

Civilian Social Network Degradation and Views on Psychological Treatment Among Police Officers

By: Nicholas R. Badzinski

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By: _____


Dr. John P. Mabry

Committee Chair


Dr. Wayne D. Lord

Committee Member


Dr. Alicia Limke

Committee Member

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Officers

Nicholas R. Badzinski

The University of Central Oklahoma

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Abstract

Thirty-five current police officers were recruited for a study on their social network composition and attitudes toward psychological assessment and treatment. This study was based around the idea of an *us versus them* attitude, and the ideals that may arise from this division. While officers in this study suggested that civilian friends are a continued presence throughout an officer's career, officers view this inclusion as going against a normal social network. Furthermore, officers show no preference to civilian or law enforcement led counseling sessions, but insist that confidentiality is the key component in counseling acceptance. However, many of the officers in this study believe in an *us versus them* separation between law enforcement and civilian, and further suggest that it is facilitated by both parties. Data is supported by a mixed methods approach, with emphasis placed upon qualitative data. All information in this study could help future police officers in training, or aid in helping identify trends observed in police officers from past research.

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Civilian Social Network Degradation and Views on Psychological Treatment among Police Officers

“Us versus them” is a widely used expression. Typically it describes an adversarial perspective where competing sides attempt to gain some advantage over another. However, when this comes to human interaction, it can prove to be a very hazardous situation for one or both sides. One such situation is that of police and civilian interactions, suggesting that there are competing interests between the groups of people. However, these groups of people are supposed to interact and depend on each other for employment and social maintenance. Interestingly, police officers often have slogans on the side of their vehicles (i.e. To Serve and Protect); the service is mentioned first because officers actually spend a lot of time serving the public and handling situations that are typically undertaken by mediators. So then why would a stigma exist for civilians and police in the form of *us versus them* when they should be symbiotic?

Part of this problem may be related to the people officers choose to hang out with; a choice many officers may not even have once they tell people they are joining law enforcement. Popular media sometimes portrays officers as social outcasts. Popular media also attempts to play on tough guy archetypes of police. However, one has to wonder if these portrayals actually come from factual observations or are derived from some fantasy imbued conceptual idea of what officers are expected to be like. If one were to search online for pieces of evidence one way or the other, they will find a mix of ideas, but a strong inclination that the *us versus them* mentality actually exists.

One might think that adversarial situations exist to spur progression (such as Darwin’s idea of Natural Selection) or to entertain, establish glory, or win some prize (examples of this

exist in many forms; gladiatorial fights of old and super bowl football games are just two examples of these types of acceptable adversarial interactions). Gladiatorial events used to be publicized much like today's football games, but what happens when the adversarial interactions aren't designed for anyone's betterment? What could possibly be beneficial about police and civilian adversarial interaction? Furthermore, what happens when this occurs on a daily basis because of one's job? Gladiators, football players, and police all eventually retire. Some of those careers are longer, but the key point is perhaps the social acceptance of those involved. In gladiators and football players, civilians watch and cheer for their interest, perhaps because those participating are also civilians. However, with police, the adversarial interaction is not only with those they are supposed to handle to ensure public safety (law breakers), but also the public itself, and one doesn't see civilians walking around with "police" on their t-shirts unless it is for the musical group. Couple this with the idea that officers are supposed to be held to a "higher standard" and one has to wonder how police officers are able to handle their job and maintain healthy social relationships with people, especially those outside of law enforcement.

One way that this might be examined is through psychological testing and observation. Unfortunately, a stigma again exists with police officers and psychological services. Again, cursory glances suggest that officers have an aversion to counseling and psychological interaction. Could this be related to the *us versus them* mentality? Typically psychological services are provided by personnel outside of police departments, and are administered by civilians. So officers already have to deal with someone potentially in the *us versus them* equation, and then add that psychological services may equal changes in their placement or ability to perform duties. The sum of these possibilities wouldn't be appealing to most people in an officer's position, especially when officers are supposed to be strong individuals, relying on

their own problem solving skills to replace the need for outside intervention. This idea too seems to be popularized in the media. However, one has to ask again if these stigmas are factual observation. Do most officers even share this sentiment?

This study aimed to ascertain if factual data exists to support any of these archetypes and supposed shared mentalities. Police officers from multiple departments were surveyed without prejudice to determine if civilian and officer relationships tend to dissipate throughout their careers. By studying their social networks, it was the hope of the researchers to map changes in their network as civilian friends either transition in their apparent closeness to the officer, or disappear from the network completely. Furthermore, a slightly independent study looked at the officers' views on psychological assessment and treatment. This attached study was meant to help determine if shared positive or negative associations were made regarding psychological treatment and assessment, and if officers felt more comfortable speaking to civilians versus officers regarding psychology related matters.

Civilian Friends vs Police Friends*

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Get upset if you're too busy to talk to them for a week.

POLICE FRIENDS: Are glad to see you after years, and will happily carry on the same conversation you were having the last time you met.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Have never seen you cry.

POLICE FRIENDS: Have cried with you.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Borrow your stuff for a few days then give it back.

POLICE FRIENDS: Keep your stuff so long they forget it's yours.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Know a few things about you.

POLICE FRIENDS: Could write a book with direct quotes from you.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Will leave you behind if that's what the crowd is doing.

POLICE FRIENDS: Will kick the crowds' ass that left you behind.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Are for a while.

POLICE FRIENDS: Are for life.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Have shared a few experiences.

POLICE FRIENDS: Have shared a lifetime of experiences no citizen could ever dream of.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Will take your drink away when they think you've had enough.

POLICE FRIENDS: Will look at you stumbling all over the place and say, 'You better drink the rest of that before you spill it!!' Then carry you home safely and put you to bed.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Will talk crap to the person who talks crap about you.

POLICE FRIENDS: Will knock them the hell out for using your name in vain.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Will ignore this.

POLICE FRIENDS: Will forward this.

*Courtesy of Bob Sutton's Information Site: (Sutton, 2009)

Literature Review

The previous missive was placed for display on Bob Sutton's information site in October 2009 (Gottuso, 2009). While many police officers might agree with the statements provided by a current police captain and member of the Hillsborough California SWAT team, psychologists tend to view this information as perplexing and potentially maladaptive when it comes to social maintenance. These very thoughts were posed on Bob Sutton's website in response to the missive: "what does this piece indicate to you about the culture of police and how that affects the psychology of individual cops? I see a few things that might not be healthy" (sk, 2009). The responder then goes on to quote several interesting aspects: "[a] cop is always a cop, whether active or in retirement. The civilian friend will never understand them. The civilian friend will treat them poorly in comparison to police friends" (sk, 2009). In response to these ideas, "sk" asserts that "[the] civilian friends vs. police friends contrast shows an unhealthy "them vs. us" attitude, with the obvious implication that the police are superior to civilians" (sk, 2009). Finally, this same responder poses several key concerns with the letter: the piece "romanticizes violent anti-social behavior as a norm for cops. Of course, this is all the worse since this kind of illegal behavior is policed by those who feel it is only right for a cop to "knock them the hell out"" which can be strengthened by "[the] nature of police work [setting] a natural divide between the police and civilians. The culture of their workplace can either help them bridge that divide or widen it" (sk, 2009). This information may seem light-hearted, but one study performed by the National Institute of Ethics found that of officers polled, "46 percent (532) advised they had witnessed misconduct by another employee, but concealed what they knew" (Trautman, 2000). In some of these cases, the misconduct described was excessive force by a police officer.

The author of the responses to the missive simply identifies himself as “sk” to avoid giving out personal information; however, one has to look at his/her responses as having a tinge of psychological interest. Even if the letter was written with the intent to be a camaraderie boosting personal distribution quip to fellow police officers, one officer thought it was informative enough to send it to a world-wide accessible website dealing with a topic of *us versus them* mentality. Furthermore, most civilians and police officers will unofficially agree that there remains a divide between the two groups of people. This small list of civilian/police roles, while attempting perhaps to be harmless, serves as a basis for research into social isolation experienced by officers. While this study will attempt to address one side of the equation, the police officers and their role in the *us versus them* attitude, there may be future interest in the impact civilians play in the matter. However, because officers are among one of the highest groups with shared suicide rates, the current study is focused on their psychological input out of importance for officer longevity. This importance is shown in studies by researchers such as Heather Stuart, who found that “[police] appear to be at greater risk of posttraumatic stress reactions (resulting from higher exposures to trauma) and job burnout (resulting from the way in which police work is organized), both of which increase the risk of psychosocial problems and suicide” (Stuart, 2008).

Interpersonal-psychological Theory and Occupational Relation

Suicide rates among police officers may be related to the interpersonal-psychological theory of suicidal behavior proposed by Joiner in 2002. This theory suggests two key points: “the interaction of thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness predicted current suicidal ideation” and “that painful and provocative experiences significantly predicted acquired capability scores” in relation to suicidal tendencies (Van Orden, Witte, Gordon, Bender, & Joiner,

2008). The second half of the theory is easily applicable to officers, as these types of experiences tend to permeate an officer's career. To make matters worse, officers are generally given their weapons at the time of retirement as keep sakes. In some cases, this item has served as the means for officer suicide.

The first part of Joiner's theory may apply to officers and their alienation from society as a civilian, which in turn could lead to them alienating civilians from their personal life. However, in relation to the missive, the same officer provides reader's with a preface: "[we] know in the law enforcement life there is a fellowship which lasts long after the uniforms are hung up in the back of the closet. We know even if he throws them away, they will be on him with every step and breath that remains in his life" (Gottuso, 2009). This is enforced by "the burdens of the job. You will still look at people suspiciously, still see what others do not see or choose to ignore and always will look at the rest of the law enforcement world with a respect for what they do" (Gottuso, 2009). Finally, this officer asserts that as an officer, one should "[never] think for one moment you are escaping from that life. You are only escaping the 'job' and merely being allowed to leave 'active' duty" (Gottuso, 2009). To the researchers, this ideology can be associated with the first aspects of Joiner's theory. Police officers have a position in which they belong until retirement. Certain things, such as a desk job, can detract from the essence of what an officer is for many, but the final loss comes at retirement.

