). Physiological reactions may include headaches, ulcers, heart attacks and strokes, while psychological reactions include irritability to severe depression (Stinchcomb, 2004). The musculoskeletal system is affected by the muscles within our body when they tense up. This distress occurs when a stressful event is experienced. When chronic

stress is present, the muscles may tense for considerable amounts of time, causing other issues such as headaches and may promote stress related disorders (Tovian, et al., 2015).

The heart and blood vessels make up the cardiovascular system. When stress is experienced, the heart will direct blood to needed areas such as the large muscle groups. The heart and vessels will dilate causing blood pressure to rise. This can be helpful when experiencing short bouts of stress but, chronic long term stress may cause hypertension, heart disease, and stroke (Tovian, et al., 2015). As a result of a decade long study by the University at Buffalo, it was discovered that the risk for heart attack in officers over the age of 40 was above the national average standards, with police officers in general experiencing higher cholesterol levels, higher blood pressure, and faster pulse rates (Goldbaum, 2012).

In addition, it is known by medical research that stress has a negative effect on the body's immune system, making the body vulnerable to disease. When a foreign invader, such as a virus or bacteria enters the body, the immune system identifies and destroys the invader. According to Rathus (2005), stress suppresses the immune system by producing steroids. The effects of suppression are minuscule as long as the introduction of steroids to the body is occasional. When persistent levels of steroids are created, there is a decrease in inflammation, which is a function that repairs damaged tissue and a decrease in formation of antibodies (Rathus, 2005).

Response to any stressor is the way our bodies respond by analyzing the type of threat and our ability to cope effectively. This response was labeled by Hans Selye as the general adaption syndrome and provides for bodily changes within three stages: alarm, resistance and exhaustion stage (Rathus, 2005). The alarm stage provides for the fight or flight response. Police officers experience the fight or flight response during calls for service or traffic stops where there are many uncertainties until the officer has gained total control of the situation.

Changes within the body that occur during this stage are increases in the heart rate, respiration rate and blood pressure. Blood flows to the larger muscle mass as they become tense and there is a release of adrenaline (Rathus, 2005).

The second stage is the resistance stage, which will be activated if the stressor is not effectively handled. This is where the body attempts to adapt to the stressor by counter acting the response from the alarm stage (Comer, 2007). The changes in the body during the alarm stage are slight but still high. If by this time, as with chronic stressors, the stressor has not been dealt with adequately, the exhaustion stage arrives. Resources are now depleted and as the stressor continues, the body will face disease ranging from allergies to heart failure and ultimately death (Rathus, 2005).

### **Psychological**

Numerous police officers will not seek assistance concerning stress. This may be due to the fearless image police possess and the *John Wayne* syndrome, in which police officers are perceived to be macho, thick skinned, and tough (Stinchcomb, 2004). Many officers attempt to cope on their own by self-medicating by using alcohol or drugs. Coping with stress in this way ultimately hinders the officer's lives, making life more complicated and at times includes the loss of reality. This officer may also experience burnout and does only what may be necessary to get by. The stress will continue to worsen and the individual may begin to experience anxiety, panic attacks and depression and if not treated, suicide may be the end result.

### **Alcoholism**

For many police officers a very common maladaptive way to cope with stress is by the use of self-medicating with alcohol. A study by Violanti, et al., (2011), indicates the police culture accepts alcohol use and is common for officers to use alcohol to celebrate completed

assignments, missions and to reinforce their values. Alcohol use is a quick, however temporary, coping mechanism that officers use to cope with stress. According to Willman (2012), police officers often suppress the organizational stressors and problems occur when the officer's ability to function appropriately becomes impaired. The officer will then use the common maladaptive coping mechanism known as alcohol.

### **Burnout**

Police officers enter their career with enthusiasm and motivation to achieve their goals and the goals of their agency. As a police career progresses, circumstances change, stress occurs and the condition of burnout may appear. According to Ortmeier & Meese III (2010), burnout is the result of chronic stress, which causes a sense of cynicism, ineffectiveness and exhaustion. The officer may retire early, resign or continue employment with frustration, harbor anger, exhibit a lack of enthusiasm and show a lack of productivity (Ortmeier & Meese III, 2010).

A study of high risk occupations by Lisa M. Russell (2014), suggests that those employed in the human services arena such as doctors, counselors and police, are prone to burnout. Once the officer reaches the stage of burnout, he or she may become cynical and carry a "who cares" attitude. This condition of burnout is detrimental to co-workers, the police agency and the community the officer serves.

### **Suicide**

Suicide is a topic that is tough to discuss and not a popular topic within the law enforcement family. Chronic stress takes a toll on any human being, especially police officers. Research suggests that officers are more likely to commit suicide than be killed by a criminal. A 2012 national study of police suicides was conducted by the Badge of Life. The result of this study show that 126 officers committed suicide in 2012, with an average age of 42 and with an

average of 16 years on the job. Ninety-one percent were males, 11 percent were veterans and 63 percent were single (Clark & O'Hara, 2013). During research performed by Clark, White, and Violanti (2012), it was noted that alcohol, depression, and chronic stress were at the top of the list of characteristics in police officers taking their own lives. It is also these types of effects on the human body that will lead to negative effects upon the agency.

### **Organizational Effects to Agency**

The officers are not the only entities that feel the effects of organizational stressors. The organization itself will also experience secondary repercussions from the same stressors, such as the cost in replacing officers that retire early or resign. Other costs that may incur are over time due to the abuse of sick time usage, officer low productivity, or monetary awards for civil liability. The image and trust of the agency will also diminish within the eyes of the community.

### **Turnover**

Like any business, the quality of the employees can determine the success or failure of that business. When an officer leaves an agency, it can be detrimental in several ways. Generally speaking, the costs to hire, train, and outfit with gear are staggering. After being with an agency for several years, an officer gets to know the streets and the people they have contact with. Police officers become familiar with the residents and re-offenders and have a good operational wisdom. These are officers who have been with the organization for many years and have developed sufficient knowledge and power to influence other members. When an agency loses officers, they also lose this wisdom and need to re-hire, re-train and re-educate which is costly.

According to Orrick (2005), agencies invest great mounts of time, effort, and money into recruiting, hiring and training officers. When officers leave the agency it can have a detrimental effect on the agencies concerning agency goals (Orrick, 2005). Although police officer salaries

and benefits are decreasing, research has found dissatisfaction with management to be positively related to turnover (Cooper & Ingram 2004; Lynch & Tuckey 2004; 2008; as cited in Parsons, Kautt, & Coupe, 2011). Officers are more likely to remain at an agency that treats them fairly than to find a better paying agency.

### **Absenteeism**

Police officers earn paid time off, such as vacation time and sick time to utilize for personal use when needed and necessary. However, when an officer is experiencing stress or burnout, sick time may be abused. When this happens, it affects the entire agency. Absenteeism directly affects shift shortages and overtime paid to cover those shift shortages and affects an agency's budget and bottom line. This in turn will cause low morale and anger to those being ordered to cover the absent officer's hours.

### **Low Productivity**

Police agencies operate with low budgets and rely on numbers driven grants, such as traffic grants for seatbelt and speed enforcement (Cruickshank, 2012). In order to receive these types of grants, a certain amount of officer-citizen contact is necessary. Unfortunately, if a suggested number of contacts are not met, the agency may lose these grants. In addition, when an officer fails to adequately investigate complaints, the public will lose its confidence in the agency's ability to provide police services (Cruickshank, 2012).

### **Civil Liability**

When an officer fails to perform or performs negligently because of the use of drugs, alcohol and depression, or abuses their authority, the chance of a civil suit against the officer and the agency is plausible (Gaines & Kappeler, 2008). The agency will not only suffer from monetary penalties for the officers' actions, but the agencies image will be tarnished for some

time to come and will take years to regain trust from the community (Ortmeier & Meese III, 2010).

### **Community Effects**

The cost of police stress extends to the community itself. In 2011, approximately 27 Milwaukee Wisconsin police officers were on stress related disability. This cost the taxpayers approximately \$110 thousand per month, which is a grand total of \$1.32 million each year (Henry, 2005). As stated, the cost to an agency and the community in terms of lack of productivity, absenteeism, and turnover can also be quite devastating (Cruickshank, 2012). Overtime alone to replace an officer out of duty is overwhelming and further damages morale and produces more stress on those that must cover the absent officer's shift.

What is necessary for the health of the police officers, the agency and community, is for the police managers and leaders to recognize their role in generating stress. They must realize that counseling and training cannot sufficiently address the organizational sources of stress which must be identified and reduced to ensure a healthier more efficient environment.

### **Leadership Responsibility**

There is an abundance of research correlating police officer stress with organizational stressors. Studies have identified a cause of the stressors as leadership and administration in many instances due to rigid controls, policies and leadership styles. Many leaders have come up through the ranks and have experienced the results of stress and realize what stress can do to the officer, their family and the agency. They understand organizational stress is very real. However, little changes once they are at the top and typically continue with the ways that they know (Cruickshank, 2012). Leaders have a responsibility to provide guidance and support to their followers. Leaders must understand the needs and wants of their subordinates, as well as

remove obstacles which prevent them from achieving personal and organizational goals (Andreescu & Vito, 2010).

Some leaders do recognize the occupational stressors and provide programs for their officers to utilize and learn coping techniques. These programs are clinical or individual in nature and are vital, but do not address the source of the chronic stressors causing the most harm, and only target symptoms and effects (Stinchcomb, 2004).

Research studies have explored the context of what makes a leader successful and contrarily an ineffective leader. An individual can hold the position of a leader but lack the traits and necessary skills to be a true positive leader. One would think that after approximately 50 years of leadership research and thousands of books and articles written on the matter, along with billions of dollars annually invested in leadership development, there would be no shortage of effective leaders (Burke, 2006, as cited in Schafer, 2010). Nevertheless, poor leadership has been correlated with mental health issues and debilitating stress in employees, as well as decreased motivation and organizational commitment (Einarson et al., 2007, as cited in Schafer, 2010). Therefore, it is imperative to consider supervisory/leadership development and its effect upon stress.