At retirement, an officer loses that close-knit personal connection with other officers on a daily basis. At this point it is difficult for many officers to return to their civilian friends and try to rekindle old connections. As one study has shown, "when the need for social connection is thwarted, risk for suicide is increased" (Joiner, Brown, & Wingate, 2005). "Suicide rates for police — at least 18 per 100,000 — are higher than for the general population" according to

studies collected for the *USA Today* (Ritter, 2007). If one looks at retirement as a loss of social friends within the department, at least at some level, this could result in a second form of social isolation threat (the first being a loss of connections associated with becoming a law enforcement agent). Studies have shown that the “transition from police officer to civilian can be a stressful life event bringing about overwhelming feelings of separation and isolation” (Robicheau, 2005). One aspect this study failed to address is the opposite side of that scenario. Transition from civilian to police officer can be extremely trying and lead to social isolation. It is this isolation, brought on through social network degradation, which creates an area of interest for research into police behavior.

Multiple Social Isolation Threats Perpetuate In-Group

Looking at this situation in simplistic terms makes a great deal of sense. An officer joins the police academy. By enlisting, they enter a fraternity, a brother (or sister) hood in which they are all striving for the same things. Their associations outside of the police academy frequently become paranoid or distrustful of their new cop friends, while subliminal and obvious signals are given to officers about trust and suspicion. The first social isolation threat hits as officers lose civilian friends through becoming an officer. Studies show that as friends pull away from their now police friends, police deal with this loss by accepting new acquaintances inside the police force. One officer shares his experiences as, “[civilian] friends are either going to be “weirded out” by your new profession or they may become distant, intimidated, even hostile about you becoming a cop” (Brantner-Smith). Officers attempt to recover from this isolation by befriending fellow recruits however; making connections with established officers could be difficult while new recruits are still rookies. While this happens, officers are in a place where collectively they are sharing a similar goal, to be police officers. As outside friends are lost,

police begin to view their new brother/sister hood as a means to maintain friendships and build ties with people who will end up watching one another's backs. This again would be related to Joiner's first section of the theory, in which officers begin to feel a "thwarted belongingness" from a loss of one group, to the acquisition of another (Van Orden, Witte, Gordon, Bender, & Joiner, 2008).

For police officers, these changes may sound positive. The ability to have such connections while maintaining a sense of distrust over the common citizen could at least be adaptive to an officer's survival, especially in situations where an officer's life is on the line. However, in relation to a social network, it can be destructive if there is negative reinforcement. Whenever the basis of a social network is comprised of one type of individual, that network is in jeopardy of becoming a mob or collective mentality. This mob mentality "refers to the behavioral tendency of people (or other social animals) to act in unison with the group of which they are a part" ("What is mob, "). As groups of like minded individuals reinforce and dissuade behavior they deem productive or desirable to the group goals, officers face the dilemma of acquiring both positive and negative ideals and traits without much dissention. One way of trying to understand a group is to understand their backgrounds and where they came from. To help understand the driving force behind police officers, one needs to first look at the reasons officers choose to join the force. Furthermore, information needs to be assessed to determine if a psychological profile for an officer can be made.

Constructing a Police Profile

Research has indicated that officers "self-report joining the ranks for altruistic reasons" (Verro, 2009). While the same study did not address the issue directly, it did suggest "that agencies expand their psychological profiles to address each candidate's long-term goals and

social support networks prior to hiring (Verro, 2009). On the other hand, obtaining information on police psychological reports and evaluations is quite difficult as much of the past research “was often unsystematic and poorly evaluated” (Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, & Nietzel, 2007). This is shown in early IQ tests performed on officers in 1917. The evaluations “found that the average IQ among [the] applicants was 84” which was supported a few years later when the testing of “358 Detroit policemen ...reported below average IQ scores” (Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, & Nietzel, 2007). Psychological screening and evaluation remained a research based occurrence until the eighties and nineties. The nineties showed a great shift in emphasis on psychological assessment by making “formal assessment of police candidates...routine” (Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, & Nietzel, 2007). In complete contrast, as tests became revised and better suited for today’s society (as old IQ tests were very difficult for the average citizen to pass), it has been found that many “officers tend to score in the average to above-average range on intelligence tests” (qtd. in Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, & Nietzel, 2007).

The main difficulties surrounding psychological tests currently revolve around their use. Generally, “tests are currently used to assess levels of psychopathology...rather than focusing on risk assessment, situational testing, or job simulations that could detect potential problem behaviors or attitudes” (qtd. in Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, & Nietzel, 2007). Currently, officers are assessed using the following: The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI and the updated MMPI2), the California Psychological Inventory (CPI), the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire, and the Inwald Personality Inventory. The Inwald Personality Inventory “shows good reliability, and some research suggests that its predictive validity is significantly better than that of the MMPI” (qtd. in Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, & Nietzel, 2007). The other measurements show very mixed results, making their reliability somewhat questionable. All of

these tests focus on certain aspects of an officer's psychological encounters and their exhibiting characteristics. However, determining an actual detailed description of common officer psychological traits is rather complicated.

Research has shown that a discernable police personality or profile is very difficult to establish. Over the years of evaluation, researchers have found that "the consensus is that career socialization is a stronger influence than preexisting differences in temperament" (Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, & Nietzel, 2007). However, one study found that police are typically comprised of "a close-knit group of people whose occupational isolation and accompanying secrecy lead to strong feelings of being misunderstood by outsiders, who are in turn viewed with suspiciousness and cynicism by the police" (Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, & Nietzel, 2007). Socio-occupational isolation, termed by Lefkowitz in 1975, is a result of these feelings and causes officers to cling to bonds with other officers in an attempt to maintain some social network (Lefkowitz, 1975). Perhaps it is this form of isolation that could cause officers to abandon civilian ties throughout their career, and feel more connected with new coworkers.

All of this information makes determining a 'group mindset' or 'police psychological profile' practically impossible. As one can see in something as simple as an IQ test, average scores reported have varied through the years. This is also shown in psychological evaluations, making their role in the police world ambiguous. Conflicting results and the inability to truly create a police psychological profile makes understanding officers all the more difficult from the civilian perspective. However, this may be related to officer's 'Code of Silence.' As one source puts it, officers can "distort their responses to protect their jobs and consequently miss the opportunity for potentially beneficial treatment" and psychological evaluation (Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, & Nietzel, 2007). This is discouraging, as one study found that officers selected

counseling be required for “[three] needs...substantially more than others: personal and family counseling for officers, screening for job applicants, and workshops in special problems of police work” (Rios, Parisher, & Reilley, 1978). Even if officers have nothing to hide from the department or psychological evaluation, many officers find that “the stigma associated with obtaining mental health treatment...discourage officers from going” (Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, & Nietzel, 2007). The authors assert that “one way to reduce the stigma and offer mental health services to officers is through peer counseling programs in which counselors within the policing profession...provide the intervention” (qtd. in Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, & Nietzel, 2007).

Seeking Psychological Services

Problems arise as officers seek out information or help from their peers. Even if counseling is administered by police personnel, many cops “tend to believe that capable officers should be able to withstand hardships and that failure to do so signals a lack of professionalism or emotional control” (Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, & Nietzel, 2007). Furthermore, “police fear that counseling will brand them with the stigma of mental disorder and thus undercut respect from their peers” (Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, & Nietzel, 2007). In terms of non-ego threatening branding, many officers are “concerned that the department’s need to know their psychological status with respect to their fitness for duty will override their rights of confidentiality and lead to embarrassing disclosures of personal information” (Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, & Nietzel, 2007).

In some cases, including the death of an officer, counseling becomes mandatory. When an officer dies in the line of duty, counseling becomes “one important area where police psychologists and community mental health clinicians can be of tremendous service...in trauma therapy and grief counseling to the special needs of law enforcement and emergency services” (Miller, 2007). Unfortunately, counseling “often relies on peer support” as a means to comfort

officers (Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, & Nietzel, 2007). This is a problem when officers believe that counseling is not worth their time, or may make them weaker. Non-departmental psychologists in the police life are generally not very well perceived either. While police tend to have a couple options when it comes to police psychological evaluations; “[in-house] professionals are more readily available and more knowledgeable about police issues” whereas “[outside] consultants...may be better able to protect the confidentiality of their clients’ disclosures” (Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, & Nietzel, 2007). Unfortunately, neither selection avoids the perceived problems that arise from seeking counseling. Furthermore, many of the psychologists who are located within the department have some police experience, which one has to wonder how it affects counseling treatment. On the other hand, counselors located outside of the department may run the risk of being alienated or not taken seriously based upon their lack of “in group knowledge.” This “in-group knowledge” would refer to a counselor’s ability to understand the workings and mentality of a department. While this may be difficult even for counselors and psychologists that work within a department, those held on retainer and practicing outside of the department would face an even bigger challenge.

Online Peer Support Groups

Interestingly, as information and technology become more readily available, many officers have turned to the internet as a source for their information, comfort, and discussion. Websites such as *realpolice.net* allow police officers to join a forum based website and engage in conversations with other law enforcement personnel (“Real Police”, 2010). While many of these websites require the officers to sign up using badge numbers and other personal information, and thereby eliminate the possibility of civilians chatting on this forum, some are far more open. Furthermore, some of these websites discuss criminal cases, using the forums as a way to discuss

not only similar cases nationwide, but departmental policies. In many of these situations, civilians that attempt to chat with officers are simply shut down based upon their lack of police experience. While seemingly a good idea, these websites could serve as a means to continue the rift between civilian and officer on a much larger level. Furthermore, interaction between cops over the internet could result in solidifying the 'Code of Silence.' While it is intriguing to see that police are attempting to reach out to people, it remains somewhat discouraging to know that it is mainly other officers.