### **Effective Leadership Development**

The Community relies on police agencies and their personnel to provide ethical protective services to them. They expect police to be ethical and well trained to carry out the necessary duties as an officer. The community also demands the same from law enforcement leadership. This stands to reason then if leadership is ineffective so will be the end results. Because an individual has been promoted to a higher rank does not make them a leader. An individual becomes a leader through process, not by rank and respect must be earned and not

demanded. A leader leads his subordinates by example in thought, word and deed. Further, effective leaders mentor their subordinates and assist them in becoming professional, productive members of the organization (Morreale & Ortmeier, 2004).

Rank does provide for power and authority and the ineffective leader will rely on power and authority to rule their subordinates. Very often, power and authority are thought to be the same. However, power is the relationship between two people, while authority is dictated by the position held within the chain of command (Gaines & Kappeler, 2008). Power designates that “a person or group of persons or organization of persons determine what another person or group or organization will do” (Tannenbaum, 1962, p. 236, as cited in Stojkovic, Kalinich, & Klofas, 2008, p. 256).

The quality of the leader is the utmost import factor to a successful organization. A study of the traits and habits of ineffective supervisors was conducted by Joseph A. Schafer in 2010 by surveying mid-career police supervisors attending the FBI National Academy (Schafer, 2010). The study utilized open ended surveys to evaluate their perceptions of ineffective leaders. The common traits and habits identified were found to be related to commission and omission concepts. The top five related to commission were identified as self-centered, arrogant, closed-minded, micromanager and capriciousness. The top five related to omission were identified as less than desirable work ethic, failure to act, ineffective communication, lack of people skills and lack of integrity (Schafer, 2010). Additional descriptors of ineffective leaders were moody, lack of empowerment, lack of empathy, decision making while angry and failure to support their troops (Schafer, 2010).

Another study on leadership behavior was conducted in 2010 by Viviana Andreescu and Gennaro F. Vito, which reveals ideal behaviors of effective leaders. This study surveyed 365

law enforcement officers while they attended executive training programs in Arizona. The support for a highly participatory leadership style was found to be common. In addition, the effective leader will be genuinely concerned for the subordinate's needs and provide empowerment and support (Andreescu & Vito, 2010). Additional research surveyed 52 police chiefs within 28 states and found these executives share their vision for the future and have high regards for openness, honesty and promote teamwork by assisting subordinates with task completion (Andreescu & Vito, 2010). Effective leaders will define their role and the responsibilities of their subordinates, promote their well-being and integrate them into the organization. The study also found there was favor towards the elements of transformational leadership.

Competency in leadership is required at all levels to effectively achieve personal and organizational goals (Andreescu & Vito, 2010). Leaders use different leadership styles, which work for some and fail for others. These leadership styles are very different in their delivery and produce a variety of results. Current and future leaders need to understand leadership theory and utilize the techniques of the different types of leadership styles that produce inspiration, motivation, personal growth and achievement of organizational goals (Andreescu & Vito, 2010). As stated, this is no easy task. A successful leader is one who finds their own successful leadership style and guides followers to achieve personal and professional goals.

Morale and motivation are not only directly related to stress, but to leadership styles as well. The type of leadership style that is chosen by a leader in law enforcement will have a bearing on the motivation and morale of subordinates. Leaders must recognize the differences in their subordinates and utilize the most beneficial style possible (Andreescu & Vito, 2010).

Style of leadership concerns the techniques the leader utilizes in which to motivate and influence subordinates and to achieve organizational goals. As earlier stated, the position in which a person holds does not typically make them a leader. In fact, leadership is about attitude and the responsibility to make a difference (Ayres, 2004). An effective leader will focus on releasing creative energy of subordinates (Ortmeier & Meese, III, 2010).

A leader who is primarily focused on the traditional style of leadership has high expectations of his subordinates enforcing the law in its strictest form. He expects those that work under him to follow the rules and enforce the laws to the fullest. A traditional leader does not push his officers to develop relationships through community policing, but rather strict enforcement of the law. Traditional leaders tend to punish rather than reward officers, providing the leader with control of his subordinates. Aggressive in supporting new, more hard line policies, traditional leaders most often dictate, rather than work as an equal. According to Engel (2003), traditional leaders are task oriented, and have high expectations of arrests and written citations. Innovative style leans towards progressive thinking regarding new law enforcement philosophies and technologies. Along with their progressive thought processes, an innovative leader's progressive thinking tends to build more friendships with those under his command. Mentoring is a program frequently used by an innovative leader, as well as community policing. An innovated leader uses new teachings and new philosophies in their work and allows subordinates to conduct themselves on duty without dictating the procedures used by them. According to Engel (2003), an innovative leader is not as concerned with rule enforcement, report writing, or regulations but rather is more focused upon new ways of thinking in law enforcement.

A supportive styled leader will make attempts to reduce stress in the agency and clarifies the officer's role and responsibilities. Leaders who use a more supportive approach usually are well accepted by those under their command because it gives them the freedom and confidence to do their job without fear of harshness. Encouragement is popular with a leader who is supportive and they are concerned with delving out praise and recognition to their subordinates (Engel, 2003).

Active supervisory styles are said to be those who lead their followers by example. Those that are active supervisors work right alongside of the officers; however, according to Engel (2003), they tend not to encourage team building and mentoring. Nonetheless, as non-encouraging this style may appear, an active supervisory style encourages a positive view of subordinates, a strong sense of power and directive decision making.

As stated earlier, it is imperative to understand leadership styles and to utilize different styles to find what works and what does not. The end result must be one that supports, motivates, guides and assists subordinates in attaining their personal goals, as well as the goals of the agency and removing obstacles preventing them from doing so.

### **SECTION III: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

There are several sociological theories that can be utilized to determine why stress occurs within law enforcement. The theoretical framework section of this paper will utilize the general strain theory, social learning theory and the four concepts of the social learning theory: differential association, definitions, differential reinforcement and imitations. In addition, this section will examine leadership theory as leadership is dynamic to organizational stress. This section will review leader centered theory, follower and context centered theory, and leader follower centered interaction theory as well as the sub-categories of each.

This section has two goals. The first goal is to provide an understanding of how stress affects police officers by applying the general strain theory and social learning theory. The second goal is to provide a review of leadership theory for the leader or manager to identify which leadership style will work best to reduce stressors, motivate, and provide support for their subordinates.

#### **General strain theory**

Typically, the sociological theories are utilized to explain why an individual resorts to criminal activity when experiencing stress. Robert Agnew's General Strain Theory (GST) adequately explains the various aspects of persons experiencing severe stress or strains, and proves to be a productive framework to utilize in the study of police stress. Cullen and Agnew (2006) posit that strains are events or conditions in which a person is subjected to and are disliked by the individual. The individual reaction of each person may not be criminal activity however; this depends on social support from others, individual temperament, and intelligence. Conklin (2007) further explains that the redundancy, magnitude and duration of the strains

including peer abuse, erratic discipline and discriminatory treatment; which can be found within the police organization, may result in severe emotional and maladaptive coping strategies.

The GST examines three major categories of strains. These strains are failure to achieve positively valued goals, removal of positively valued stimuli and presentation of negatively valued stimuli (Cullen & Agnew, 2006, p. 202). Strains that are frequent, unjust and constant and affect the individual's needs, goals and values, will provide for deviance (Menard & Arter, 2013). The strains police officers experience are unique and the subculture and the nature of police work provide challenges to effectively cope. These strains ultimately cause anger and frustration within the individual and the end result can be deviance and posttraumatic stress.

As previously stated, police agencies are paramilitary organizations and bureaucratic in nature with strict policies and conformity. The lines of communication are strictly from the top down, the atmosphere is impersonal and there is a social distance between subordinates and ranking officers. The failure to achieve goals can be represented by lack of promotion, lack of appreciation and recognition from supervisors and leaders (Menard & Arter, 2013). Removal of positively valued stimuli is represented by isolation, or losing special assignments or training opportunities to senior officers (Menard & Arter, 2013). Presentation of negative stimuli can be represented by unfair policy, forced overtime and favoritism.

### **Social Learning Theory**

The social learning theory was developed by Ronald Akers as an expansion from Sutherland's differential association theory (Chappel & Piquero, 2004). The differential association theory posits that criminal behavior is learned through interactions with others; however, the theory does not explain the means by which the behavior is learned. Ronald Akers broadened Sutherland's theory by defining the process by which persons learn behavior from

others by utilizing several theoretical concepts including behavioral theory (Cullen & Agnew, 2006). The following are the four concepts of the social learning theory.

### **Differential Association**

Differential association is the process where individuals are subjected to behaviors whether they are favorable and/or unfavorable. There are two dimensions concerning differential association respectfully termed as behavioral interactional and normative. According to Cullen and Agnew (2006) the behavioral interactional dimension can be explained as direct interaction with others such as peers, who engage in particular behavior. Further, the normative dimension is the exposure of their different norms and values. Within the police subculture new officers will experience peer groups. These peer groups will have models of behavior in which the new officer will be exposed to that will have much to do with influencing their own attitudes and behavior (Chappel & Piquero, 2004).

### **Definitions**

Definitions are the individuals own meaning they attach to the specific behavior. These concern individual attitudes, morals and beliefs in which they attach to the behavior. Police officers also learn definitions from the subculture within the police agency, specifically from peer influences (Chappel & Piquero, 2004). An example of this is that an individual may determine that stealing is wrong and laws against it must be obeyed while drinking and driving is all right through rationalizing and their own definitions (Cullen & Agnew, 2006). An example relating to effects of stress can be abusing sick time or alcohol and drugs through rationalizing and utilizing their own definitions.

## **Differential Reinforcement**

Differential reinforcement concerns the balance of rewards and punishments which follow behavior. According to Cullen and Agnew (2006) the act of deviance or refraining from deviance depends on past behavior as well as rewards or punishments for their actions. Within the subculture, free or discounted meals and services may be viewed by some police officers as a fringe benefit and expect little or no punishment. Therefore, the subculture reinforces the behavior.