Still there are other websites that attempt to alleviate stress and provide services to officers. One such website is the police stress line (Brown). This geocities account provides officers with books and links dealing with depression and social isolation. It also provides links to symptoms of stress, treatment, and other options. One website addresses the problem at hand by attempting to show how the *us vs. them* mentality should be managed. Policelink.monster.com deals with the issue in a very educational and professionally based way. Giving officers information and research into possible problem areas, the website provides police with ways of coping with loss of civilian friends and problems that arise between civilian and cop. This website, which was compiled and written by police, talks about the importance of the rookie years. One officer states that "a new officer begins to rely on the friendship and support of other officers, usually to the detriment of their "non-cop" relationships" (qtd. in Brantner-Smith). The most interesting assertion found on this site is stated as thus:

[Cops] view the world as a violent place full of idiots, con artists, and liars. We become skeptical, paranoid, and hypervigilant, and we look down on those who do not share our cynical and alarmist view of the society. Not only do we cease most of our "pre-cop"

friendships, but our family relationships may begin to deteriorate as well. We become distant and dark-spirited, even when we're at home. We complain that "my family doesn't understand," and we may become overly strict with our kids, not wanting them to be exposed to the outside world that we know is violent, dangerous and unpredictable. Eventually, your family may grow weary of your "us v. them" attitude and decide they'd rather be with "them" rather than being a part of "us." (Brantner-Smith)

The author also asserts that in the very beginning (police academy training) is where an *us vs. them* mentality can begin: "that elitist feeling you have in the academy can be just the beginning of your "us v. them" mentality" (Brantner-Smith). The author claims that officers separate themselves from the common person through experiences with other officers, and thus begins the elitist mindset.

One promising internet based program comes from one man's movement. Prateep V. Phillip started a program called Friends of Police in 1993 (Philip). Phillip clearly states "the Movement aims to bring police and public close" (Philip, 1996). Phillip hopes to use Friends of Police to allow the "free flow of information between the police and the public" and to "create attitudinal changes both within the force and among the public" (Philip, 1996). While much of this movement is centered around police and civilians helping one another to root out crimes and praise one another for their work, one key aspect of it surrounds the idea of "[ending] the social isolation imposed on the police, individually and as an [organization], by the traditional, reactive and negative model of policing" (Philip, 1996). As part of this movement, Philip administered questionnaires and surveys to members after the program had been implemented for a few years. These surveys addressed several factors, but one of interest was identified when "88% of

respondents felt they had acquired [a] sense of pride of policing” (Philip, 1996); many of those polled for the questionnaire were civilians. Philip hopes that one day this movement will expand to encompass many corners of the world and enrich other civilians with a sense of pride for their law enforcement personnel. However, if one were to visit *friendsofpolice.com*, they would find that the website appears to be mainly associated with law enforcement outside of the United States. While this type of ideology could work wonders in America, it has yet to reach its shores. Still, this type of thinking is very similar to community based policing found in the United States. The goal of community based policing “is working cooperatively with individual citizens, groups of citizens, and both public and private organizations to identify and resolve issues which potentially affect the livability of specific neighborhoods, areas, or the city as a whole” (Casady). Community based policing, much like Prateep’s Friends of Police movement, has shown some great results in negating some of the effects of an *us versus them* mentality. However, officers that take part in these cooperative efforts often find that their off duty time becomes filled with on duty activities. The more a friendship is formed between the officers and the citizens they serve and protect, the more comfortable a civilian becomes at asking for favors. These interactions when an officer is off duty can lead to future problems down the road, and have led several officers to live outside of their jurisdictions to avoid working while off duty.

The question one has to ask, is why suicide rates among officers are so high with all of these resources in place? As one cop put it, “cops have a 75% divorce rate, a high rate of alcoholism, and we die twice as often by our own hand as we do by felonious assaults” (Brantner-Smith). Also, if police experience social isolation threats (at least two if one considers the loss of civilian friends at the beginning and the side effects of retirement), this could lead to depression or suicidal ideation. Some studies have shown that “the presence of a social network

is a protective factor against suicide” (Joiner, Brown, & Wingate, 2005). However, most of the studies conducted on cops target stress for links to suicide rates. The National Institute of Justice gave officers surveys in 2002. This study “reported an increased vulnerability to alcohol abuse and heightened levels of anxiety within the first 5 years of employment” (Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, & Nietzel, 2007). The same study also found that officers “reported increased behavioral problems in their personal lives, such as physical abuse of their spouses and children, as a result of job-related stress” (Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, & Nietzel, 2007). If the stress continues, some officers can experience burnout. Burnout leads to depersonalization for many officers, making not only their on-the-job experiences with individuals’ worse, but in many instances their home lives less relaxing and soothing.

Statement of the Purpose

Based upon past research and the ideas presented here, the researchers felt that the main purpose of this study should focus on determining if an officer’s civilian friends are lost during the time of his/her career, if there is any discernable area in which a majority of friends are lost, how many non-officer friends the majority of officers have, and finally what views police tend to have of psychological assessment and treatment, as this may play a role in helping determine a profile for police officers and play a role in their need to seek out psychological services.

Based on the previous information gathered, four hypotheses were formed: (1) The number of civilian friends in an officer’s network will decrease during the course of their occupation; (2) Law enforcement friends will be more prevalent in the inner and middle circles of an officer’s social network; (3) Psychological treatment will be considered not beneficial by a majority of police officers; and (4) Police officers will prefer law enforcement led counseling sessions over those provided by civilians.

It is the hope of the researchers to use the information gathered to not only address the hypotheses, but to provide police departments, researchers, and psychologists with information relevant to police ideals and social network trends. This information in turn can be used to help aid training programs in a variety of fields, as well as provide prospective officers with information they might consider before applying to be a law enforcement agent. Furthermore, any information acquired through this research will be beneficial to future studies of police behavior and aid any researchers in areas of research regarding police mentality and social structure.

Method

Participants

Thirty-five police officers from four different departments were recruited for this study. The police departments included Edmond, Midwest City, Nichol's Hills, and Oklahoma City. The officers encompassed a wide spectrum of experience, employment history, background, cultural views, and levels of departmental activity. It was the hope of the researchers to use this diverse collection of subjects to narrow a time frame in which a majority of civilian friends are lost during employment. Officers were taken from the department without prejudice, meaning a particular population was not sought, nor was any group excluded, but was acquired based upon availability and willingness to participate. Officers received no incentive for their participation, but were instructed that their cooperation may help future and present officers with social networking concerns. Officers were debriefed after testing, and given contact information for local psychological treatment or information related to in-house help (CHAPS) if they requested any services. All information obtained was kept confidential and secured. Other than their signature on the consent form, no personal information was acquired. All packets contained a

number identification for confidentiality purposes, which was later shuffled into a random order to help maintain confidentiality.

Materials

Thirty-five police officers were recruited for this study. Subjects were recruited using flyers posted around the offices at the police departments. An example of this flyer can be found in appendix B. The officers received a set of instructions at their designated appointment (appendix C), which they made through the researcher, and a copy of the consent form (appendix A). The instructions also contained an example of the type of information being requested by the test materials (appendix C). Following the signing of the consent form and distribution of instructions, officers were then given a generic information request form. This form asked officers to fill in information regarding their gender, age, length of employment, and current rank (appendix D). Following the generic form, officers then filled out two circle test forms. These forms were comprised of three circles on a sheet of paper (much like a target) and gave officers the ability to assign value to their relationships by determining which circle to place the relationships in. One form asked officers to fill in all members of their social network before being employed by the department, and one asked officers to do the same with their current social network configuration (appendices E & F respectively). Following the circle tasks, officers were asked to complete a short 10 question Likert-type scale. Officers were asked to read the statement above the scale and then circle the number that best represented their opinion of that statement. The following scale was used: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neither strongly disagree or strongly agree, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree (appendix G). After each subject had filled out the materials, a semi-structured interview (appendix H) was administered to each subject regarding answers provided on the survey materials. Answers to the interview

were recorded by the researcher, allowing the officers to stop writing and focus on providing qualitative enhancements to answers provided on the survey materials. Writing utensils were provided to all subjects. At the end of the testing process, debriefing and psychological service papers were provided to the subjects who requested additional information. Testing locations included small closed rooms at the University of Central Oklahoma's Forensic Science Institute and/or small distraction free rooms at the respective police departments. Locations were selected based upon availability. All rooms provided a chair and table at which to sit and answer any questions.

Procedure

Flyers for the study were placed at the police departments involved in the study. Officers from the departments made contact with the researcher regarding available times they could meet to participate. Careful consideration was used to ensure officers could meet at a certain time either during duty or off-duty when they are allowed time to take the survey. It should be noted however, that recruitment from the flyers was very scarce. It was found that recruiting officers to the study was extremely difficult, and inter-departmental contacts and word of mouth typically worked much better than impersonal (flyer) solicitation. Confidentiality was still maintained between all groups, as officers simply heard the researcher was in the department, and approached the researcher of their own free will. Officers recruited through the use of the flyer and from direct contact were all advised that the study took roughly twenty minutes to complete, dealt with social network structure and views on psychological treatment, and they were further assured that all answers provided would be kept confidential.

Upon arriving at their designated times, subjects were informed again of the study's goal, and given the consent form. After being allowed to read and complete the consent form, the

researcher provided the subjects with a signed copy of the consent form for their records. The subjects were then given instructions for the study and a sample of the circle test. It was quickly observed that the instructions proved distracting, and were removed from the third subject on. Following the third subject, the instructions were presented to the subjects orally along with an example of the circle forms. Oral instructions were given for each step of the survey materials.

Starting with the generic questionnaire, subjects were asked to complete the questionnaire by circling their corresponding gender, filling in their race, age, length of employment (which required them to put the number of years and months), and finally their current rank. The first subjects interviewed had a wide range of job descriptions, so starting with subject one, the researcher asked the subjects to include their positions inside their respective departments (i.e. Homicide Detective).

Participants were then advised concerning the first circle paper. In this paper, subjects were asked to place people within their social network (represented by the circles). Subjects were told that the inner circle represented themselves and the closest social relationships they have with people. Participants were advised to set up their circles according to their own view of their social network. No standardized version was given to the subjects, allowing them to choose their associations and assign personal strength to that social relationship. The only instructions given regarding placement were that the inner circle should be comprised of people the subject felt the closest social relationship with, and communicated with on a very regular basis. The second circle was reserved for people the subject felt they had less of an interaction with, and viewed it as semi-frequent. Lastly, the outermost circles were reserved for social acquaintances the subject felt deserved a placement within the network, but were almost never in contact with or the subject saw on a very infrequent basis.

Subjects were asked to use first names, initials, or some form of identifier that made sense to them, yet kept the identity of the person listed on the circles confidential. Subjects were informed that the use of personal identifiers were not important to the study, and should only be used if the subject needed to keep track of which individual they were describing (i.e. one friend out of a group of 8) however, subjects were asked to refrain from using full names for confidentiality purposes. Participants were asked to write the relationship of the individual next to the identifier (or in place of) and then to put a marker beside the relationship to discern their involvement in law enforcement or lack thereof; thus, (L) for Law Enforcement, (C) for Civilian, (L/C) for Law Enforcement to Civilian (retired law enforcement personnel), and (C/L) for those associates that transitioned from Civilian to Law Enforcement later in life. Special designations were applied to either the circles or noted in the interview portion of the study regarding associates in the military. This same method was applied to the second circle paper regarding their current social network make up.

The next paper the subjects received and were instructed on was the Likert-type scale questionnaire. Subjects were asked to read the statement above the numbered scale (1-5) and circle the response that best corresponded to their opinion of the statement. After running the first subject, it was found that clarification was needed on question #1 of the questionnaire. Explanation was given to subject one and all following subjects that the question was referring to the average person (i.e. Seeking psychological treatment is helpful in many cases “for the average person”).

Lastly, subjects were asked to provide qualitative feedback regarding some of the answers they provided throughout the study in a short semi-structured interview. This interview asked officers to expand upon answers given throughout previous portions of the study.

However, the last question, "How would you feel about peer group counseling," was found to be irrelevant. The officers revealed that most counseling sessions provided to them were in fact peer group. Thus, the question was changed to offer officers a choice between several types of counseling leaders. This question was revised to (starting with subject one), "Would you prefer one of the following: counseling sessions led by someone on retainer outside the department, a former police officer with psychological training, or a current police officer?" Subject responses were recorded on the semi-structured interview by the researcher, with any ambiguous responses being asked for clarification before being recorded.

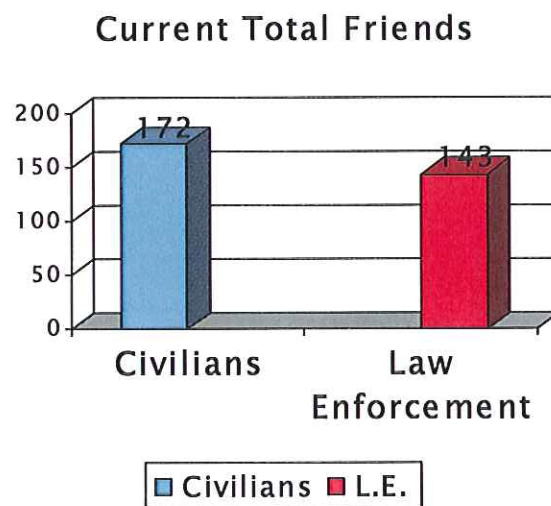
Results

Quantitative Data

Due to the type of data collected quantitatively from the questionnaires, options for analyzing the data proved limited. Paired sample *t*-tests were performed on several key components of the data to determine if significance would be observed from officers' prior network configurations to their current. In particular, paired sample *t*-tests were run on total civilian friends prior to current, inner circle civilian friends prior to current, middle circle civilian friends prior to current, and total numbers of friends (both civilian and law enforcement) reported by officers in their current network compositions. A dependent samples *t*-test showed that the number of total civilian friends prior ($N = 33$; $M = 7.3939$; $SD = 6.9279$) and the number of civilian friends current ($N = 33$; $M = 5.33$; $SD = 6.3179$) did not differ significantly ($t = 1.401$; $p = 0.171$). Paired sample *t*-tests were also ran for total civilian friends reported in current officer networks ($N = 33$; $M = 5.33$; $SD = 6.3179$) and total law enforcement friends reported in current officer networks ($N = 33$; $M = 4.33$; $SD = 6.2583$). However, this again was found to be not significant ($t = 0.874$; $p = 0.389$). While a paired samples *t*-test showed a lack of

significance ($t = 0.506$; $p = 0.616$) for number of civilian friends officers recorded in their prior middle circles ($N = 33$; $M = 3.0909$; $SD = 3.1953$) compared to the number of civilian friends recorded in their current middle circles ($N = 33$; $M = 2.5758$; $SD = 4.9119$), a significance ($t = 3.169$; $p < .01$) was observed regarding civilian friends placed into officer inner circle prior networks ($N = 33$; $M = 2.1515$; $SD = 3.6467$) compared to the number of civilian friends placed in their current inner circles ($N = 33$; $M = 0.9697$; $SD = 1.82833$). The effect size (d) was .41, making it small to medium in scale.

Frequency analyses were run using PASW 17 (Predictive Analytics SoftWare) to account for several factors. A majority of those interviewed identified themselves as male (85.7%, or 30 out of 35). Of those interviewed, 24 subjects were currently in desk job positions. This consisted of three females and 21 males. Ages varied from 25 to 57, but were not found to have any effect on results. Of those interviewed, eight officers were ex-military. Very little distribution was found according to race; 27 Caucasians, 3 Hispanics, 3 American Indians, and 2 African Americans were responsible for the data collected in this study. Length of employment played no major role in changing observed data however, as length of employment increased, officers were typically found to be in a desk job. Changes prior to employment to current were observed in civilian totals per network.

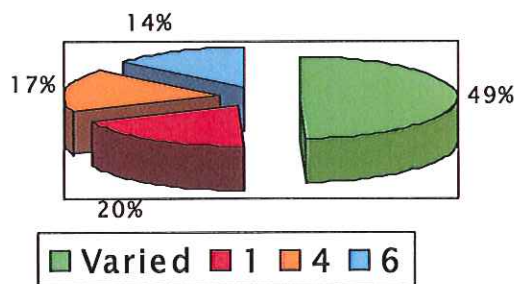


Accounting for family members, civilian friends were more prevalent in officer current networks than law enforcement friends. Civilian friends for all officers combined totaled 172 people whereas, law enforcement friends for all officers combined only totaled 143 (both current).

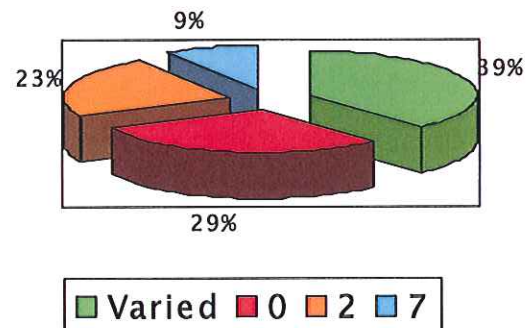
Prior to employment, civilians accounted for more of officers' social networks, but not of significant values. The most common observed amount of civilians prior was 14 (14%), while current was 8 (17%). These observations were followed by prior at 8 (11%) and current at 13 (8.6%). However, total number of civilians prior to current showed more frequency above 14 civilians (prior) and below 14 civilians (current). Total networks showed changes prior to current, in prior networks showing higher frequencies at 8 and 14 members in their social networks each at (14.3%). This was followed by 18 members (8.6%) and 21 (5.7%).

Interestingly, current networks showed that 17 and 18 members accounted each for (8.6%) and 9, 11, 15, 21, 29, 32, and 51 members accounted each for (5.7%). This data would suggest that officer total networks increased throughout their careers in law enforcement. However, a majority of the officers polled were over the age of 35, which could possibly be a detriment to pre-employment social network recall.

Civilian Friends Current

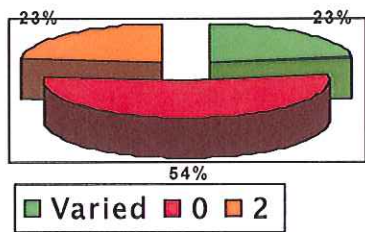


Law Enforcement Friends Current

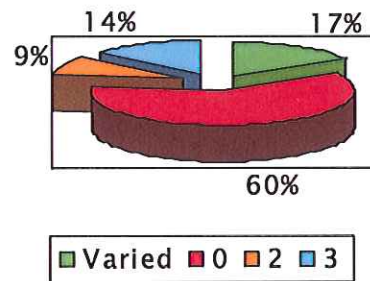


However, of those numbers, the largest percentages of civilian friends current were found at one civilian friend (20%), four civilian friends (17%), and six civilian friends (14%). Law enforcement friends current had the highest at zero friends (29%), followed by two (23%), and seven (9%).