## **Imitation**

Imitation is simply imitating the behaviors of others. However, the behavior of others may or may not be imitated depending on the characteristics of the behavior and consequences of the behavior (Bandura, 1977 as cited in Cullen & Agnew, 2006). If there are no observations of consequences to the behavior, imitation is more likely to occur.

## **Leadership Theories**

Leadership within any organization is important and effective leadership is vital. An effective leader is one who inspires and motivates their follower which encourages followers to voluntarily make contributions to the organization (Andreescu & Vito, 2010, p 568). An effective leader will provide support, encouragement and identify obstacles that deter their subordinates to excel. The level of dedication, morale and motivation of followers is directly related to the effectiveness of their leader.

Throughout the years there has been an abundance of leadership theories developed to explain concepts and dynamics of leadership. Many definitions of leadership have been derived from leadership theories and just as many theories exist as there are leadership definitions. All this can become very confusing, however within this section we will review leader centered,

follower and context centered and leader follower centered interaction, as well as the sub-categories of each.

### **Leader Centered Theories**

Leader centered theories concern a leader's traits, characteristics and behaviors (Ortmeier & Meese, III, 2010). These theories include trait, behavior, personal-situational and interaction-expectancy theories. Trait theories suggest that people are born with inherited traits. Some of these traits are high IQ, trust, self-confidence, integrity and the desire to excel (O'Conner, 2006).

According to Ortmeier & Meese, III, (2008), great leaders in the early 1900s were studied to find what type of traits these leaders possessed that made them great. Many of these leaders possessed the traits mentioned above. However, it should be noted that the trait theory fails to acknowledge that leadership competence can be learned and developed even though a potential leader was not born with specific traits.

Behavioral theory focuses on the leader's conduct inasmuch as what they do and how they do it. This theory rests on the premise that great leaders are made and not born. People can become leaders by learning, teaching and observing. Behavior theories are task and relationship orientated. Effective leaders under the behavioral theory are concerned for production and the needs of the workers (Stojkovic, Kalinich, & Klofas, 2008).

Personal-situational theory posits that the success of the leader is their ability to understand their followers and the environment in which they function and react appropriately to change (Ortmeier & Meese, III, 2010). To create a successful leader, this theory suggests that a complex combination of characteristics and specific environmental conditions must operate together.

Interaction- expectation theory focuses on initiating a structure that the group members will support. If the structure conforms to group norms and helps to solve mutual problems, as well as providing expectations of success and those expectations are fulfilled, the leader will gain credibility.

### **Follower and Context Centered Theories**

The follower and context centered theories include situational, contingency and path goal theories. Situational theory focuses on leadership in specific situations. According to this theory, there is no best single leadership style and the leader must adapt their style to the individual or group and the task which needs to be accomplished. In other words, different situations demand different leadership styles (Ortmeier & Meese, III, 2010).

Contingency theory is based on the contention that there is no one best way to lead and that leadership is situational in nature (Stojkovic, Kalinich, & Klofas, 2008). This theory is similar to situational theory; however it posits that a leader who is successful leading in one situation and then placed into another may not do as well because of the leader's capabilities and other variables within the situation (McNamara, 2010). In other words, there must be a match between the leader's style of leadership and situational variables.

Path goal theory suggests leaders enhance the subordinate's performance by rewards and motivation by utilizing a style that meets the subordinate's needs and the situation (Stojkovic, Kalinich, & Klofas, 2008). By making the path clear and easy to accomplish goals, encouragement and support is felt by the subordinates (McNamara, 2010). Four styles of leadership can be used to encourage and support followers. These styles are supportive, directive, participative and achievement-oriented (House, 1971, as cited in McNamara, 2010).

## **Leader Follower Interaction Centered Theories**

Leader follower interaction centered theories are those that concern the process of interaction between the leader and follower. These theories consist of leader follower exchange theory, transformational theory and psychodynamic approach.

Leader follower exchange theory entails two types of groups; the “in group” and “out group”. The “in group” are those that go beyond what is expected of them while the “out group” only achieves what is asked of them (Stojkovic, Kalinich, & Klofas, 2008). This theory suggests that leaders should develop quality relationships with subordinates and other networks within the organization which will produce greater gains for the overall organization and its members (McNamara, 2010).

Transformational theory effectively influences followers on all levels. This theory concerns the ability to get people to want to change, improve and be led (Hall, Johnson, Wysocki, & Kepner, 2009). It meets the leader and followers needs, as well as placing an emphasis on values and morality (Ortmeier & Meese, III, 2010). In addition, transformational leadership is easy to understand and the leader utilizing this type of style is viewed as providing a vision for the future.

The psychodynamic approach is typically an approach to leadership more than it is a theory. This approach concerns the leader having knowledge of the psychological makeup of themselves and followers (Ortmeier & Meese, III, 2010). It also encourages self-assessment and discourages manipulative techniques.

Both the general strain theory and the social learning theory can adequately explain how stressors, such as those within the organization, affect police officers and how they learn to cope with these stressors. The general strain theory focuses on the social environment and negative

relationships; in this case, the police sub-culture, and leaders and supervisors. The social learning theory suggests an individual learns behavior not only by their environment, but how others conduct themselves and by their own thought process.