Civilian Friends Inner Circle Current

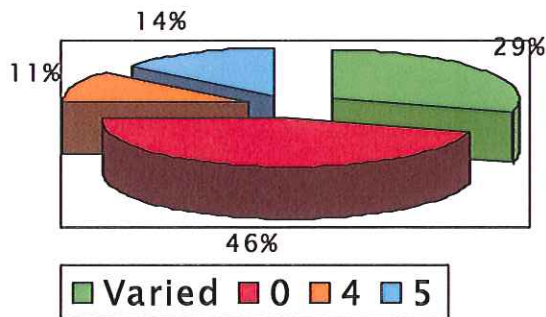


L.E. Friends Inner Circle Current

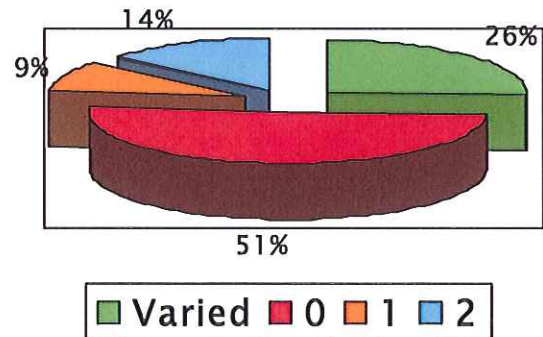


Interestingly, the inner circles of officers were not comprised mainly of civilian or law enforcement friends. Civilian friends (54%) were not included in the inner circle of officer social networks a majority of the time. The highest frequency observed was two civilian friends in the inner circle (23%). Overall, officers reported civilian friends in their inner circles 32 times. Interestingly, law enforcement friends were present in the inner circle even more infrequently (60%). However, law enforcement friends were then recorded at three (14%) and two (9%) more frequently in the inner circle. Overall, law enforcement friends were more prevalently mentioned in the inner circle than civilian friends, but only by the inclusion of four people (a difference of 32 civilian friends versus 36 law enforcement friends).

Civilian Friends Middle Circle Current



L.E. Friends Middle Circle Current



A more defined difference emerged from data collected from the middle circles. Ninety civilian friends were placed into the current middle circles by officers. However, the majority of officers stated that they had zero civilian friends in the middle circle (46%). This was followed by five friends (14%) and four friends (11%) in frequency. Compared to the collective 64 law enforcement friends found in the current middle circles of the officers, civilian friends had a higher prevalence in the middle circles. Law enforcement friends were mostly left out of the middle circle (51%), followed by small inclusions at two friends (14%) and one friend (9%). This would suggest that civilian friends may play only a slightly bigger role for officers in the middle circle as opposed to the inner circle. This could be related to officers transitioning into law enforcement, or be a byproduct of life changes.

In terms of psychological evaluation, 15 officers stated that they had gone to some counseling session. Five officers were offered counseling sessions following an event (typically resulting from stressful events such as loss of life on the job or dealing with death unrelated to police intervention) and did not go, while six officers were offered and did go. Number of sessions varied between those officers that did go, with the most common amount being one time

(23%). This was followed by three sessions (11%) and 2 sessions (9%). Of those sessions, 10 of officers were mandated to go in relation to the Murrah Building bombing. According to those officers, only two officers found the sessions for the Murrah Building bombing to be overall beneficial. Interestingly, officers that attended more than one session related to the Murrah Building bombing, had a tendency to rate the sessions as being beneficial more than those who attended only one session.

Question one on the Likert-type scale suggested that a majority of officers (46%) found that psychological treatment was helpful in many cases; the second highest rated responses tied between no opinion and disagreeing at (23%) each. Question two found that a majority (37%) of officers disagreed that psychological treatment was a distraction from the regular police routine. The next highest frequency of scores showed that (29%) of officers had no opinion, while (23%) strongly agreed that psychological treatment was a distraction from regular police routine. Twenty-eight officers disagreed that fitness for duty testing was a waste of time for officers. The responses showed equal variance between strongly disagree and disagree at (40%) each. The opposite, fitness for duty testing being beneficial for officers, found 24 officers agreeing that fitness for duty testing is beneficial. Of those polled, answers were divided equally between agree and strongly agree, with each selection accounting for (34%) of the answers observed. However, as the study progressed it was found that many officers had trouble distinguishing between physical fitness for duty and psychological fitness for duty. Post-incident counseling sessions being of little benefit to officers was found to be false by 25 officers. Answers to this were closely matched with disagree accounting for 13 (37%) and strongly disagree accounting for 12 (34%). Furthermore, officers disagreed that post-incident counseling was a distraction from the regular police routine. Answers to this varied between (49%) disagreeing, and (31%)

strongly disagreeing. When asked if other officers talk about psychological services, officers responded that (34%) had no opinion (perhaps based on lack of talking about services, or lack of understanding of the question), (31%) disagreed that officers talk about services, and (26%) strongly disagreed that officers talk about services. Interestingly, those who did talk about psychological services found that even though the majority had no opinion (46%), answers then varied between strongly disagree (23%) and disagree (20%). However, when asked if officers would tell other officers if they sought psychological treatment, answers were equally observed between strongly disagree and disagree at (31%) each. This was followed by (23%) of officers having no opinion about telling other officers. Finally, when asked if other officers overall talk about psychological services positively, (34%) had no opinion, while close variation was shown between agree (29%) and disagree (26%).

Qualitative Observations

One of the most interesting observations found throughout this study, was the idea of a normal network. This was something proposed by many officers, perhaps in an attempt to better complete the circle tasks (as examples won't be the same from person to person, making a sense of completion more difficult for the subject), or perhaps to reaffirm something about themselves. Regardless of the reason, all officers eventually touched on the idea of a "normal" network without being prompted. This sense of a "normal" network usually came in the form of a simple statement, "I believe I will go against the norm." Out of the thirty five officers interviewed, almost all of them (except two) said a variation of that statement, but the statement provided was actually the most common observed. While this observation lacks deeper information, what this implies is of great interest. Regardless of the composition of the subjects' social networks, there is a perceived notion of normality, a slot within which officers are supposed to fall regarding

their social network composition. This is the most powerful information gleaned from the qualitative processes of this study. While this may not seem like a lot, take into account the deeper meaning.

There appears to be a shared idea among officers regarding social networks and the type of network in which they should exist. However, thirty three officers reported that they fell outside of that “normal” network by the inclusion of civilian friends throughout their careers or through their service to the military prior to law enforcement employment. However, the researchers discovered that law enforcement agencies are now pulling heavily from prior military personnel for law enforcement positions. More importantly however, is that a shared mentality about a normal network exists. Why would such an idea exist among officers leading them to believe that they fall outside of this “normal” placement? Over half (21) of the officers suggested that an *us vs. them* mentality definitely exists between civilians and officers, and several suggested that civilians play a big role in widening the gap between officer and civilian. More questions than answers arise from observations through their interviews; further research is definitely needed into why shared mentalities exist regarding a perceived normality, and why many officers feel they deviate from this norm.

Through the interviews, one might believe that prior military experience may actually be more prevalent, and in some respects more “normal,” but when applying information from an officer within CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) the interviews begin to take on even more meaning. This officer, who also worked many hours as a training coordinator for a large department, suggested that because departments are looking into military personnel for recruitment into law enforcement, the outlook on psychological services is becoming more positive. On the opposite end of the spectrum, several officers (4) suggested that the inflow of military personnel should

increase the required amount of psychological screening needed to become an officer; which disagrees with many officers saying that prescreening should be done, but with less hassle and not repeated throughout the officer's career. Still, the CIT officer equates this observed change in positive views toward psychological treatment and assessment by new recruits, to an idea of a "shared load" impressed upon them through military training. In the military, personnel are trained to work together and rely on one another to survive. As these individuals transition from the military to law enforcement, they bring with them an idea of sharing the load. This allows them to approach social issues more openly (according to this officer) and have less aversion to counseling sessions. Further perhaps positive side effects of military personnel transferring to law enforcement are the easier transitioning of people into a field filled with like-minded or similar individuals, leading to a more open environment with trust being established faster. However, this again may play upon the idea of a "mob mentality." As these persons transfer from one cohesive group of trained individuals working with one another to something very similar, one has to wonder about the impact this can create on their interactions with those outside of the military or law enforcement. Interestingly, interviewees often stated that personal preference was greatly important in deciding if treatment and evaluation was worth pursuing. However, the majority of officers interviewed typically fell into the same overarching ideas regarding treatment and assessment. One has to wonder if this is a result of experiences or a shared collective ideology of psychology's role in law enforcement lifestyles. While individual expression and thinking seem to be important to many officers, their responses don't show a great deal of variation. While this could be related to the influx of individuals being recruited from military occupations, many of the officers interviewed were over the age of 35, and did not

have previous military backgrounds. Perhaps these similar responses are a product of early law enforcement training.

Several officers (3) stated that police academy training strongly emphasized the importance of not ostracizing civilians during their transition into law enforcement. However, if officers are now being recruited from the military, a placement that already takes them away from civilian interaction, these instructions may be falling upon deaf ears (or at least ears that haven't been around civilians for a few years anyway). The same officer from CIT also stated that these group interactions with like minded individuals plays a role in maintaining an *us vs. them* mentality. However, this officer also suggests that because of these group experiences and shared mentalities, peer support is much more accepted and used than sessions provided outside of the department. On the flip side, the same officer also asserts that because of technological advances (particularly the invention and proliferation of online social networks such as Facebook), officers deal with scrutiny from other officers in their networks much faster than in the past. This was supported by a couple of other officers who stated that their mistakes in the field quickly found their way to Facebook, resulting in heckling for a period of time following the incidents. These interactions make one question the types of heckling officers might encounter on the forums mentioned earlier. If taunting occurs on these websites designed to help police, perhaps there is no place safe from scrutiny for officers.

Still with police training academies telling officers to try to maintain civilian friends, why are officers seeing large changes as they enter the training academy? Over ten officers asserted that within the first two to three years they noticed the biggest changes in friends transitioning in and out of their networks. One officer also stated that the first few years of the academy typically create changes in family relations. In regards to this, a theme began to emerge from the

interviews. A majority of the subjects stated that they felt as though law enforcement personnel are held to a higher standard than other people that make up a society. This leaves them open to greater scrutiny, something which many (8) of the officers felt made an impact in the *us vs. them* mentality. Furthermore, this also creates a sense of feeling like an officer is never truly “off duty” as described by many officers through the interview process and related to the missive posed earlier.

Scrutiny for many officers was actually described as psychological assessment and evaluation. Many (10) officers felt that fitness for duty testing was great as a pre-screening tool, but should be rarely used after that. One officer summed up a lot of the other subjects’ perceptions for psychological evaluations by saying when they’re used for positive purposes, they’re worth while; when evaluations are used to punish or establish “fitness for duty” they lose all function. One officer stated that “fitness for duty” really suggests “fit to make a pay check” and finds that idea disturbing.

One such session that a majority of the officers were made to attend (for those that went to a session) involved fitness for duty sessions following the Murrah building bombing on April 19, 1995. This incident involved not only state law enforcement, but fire fighters and paramedics from the surrounding areas. This is important information, as some of the officers interviewed were in the other service fields during the bombing and thus were mandated to go, just not through law enforcement directive. This incident saw many officers assigned to guarding bodies recovered from the bombing. Of the officers that went to this session, many suggested that watching the dead being removed from the rubble left an impression on their mind. Thus, in order to help with the visions many officers faced, local departments mandated that officers go to at least one session of group counseling. In these sessions (as they were broken up

to include a certain number for overcrowding reasons), officers were asked to talk about any feelings they had. Unfortunately, all but two officers reported that these sessions were not beneficial. Many officers stated that a few people sent to counseling treated it like a joke, and make it difficult for the ones that actually wanted to be there and receive counseling. In fact, many officers (16) reported that overall group sessions proved less effective than one on one sessions. However, overall officers reported that the most important factor when determining if the sessions would be beneficial revolved greatly around the ability for confidentiality to be maintained. This desire for confidentiality came up quite frequently throughout the interview process. Some officers suggested that confidentiality was important because of the possibility of punishment. This can be tied to what one officer stated above; “fit for duty” really means “fit to make a pay check.”

Interestingly, when it comes to paying officers, some feel like psychological evaluations (particularly when they return with negativity) are desirable to officers. By receiving an unfit for duty remark, officers are often “retired to a desk” or transferred out of their current area. This way, officers can avoid work of a particular nature, yet still be able to make a living. One officer stated that this can lead to an early retirement from active “dangerous” duty. Thus, an officer can either remove him/herself from a life of dangerous activities, and be transferred either to a desk position, or to a position that involves fewer chances of hostile interactions. However, one officer stated very bluntly that like any other job in the world, there exists political swaying. This political swaying can spill over into officer evaluation and placement, in what one officer described as “beneficial to officers versus beneficial to the department.” This would suggest that officers attempting to cheat the system by falsifying fitness for duty testing might be denied the

attempt for “early retirement.” However, this also suggests that officers, who really need transferring or removal from active duty, may be denied as well.

One thing gleaned from this study that a person might expect to find is the importance of family. As people age, family and friends become more solidified. Furthermore, as people get older and begin to have kids, family starts to play a bigger role in the lives of people. This is certainly true of police officers as well. Most of the officers interviewed were over the age of 35. There was definitely a discernable difference between younger police officers those closer to retirement in terms of family importance and social network placement. However, this was not always true with female officers. Many of the female officers interviewed had children. The inclusion of children in their social networks often meant a great deal of emphasis was placed upon the family and relationships that would include the children (such as play-mate families and church groups). Interestingly, many officers talked about friends from the church as being important to their social network. Some went as far as to say that their faith-based activities often supplemented or replaced counseling services. Overall, family became more important and prevalent with age, particularly when it came to children. One might expect to find this nationally however, when it comes to religious based support and members from the subjects’ churches filling slots in their social networks, one might expect to see changes based upon geographical location. Some officers suggested that attrition of friends from social networks may be the same as solidifying family members: life changes occur and acquaintances change as a natural result of life changes. Still other officers maintain that the job plays a catalytic role expediting previous relationships. No matter what the cause, all officers believed it was as much on the officers as the civilians. Some officers even stated that as friends slowly retracted from their networks they began to ask for favors or were quick to point out their “officer friend” at

social gatherings. In response to this, two officers interviewed stated that they moved outside of their jurisdiction to avoid social outings that could result in violence or to avoid the heckling of civilians when the officers were off duty. However, many of the officers interviewed were no longer “beat cops.” One officer suggested that because they were no longer on the streets arresting and writing tickets, civilian friends have begun to return to their social network. One has to wonder if this is also related simply to life changes, or if the officer appears somewhat less intimidating behind a desk compared to a squad car.

Conclusions

As the interviews concluded, it was observed that no particular session leader was preferred from another. While many officers (6) stated that ex-police officers would facilitate counseling sessions (based upon familiarity with law enforcement subject matter), again the most important factor remained confidentiality. Almost every (30) officer asked for clarification when it came to a session leader’s role in the officer’s department. This means that the officers were more concerned with what information would be returned to the department in which they work, than if the persons leading counseling sessions were well trained. Furthermore, officers typically discussed counseling services more positively when they actively chose to seek it themselves and were administered as one on one sessions.

Fitness for duty testing was considered by most (29) to be beneficial only for pre-employment assessment. However, some officers suggested that it be continued as the officer transitions within the department. Interestingly, most officers were not mandated to go to a counseling session. Many were offered sessions following critical incidents. Incidents were defined using Mitchell’s criteria; the criteria included “any situation faced by emergency service personnel that causes them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the

potential to interfere with their ability to function either at the scene or later” (Mitchell, 1983).

However, the number of officers offered and the number that went is not equivalent, with barely over half of those offered actually going to a counseling session. Of those that did actively seek offered treatment, the majority found it to be both beneficial and worth recommending to other officers.

All of this information suggests that officers like to have a preference, and when supplied with a choice, may choose to pursue counseling. However, a group mentality still appears to exist amongst officers regarding acceptability of counseling services and their role in law enforcement lifestyles. Further research needs to be conducted into why these mentalities persist, and if changes can be made that would positively affect law enforcement lives and work environments.

Discussion

Divisions exist throughout the many examples of life that embody this world. Cells divide to ensure the continuation of man. Divisions allow man to see the world by removing unifications and creating categorization on objects and entities. In these roles, divisions can be positive in nature; by dividing the perceived world, man is able to distinguish and provide mental cues to ensure survival. However, divisions typically persist in life and in the mind. It would be one thing if man was able to make short divisions then collect back into a more whole view of things, but that might result in a world too unified and unsafe for positive growth of the individual.

All of this is to say, that divisions are not only naturally occurring and have been in place long before the establishment of a law enforcement body, but persist in today’s society with even more complexity. While there are many divisions that are positive, (imagine trying to discern people without being able to divide them between race, gender, age, facial structure, etc.) there

are many divisions derived to produce resentment and prejudice. A negative form of division appears to be securely rooted between members of law enforcement and the civilian public in which they are to serve and protect. This comes in the form of the *us vs. them* mentality. This mentality is something a majority of officers appear to believe in, and this belief is perpetuated by civilians as much as law enforcement. This division could also result in mixed feelings regarding psychological assessment and treatment, especially when administered by civilians. However, officers appear to be more concerned about maintaining confidentiality during psychological sessions than the session leader's social identification. Officers, just like other people, seem to like having a choice. When given the choice to seek treatment, more officers appear to actually opt for treatment. Furthermore, those that do actively seek counseling find it more rewarding than those who are mandated to go. However, further research needs to be conducted on the role of confidentiality in session, and what prompts an officer to actively seek counseling.

Quantitatively this study had some limitations. The circles proved cumbersome to many officers, prompting them to hurry through them. Furthermore, because officers interviewed were typically not new recruits, their memories of past social networks proved fuzzy on many occasions. Future studies should attempt to alleviate problems arising from confidentiality related to the circles. By giving the officers a great deal of confidentiality in the circles, it was very difficult to figure out which acquaintances changed locations or vanished from the circles entirely. The inclusion of the Perceived Social Support scale used by McDole and Limke may prove valuable in understanding how important relationships are to officers in certain areas of the circles. It would benefit future studies to use a comparison group (or control group) to observe changes that occur because of such things as employment. It might be interesting to observe

changes in networks with police officers and military personnel, to determine any similarities or divergences from civilian occupations. Lastly, the Likert-type scale proved somewhat confusing to officers, particularly the first question and questions regarding fitness for duty. Many officers associated fitness for duty with physical examinations. However, when the researchers clarified this issue, many officers stated that their opinions remained the same regardless of physical or psychological fitness for duty.

While many officers actually increase the number of civilian friends throughout their careers, emphasis may be placed on how close those relationships are to the officer. This would disprove the hypothesis stated by the researchers, but it presents avenues for future studies. Also in disagreement with another hypothesis proposed, officers typically placed more civilian friends in their middle circle than law enforcement friends. Interestingly, in support of one hypothesis, less civilian friends were found in the inner circle compared to law enforcement friends. However, this number was by no means significant. However, different results may be observed if one were to include co-workers into the “friends” aspect. Mixed results were shown in disagreement of the hypothesis that psychological treatment would be considered not beneficial to officers. While some officers agree that it is a distraction, many believe that it is a necessary process. However, officers again assert that given a choice to attend, being confidential, and one on one session are important to many officers. Lastly, the previous information can again be used to disprove the final hypothesis that officers would prefer law enforcement personnel to lead counseling sessions.

Future research is definitely needed in this area to address the reasoning behind many officers’ views in regards to confidentiality and the importance of certain groups of people in their social networks. However, this research is a step in the right direction to helping

understand the *us versus them* mentality, and how officers perceive psychological services. Perhaps information gleaned from this study and future studies can be used to better offer positive services to officers, and help them maintain positive social acquaintances. However, the most important finding in this study is a perceived normality in which officers are supposed to fall. Whether this is a result of in-group behavior and ideals, police training and life style, the division between law enforcement and civilian, or a combination of it all remains to be understood.