Police organizations are typically paramilitary in nature and orders come from the top down. This provides for competition and alienation between staff, as well as complicating the communication process (Bynum, 2008). Furthermore, police leadership is gradually transforming from the hierarchical system to a shared leadership system (Bynum, 2008).

Although there are as many leadership theories as leadership styles, which tend to be very confusing, the leader must utilize the style or styles that best motivate, support and inspire their subordinates. Transformational leadership theory suggests that leadership should be shared throughout the organization. Transformational leadership provides for empowerment and autonomy throughout the organization and encourages productivity and input on routine decision making including at the policy level (Wuestewald, 2006). Further, this theory suggests implementation of quality circles with members, regardless of rank, to represent coworkers to discuss process improvement and problem solving.

Today's police leaders understand there is stress within the law enforcement profession. However, many of the remedies for police stress are person centered and utilize clinical interventions or individual coping techniques. Although very necessary, they are reactive in nature and fail to address the source of the chronic organizational stressors (Gillan, 2011). The following section will recommend strategies to address organizational stressors including utilizing transformational leadership, training, and organizational change.

## **SECTION IV: RECOMMENDATIONS**

To this point this paper has demonstrated the need for an organizational centered approach towards police stress. This section will provide insight to strategies for identifying and reducing, if not eliminating organizational stressors. These strategies will examine shared leadership, empowerment, micromanaging, communication, discipline, training, praise and recognition and organizational change.

### **Shared Leadership**

Shared leadership is a concept of transformational leadership theory. This is a management approach where leadership and influence is distributed throughout the workplace instead of strictly being held by superiors at the top level (Pierce and Conger, 2003, as cited in Wuestewald, 2006). There is substantial research that shows the private sector has been very successful utilizing the concept of shared leadership by flattening their organizational structures and developing work teams to replace managerial teams (Wuestewald, 2006). In addition, there are many benefits to shared leadership, including productivity, quality and worker satisfaction. According to the transformational leadership style, the leader provides encouragement and support to the individuals which results in higher levels of performance and commitment (Bynum, 2008).

A police agency in the State of Oklahoma implemented a shared leadership management style and developed a steering committee, named the Leadership Team (Wuestewald, 2006). Members were from all aspects of the agency, including management, labor union and other ranks and units, and were selected by direct appointment or department election by peers. External training for the committee members concerning communication and team development was first implemented before the committee took on its duties. The committee reviewed

policies, rules and regulations and the end result was an improvement in the way BAPD conducted business (Wuestewald, 2006). An assessment of the program had shown that positive opinions of management had risen as well as productivity, organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Wuestewald, 2006).

## **Empowerment**

Police officers are highly educated and trained to perform their duties effectively and efficiently. They have an abundance of knowledge and life experiences. They make numerous decisions daily that affect the organization, the community, and the persons they have direct contact with while in the field. Officers are by statute allowed to carry weapons and make split second life and death decisions when necessary. However, they are not afforded the opportunity to be part of the decision making process within the agency concerning policies and procedures, as well as rule and regulations that affect how they do their duties. According to Cruickshank (2012), a successful business depends greatly on its members for success.

There are two empowerment strategies, which are identified as the relational approach and the motivational approach (Gove, 2007). According to the relational approach, power and authority are delegated to the officers by the leader. The officers also share in the decision making process. The need to constantly ask for permission to take action is no longer necessary. The motivational approach also delegates power and authority, however, at a lesser degree but does promote communication, feedback and goal setting towards organizational success. Further, it will increase feelings of autonomy and organizational commitment (Gove, 2007). For successful implementation of empowerment, Gove (2007) explains the proper training and education must be afforded to the officers concerning the additional responsibilities, and executives must trust their officers' training and knowledge. In addition, executives must

delegate power and authority but still provide for a reasonable amount of oversight for officer accountability purposes (Gove, 2007).

Whisenand (2009) explains that the community, organization, its members and the leader/manager will benefit from empowering employees. The line officers are in the community day in and day out and have a clear grasp on what is needed to effectively and efficiently conduct business. Empowerment will provide for greater skilled and committed street officers. The organization will benefit because of the sharing of the wealth of knowledge that exists within the subordinates (Whisenand, 2009). The leader/manager benefits from reducing job stress and providing job satisfaction while encouraging a sense of ownership, mutual trust and improving job skills and knowledge (Whisenand, 2009). In addition, the subordinates become committed, trusting, and are recognized as competent and self-confident.

### **Micromanaging**

A leader or manager that utilizes micromanaging techniques will destroy trust and respect if allowed to continue. Empowerment practices are not on the minds of micromanagers due to the fact they feel they should make the decisions and direct the way business is conducted within the organization (Whisenand, 2009). They believe the only way to get things done is by doing things their way. A micromanager will deter subordinate and organizational growth and create tremendous amounts of stress within the ranks. However, there are legitimate instances which may require a level of micromanaging, such as a high profile case, an ineffective or untrustworthy subordinate and time constraints, but care must be taken to know the boundaries of supervising and micromanaging (Gove, 2008).