Perhaps things can best be summed up by someone from within law enforcement. When asked what it was like to be a cop, this officer simply responded with the recommendation of watching a video from the television show *Dragnet*. This officer said, "If you really want to know what it's like being a cop, watch that video...it is spot on."

It's awkward having a policeman around the house. Friends drop in, a man with a badge answers the door, the temperature drops 20 degrees. You throw a party and that badge gets in the way. All of a sudden there isn't a straight man in the crowd. Everybody's a comedian. "Don't drink too much," somebody says, "or the man with a badge'll run you in." Or "How's it going, Dick Tracy? How many jaywalkers did you pinch today?" And then there's always the one who wants to know how many apples you stole.

All at once you lost your first name. You're a cop, a flatfoot, a bull, a dick, John Law. You're the fuzz, the heat; you're poison, you're trouble, you're bad news. They call you everything, but never a policeman. (Hall)

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APPENDICIES

Informed Consent Form for Research Participation

Department of Forensic Sciences, Forensic Science Institute at the University of Central Oklahoma
 Primary Investigator: Nicholas Badzinski Advisor: Dr. John Mabry

I, _____, hereby agree to participate in a research project entitled: Civilian Social Network... and Views on Psychological Treatment among Police.

Your signature below indicates your understanding that:

1. You will be asked to show any changes in social network framework before you joined the police force, and your current social network framework. Furthermore, you will be asked to answer questions regarding psychological counseling and treatment. These four tasks should take no more than 20 minutes (maximum) to complete. After these tasks, a couple short open ended questions will be asked of you in interview format (5 minutes maximum).
2. While no direct benefit will be given to you, future training programs and counseling services may be changed to help officers deal with complications arising from social network issues.
3. All information gathered will be coded to maintain confidentiality. While the inclusion of rank, race, age, gender, and length of employment may seem invasive, officers are being polled from multiple departments. At no time will your name be used or shown. You may use nicknames, initials, or first names on the social network tasks, but please refrain from giving full names to keep associates' identities confidential. All data collected will be stored in a locked area, and will only be accessible by the researchers.
4. You may ask questions of the researcher at any time, and expect a clear response. At the conclusion of the study, you will be debriefed and given a chance to ask any questions.
5. You may refuse to participate in this study or may discontinue participation at any time without prejudice, question, or reprimand.
6. Your participation in this research is voluntary, and while nothing about this study should cause discomfort, if at any time you wish to not answer a question, you may do so.
7. If you have any questions after you have concluded your participation, you may contact any of the following:
 - a. Primary Investigator: **Nicholas Badzinski** (nbadzinski@uco.edu) or by phone (918) 232-0619.
 - b. Co-Investigator: **Dr. John Mabry** (jmabry1@uco.edu) University of Central Oklahoma. Forensic Science Institute. 100 N. University Drive, Box 203. Edmond, OK 73034. Or by phone: (405) 974-6910.
 - c. **UCO IRB** may be contacted at Office of Research & Grants, Academic Affairs Lillard Administration Building, Room 216. University of Central Oklahoma. 100 N. University Drive Edmond, OK 73034-5209. Or by Phone: 405-974-5497. E-mail: irb@uco.edu
8. A signed copy of this consent form will be given to you for your records.

I have read and fully understood the consent form. I have had a chance to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I sign this form freely and voluntarily.

Participant's signature

Date

I certify that I have personally explained this form to the participant before requesting that he or she sign it.

Authorized Researcher

Date

[Appendix B]

OFFICERS!

Interested in helping other officers?

A graduate student at the Forensic Science Institute at UCO would like your input! The information acquired will help future officers with social network maintenance, and allow for an understanding of friendship patterns of officers as they transition throughout their career.

All it takes is four simple questionnaires (roughly 15 minutes MAX) followed by a short interview (5 minutes).

Completely confidential! Your name will not be used in any presentation of findings. No questions will be sensitive in nature, and best of all answers may help officers lead happier lives!

To set up a time slot call NICK @
(918) 232-0619

[Appendix C]

INSTRUCTIONS

On the following pages you will be asked to fill in information pertaining to your background and social network.

On the first page, please circle your gender. The question concerning length of employment, please try to round to the nearest month, if you're not quite sure, just get as close as possible.

On the following two pages you will place all family members, friends, acquaintances, and co-workers with whom you have a social relationship (ie, someone you at least think of as an acquaintance and socialize with).

The first group of circles will be related to your social relationships before becoming a member of law enforcement (before formal training began or your friends knew you were becoming a member of law enforcement...whichever came first).

The second group of circles will be your current social relationships.

TO FILL IN THE CIRCLES:

Place social relationships by some identifying name (do not use last names...however, nicknames or first names are fine). If you

are unsure of a person's first name, use something to identify that person to you.

After putting the person's name in the corresponding circle, please identify beside it their relationship to you (ie, family, friend, best friend, co-worker, acquaintance, etc.).

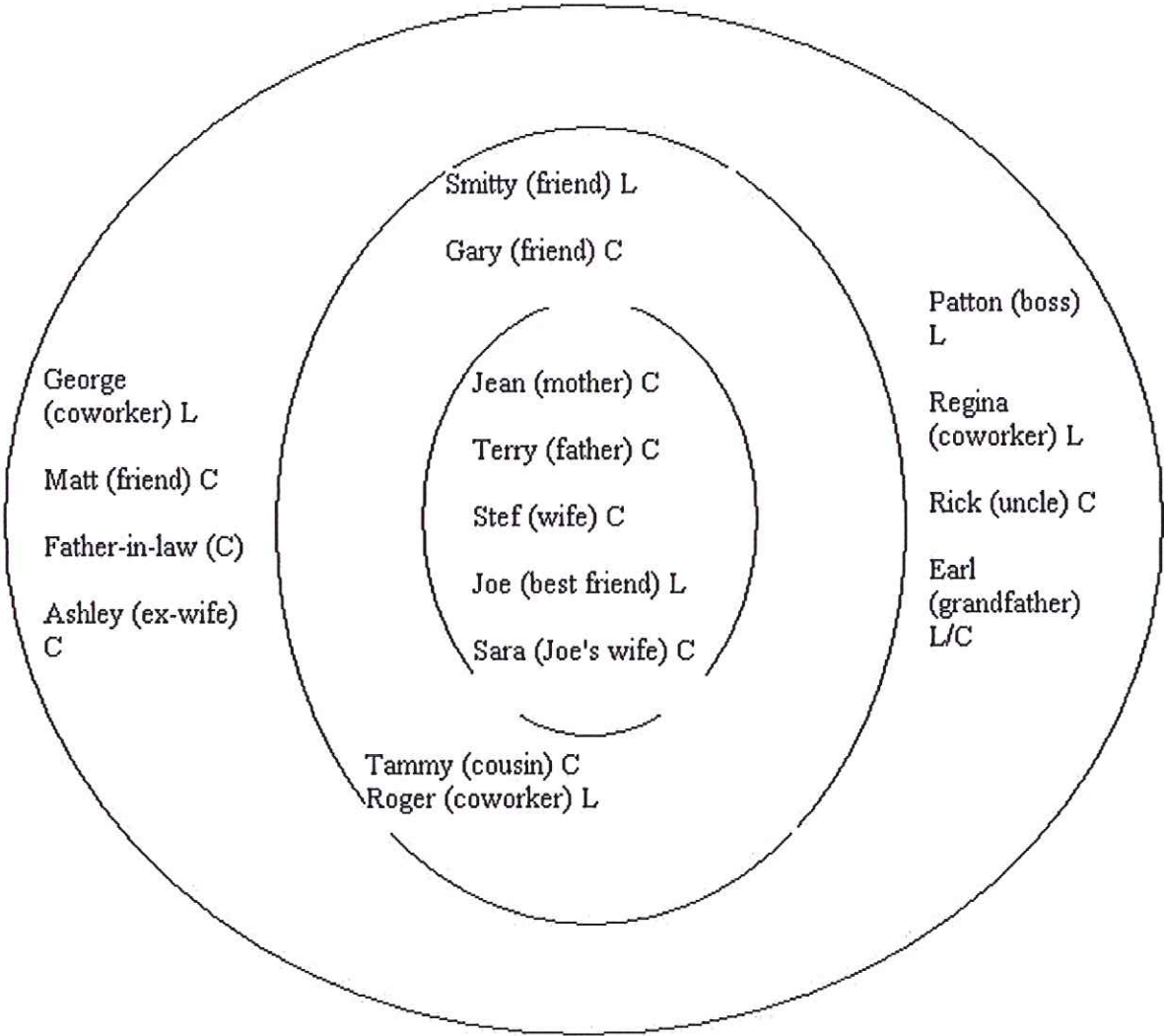
Also, please include a (L) or (C) beside their name to show that they are a member of law enforcement (L) or civilian (C). If the person you are placing was once a member of law enforcement, mark L/C, or vice versa if they are now in law enforcement C/L.

Each circle is representative of closeness in relation to you. Think of the inside circle as being the closest to you. Thus, family and closest friends should be located within the inner circle. The second circle should make up people with whom you consider being good friends, but are not as close. This could also include things such as extended family (people you may not have a strong social relationship with, but are still connected to you semi-regularly). The outer-most circle should contain people with whom you are acquainted. These people are people you socialize with irregularly and don't share a close bond with.

It is okay to have people in areas not listed above. Everyone views people differently or has a different social network. Just do your best to place people in your life where you think they belong. There is no right or wrong answer, just opinion.

FOR EXAMPLE SEE NEXT PAGE----->

CURRENT



On the fourth page, please circle the number on the scale to indicate your response. By circling a number, you will indicate how much you agree with the statement above it. In this particular portion, 1=STRONGLY DISAGREE, 5=STRONGLY AGREE, and finally 3=NEITHER STRONGLY AGREE OR DISAGREE. If you don't like how a question is posed, please inform the researcher during the interview if you'd like to answer the question differently.