To avoid micromanagement, leaders and supervisors must keep an open mind and be flexible and utilize a participative style of management practices (Gove, 2008). Further, the

leader and supervisor must understand that mistakes will happen and be open to accept them and act with an appropriate response. Progress reports can be implemented for complicated tasks at specific intervals and praise, as well as coaching abilities, should be developed by the leader and supervisor (Gove, 2008). Whether micromanaging is by mistake or intentional, the damage it causes within the agency must be understood and steps must be taken to address and eliminate inappropriate micromanagement.

### **Communication**

Communication is vital for survival and of utmost importance within law enforcement. The lack of communication will prohibit success of any business, as well as cause imminent stress. There is a direct link between communication and trust. When one is not present, the other will suffer (Whisenand, 2009). An important element of communication is feedback. Without feedback, leaders are susceptible to risk and uncertainty (Whisenand, 2009). Effective leaders will seek out feedback. They will “manage by walking around” and interact with their employees. This method will also enable the leader to acknowledge and appreciate the subordinate’s uniqueness, strengths and weaknesses while learning the individual’s values, needs, and hopes (Whisenand, p. 108). Further, implementing a true open door policy is important to the leader and subordinates, and will assist in facilitating understanding and communication between the leader and the staff (Whisenand, p. 108).

### **Exit interviews**

Exit interviews with those members leaving the organization, can provide data concerning organizational stress. The member is more likely to be honest and open as they are leaving the organization. However, there are some guidelines to follow concerning proper exit interviews. The name of the individual must be separated from the information and only utilized

as anonymous statistical information (Manning & Preston, 2003). Further, the data must be provided to all administrative officers and a genuine plan must be implemented, followed up, and monitored to obtain desirable results. Evaluators from outside the organization or internal anonymous surveys can be utilized to obtain data as well. This will give members of the organization an opportunity to voice their opinions and will open a line of communication (Cruickshank, 2012).

### **Discipline**

It is the leader's responsibility to ensure that subordinates are performing their job correctly and to address those that are not. An officer that is not willing to pull their weight will cause morale to decline and stress to rise for the rest of the team. By knowing there is a problem with a specific officer and not addressing the problem only enables the officer to continue and others to wonder why nothing is being done. On the other side of the coin, if an officer is disciplined for something another has been known to do but has not been disciplined, the feeling of favoritism is perceived. This not only holds true for line personnel but for management as well (Whisenand, 2009, p. 190). Discipline must be quick, fair, impartial, and definitive with the goal of correcting the unacceptable behavior and re-establishing the once effective officer (Miller, 2006). Miller (2006) outlines five steps to effective discipline: Identify the problem, state the effect of the problem, describe the desired action, make the resolution appealing and document actions for change.

### **Training**

Law enforcement agencies must promote leadership development early in the police officer's career. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), with assistance from the U.S. Department of Justice, developed the Leadership in Police Organizations Program

(LOP) which has its roots with the U.S. Military Academy at West Point (Moriarty, 2009). LOP is based on behavioral science and utilizes the concept that every officer is a leader. LOP is a three week program taught over a three month span. The program was piloted to police agencies throughout the United States from 2002 to 2005 with great success. The IAPC will teach the program to the staff of police agencies and provide instructor training through a faculty development workshop (FDW) for agencies that which to continue training within their agency or others within their area (Moriarty, 2009). The LOP program utilizes a gamut of techniques and methodologies to teach leadership development including videos, relevant leadership theory, coaching, role play, case study application and requires extensive reading (Moriarty, 2009).

The Delaware State Police (DSP) has implemented the LPO program within its agency and utilizes in-house instructor level through the LOP FDW initiative (Moriarty, 2009). Since 2007, DSP has made partnerships with surrounding agencies including Maryland, Connecticut, Vermont Pennsylvania, and approximately 149 other agencies have also implemented the LOP program (Moriarty, 2009).

### **Praise and Recognition**

Praise and recognition has many benefits to consider. This approach, when correctly utilized, will promote self-esteem and motivation, job performance and physical and mental well-being (Gove, 2005). In agencies that do not recognize performance, or are inefficient in doing so, officers will lose motivation and productivity will suffer and the officers will have the notion that the grass is greener on the other side and resign from the agency (Gove, 2005). Of course, a great motivator is one that is monetary. However, with yearly budget cuts and lack of resources, the second best motivator is the immediate and personalized recognition from managers. Recognition can be in the form of a simple thank you to a publicized award,

depending on the situation and facts of the deed. An important issue is that the level of recognition be in line with the deed.

Gove, (2005), suggests six guidelines to follow for maximum effectiveness of praise to occur. The praise must be timely and appropriate, given separate of negative criticism, administered regularly, sincerely and publicly unless the recipient chooses privately. Further, the praise can be delivered face to face, by email, the agency's website or department newsletter. Delivering the recognition with the organizations administrative staff present will also strengthen the purpose of praising the behavior (Gove, 2005).