When you are finished filling out the papers, let the researcher know. If you have questions at any time, please feel free to ask the researcher.

Thank you for your participation!

[Appendix D]

GENDER: M F Unspecified

RACE: _____

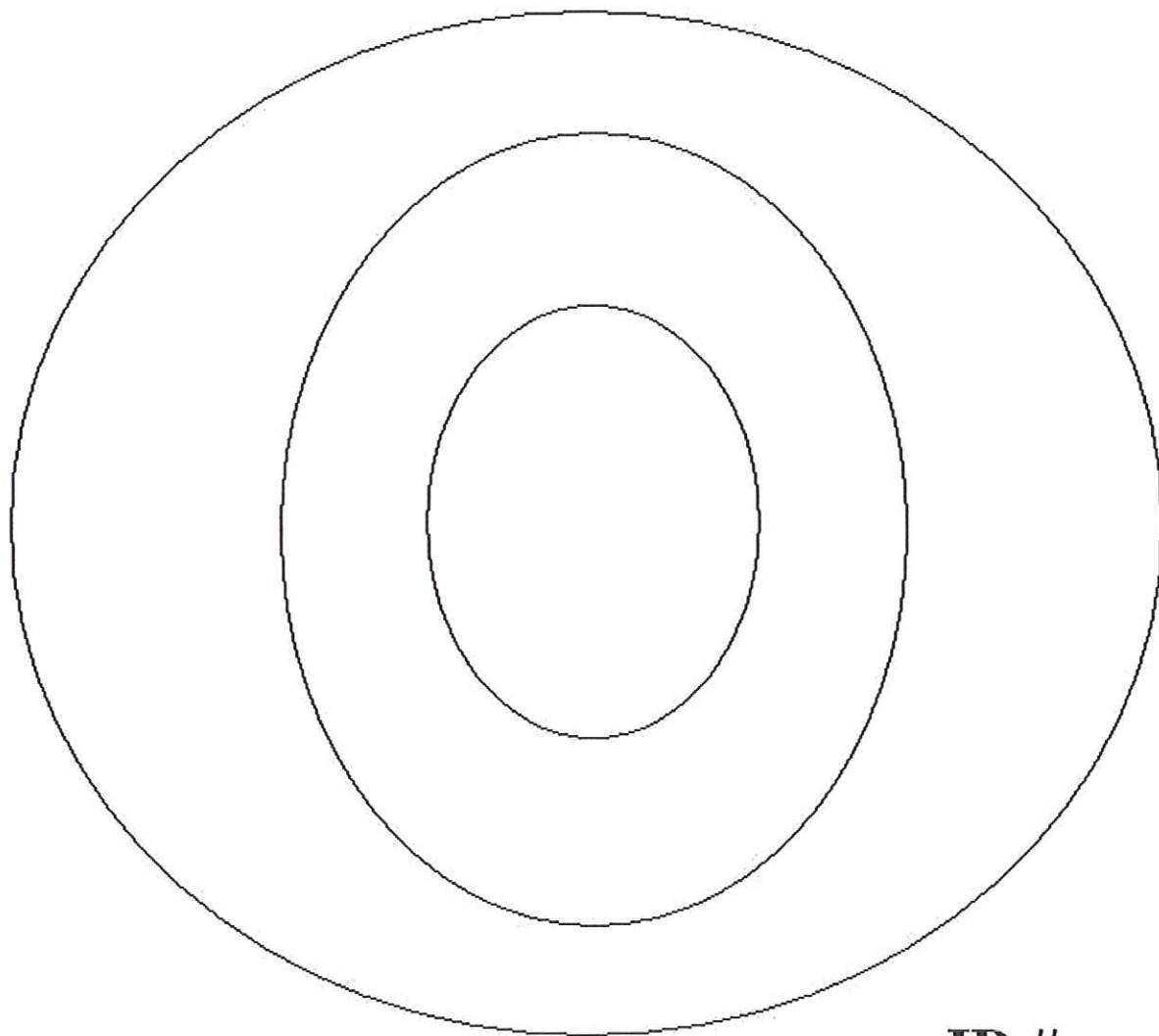
AGE: _____

LENGTH OF EMPLOYMENT (round to the nearest month): _____

CURRENT RANK: _____

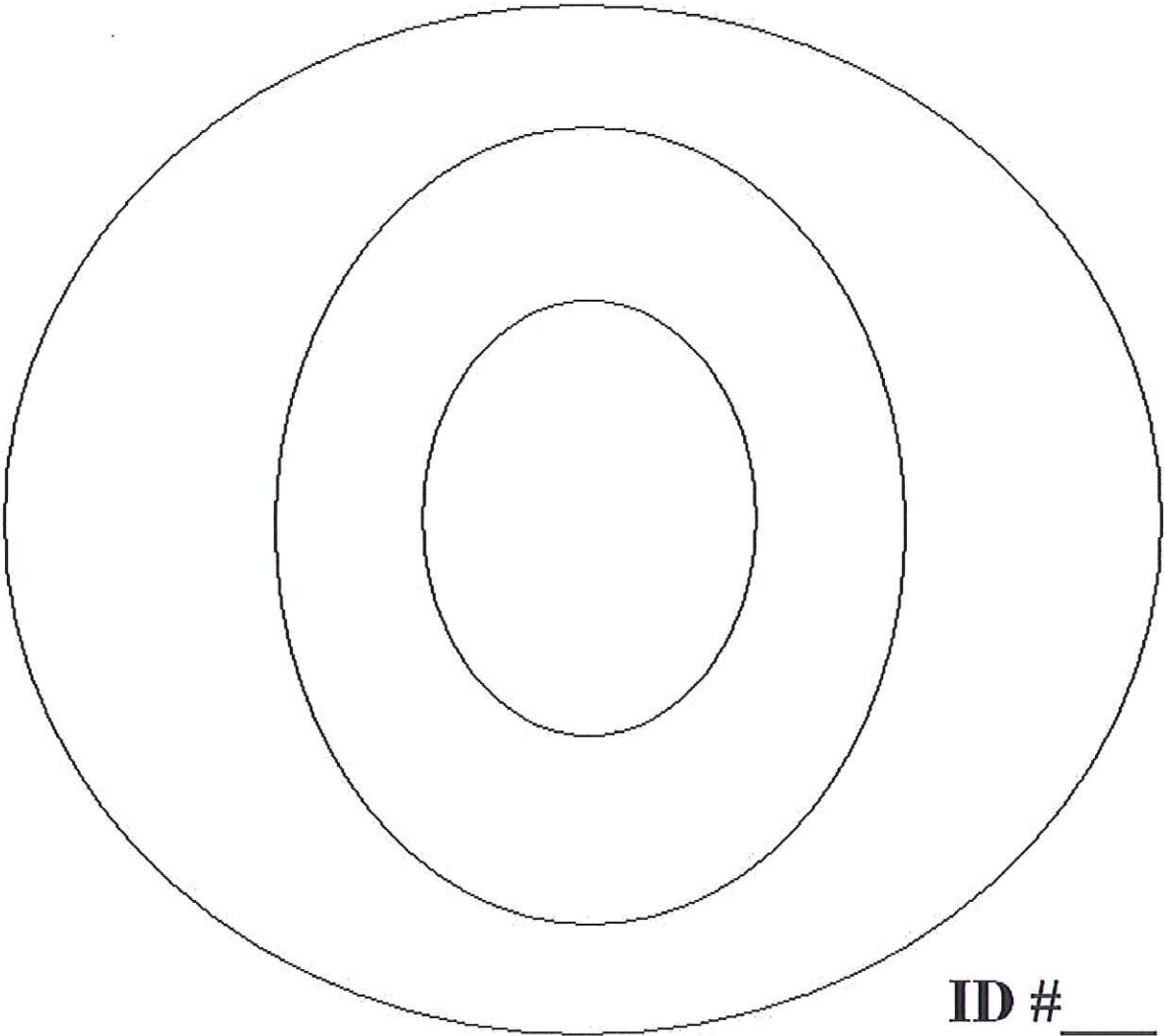
ID # _____

Before law enforcement employment



ID # _____

CURRENT



INSTRUCTIONS:

Please answer these questions by circling the number that best represents your opinion. For reference; the numbers are representative of you agreeing or disagreeing with the statement.

1= STRONGLY DISAGREE

5=STRONGLY AGREE

3=NEITHER STRONGLY AGREE OR DISAGREE

(1) Seeking psychological treatment is helpful in many cases.

1 2 3 4 5

(2) Seeking psychological treatment is a distraction from regular police routine.

1 2 3 4 5

(3) Fitness for Duty testing is a waste of time for officers.

1 2 3 4 5

(4) Fitness for Duty testing is beneficial for officers.

1 2 3 4 5

(5) Counseling and psychological services provided after an officer involved incident provide little benefit to officers.

1 2 3 4 5

(6) Counseling and psychological services provided after an officer involved incident are a distraction from regular police work.

1 2 3 4 5

(7) Other officers talk about psychological services and treatment.

1 2 3 4 5

(8) Other officers discuss psychological treatment and services positively.

1 2 3 4 5

(9) You would tell other officers if you requested psychological treatment or services.

1 2 3 4 5

(10) Overall, other officers view psychological treatment and services with a positive outlook.

1 2 3 4 5

Semi-Structured Interview

(1) If there are any transitions in your friends (from one circle to another) about when in your career did this occur?

(2) What do you think of police officers seeking psychological treatment?

(3) How do you feel about psychological assessment (such as fitness for duty)?

(4) Have you ever been a part of counseling after an event that was mandated by the department?

(5) How did it make you feel?

(6) How would you feel about peer group counseling?

[Appendix H]