### **Organizational change**

For an organizational approach in reducing stress to be successful, organizational change must occur. Change is inevitable and must take place to move forward or just to keep up with the ever changing times. There is always uncertainty when it comes to change concerning will it work, how will it work and what will change bring. The typical human response is to resist change, which in turn causes stress (Manning & Preston, 2003). Throughout history, law enforcement organizations have seen tremendous change and sometimes have struggled to keep up. Progressive leaders must acknowledge that it is time for change from the traditional hierarchical structure and implement strategies towards inclusion and dispersed leadership (Switzer, 2010).

Switzer (2010) examines the "Star Model" developed by Jay Galbraith, author of *Designing Organizations* which recommends five ideals for law enforcement leaders to follow to effectively implement organizational change. These ideals are strategy, structure, people, process and rewards. If these ideals are effectively aligned, the organization will experience

improvement in organizational effectiveness and employee behavior to bring forth desired results (Switzer, 2010).

As stated earlier, the clinical and individual approach to reducing stress within law enforcement agencies fail to address the root cause and an organizational approach is necessary. Leaders and managers must realize their leadership style and management practices may very well be the cause of the stress within their organization. Several recommendations have been presented in this section and with included research indicating success in their ability to reduce organizational stress and raise job satisfaction, productivity as well as organizational commitment. Implementing strategies as mentioned will provide for a healthier workplace as well as a more effective organization that is built around all of its members.

## **SECTION 5: CONCLUSION**

Research has been typically focused on the occupational stressors that an officer experiences during the course of their duties. Programs have been utilized to help officers cope with these situations by psychological counseling and individual training. These programs provide methods to help improve the response to stress, but do not address the cause. In most cases these stressors are not experienced on a day to day basis and are not chronic. On the contrary, this paper examines the day to day stressors within the police organization which have been found to cause more harm to police officers.

Chronic stress has been confirmed to provide the most harm, both affecting an individual's physiological and psychological stability. The effects range from headaches to severe depression, alcohol and drug abuse and ultimately death. The body also becomes vulnerable to diseases as stress has a negative effect on the immune system.

Studies have concluded that organizational stress is present in countless police organizations. Some findings of these studies show that police administrators are the common denominator to the source of stress, participating in unfair discipline, favoritism, poor communication and supervisory politics. One study researched the costly effects of practicing poor supervisory tactics, which ultimately cost the organization over \$1.5 million dollars in civil suits.

Effective leadership is paramount to a successful organization. Multiple studies have been cited in this paper regarding leadership style, leadership training and the effects of the lack of both. Understanding leadership styles and theory will provide a road map for the leader to utilize techniques that will provide competency to guide their followers effectively. Effective

leaders are supportive, motivational and inspire their subordinates to reach their personal goals as well as the goals of the organization.

Both the general strain theory and the social learning theory adequately explains how stressors, such as those within the organization, affect police officers and how they learn to cope with these stressors. The general strain theory focuses on the social environment and relationships; in this case, the police sub-culture, and peers. The social learning theory suggests an individual learns behavior not only by their environment, but how others conduct themselves and by their own thought process.

The recommendations presented in this paper are being utilized within some law enforcement agencies and assessments show positive findings in reduction of stress and an increase in productivity, organizational commitment and overall job satisfaction. The Broken Arrow Police Department has implemented a shared leadership style where members of the agency are included in decision making and reviewed rules and regulations. The end result has shown to be very productive for the agency. In addition, proper management and leadership skills concerning communication, micromanaging and fair discipline will reduce organizational stress and provide for a healthier agency.

Police officers do not need to end their career due to stress. Some leaders have implemented programs to assist officers with stress however these programs are person centered and fail to address the more harmful stressors found within the work place. Leaders must make a commitment to identify and eliminate the source of organizational stressors. They must evaluate the work environment and identify the features that provoke stress. This can be difficult, especially if these stressors are directly related to their management style (Stinchcomb, 2004). Leaders must realize that unfair and inconsistent discipline, favoritism, poor communication and

supervisory politics cause a great deal of stress within the work place. Leaders must also be aware of the physiological and psychological effects of stress upon their officers and the damage stress can do to the individual, organization and community.

Leadership styles and management practices must be in line with providing support, empowerment, establishing effective open lines of communication, have high regards for honesty and promote team work (Andreescu & Vito, 2010). Organizational change must occur and leaders must implement strategies toward inclusion and dispersed leadership (Switzer, 2010). Research shows that organizations which implement change toward participatory leadership reap countless benefits, including reducing stress, higher productivity, quality, satisfaction and organizational commitment.

It is clear there is a problem concerning leadership and organizational stress. As indicated there are many leadership and management training courses available however, there is still a lack of competent leaders. The stress reduction programs that are in place, fail to properly address the cause of organizational stress. There is also plenty of empirical evidence showing that organizational stress is very harmful to not only the officer but to the organization and community as well. Case studies indicate that there is a direct correlation between officer stress and leadership. With all the prior research and knowledge that there is in fact organizational stressors and they provide serious harm to our police officers, the question to research is why is so little being done to identify and reduce the cause of these stressors? Further research must focus on what obstacles are preventing many leaders to utilize recommendations such as those discussed within this paper.

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