

WHAT IMPACT WILL MANDATORY, CONTINUAL STRESS MANAGEMENT  
TRAINING HAVE ON A LARGE, URBAN POLICE AGENCY BY 2009?

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This Command College Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue in law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future, but rather to project a number of possible scenarios for strategic planning consideration.

Defining the future differs from analyzing the past because the future has not yet happened. In this project, useful alternatives have been formulated systematically so that the planner can respond to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing the future; creating it, constraining it, adapting to it. A futures study points the way.

The view and conclusions expressed in this Command College project are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

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## CHAPTER ONE

### ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

#### *Introduction*

Enforcing the laws of a modern society is an essential responsibility, filled with inherently stressful conditions. Law enforcement officers continually face the intrinsic danger of physical violence and the potential of sudden death in carrying out their mission. Law enforcement officers are often subject to cruelty and aggression. Additionally, they are called upon to make critical life and death decisions within seconds.<sup>i</sup> Officers frequently see the horrific outcome of murders, violent assaults, drive-by shootings, fatal traffic collisions and serious personal injury.

Police officers are fully expected to give their lives for their community. When danger presents itself, an officer must be prepared and willing to walk towards it. On September 11, 2001, 72 New York law enforcement officers did exactly this and lost their lives in the process, while trying to save people and render aid during the World Trade Center attack.<sup>ii</sup>

On a daily basis, officers put on their uniform, knowing citizens will call upon them to settle disputes that seem irresolvable. They respond to robberies in progress, gang shootings, husband/wife disturbances and drunken barroom brawls, knowing their personal safety to be in jeopardy. They make countless traffic stops on people they know to be dangerous.

On April 15, 2004, Officer Stephan Gray, a seven-year member of the Merced Police Department, paid the ultimate price while attempting to make a routine traffic stop. Moments

after the stop, the suspect took off running from Gray and then fired shots at him, striking him twice. Gray, 34 years old, would later die at Merced Community Hospital, leaving behind a wife and three young children. Merced Police Chief Tony Dossetti stated, “I’ve been a cop for 29 years and this is the toughest thing I’ve ever gone through.”<sup>iii</sup>

Just one week prior to this incident, San Francisco Police Officer Isaac Espinoza, 29, was working undercover in one of the city’s most troubled neighborhoods when a gunman fatally shot him. It was the first killing of an on-duty officer in San Francisco in 10 years. Espinoza left behind a widow and three-year-old daughter.<sup>iv</sup>

As Officers Gray and Espinoza intensely demonstrate, sometimes the outcome of a police “tour of duty” does result in real, quantifiable, consequences. In the year 2002, for example, 65 police officers were killed in the line of duty. Of these, 57 were killed by gunfire. This is significantly down from the 148 officers killed in the line of duty in 2001.<sup>v</sup> Over 70,000 officers are assaulted each year on the job. This equates to approximately 200 officers per day.<sup>vi</sup>

To further illustrate this point, few occupations routinely publicize the number of its workforce killed in the line of duty. However, statistics related to officers killed in the line of duty are measured on an annual basis and heavily publicized in newspapers throughout the country. This is truly unique to law enforcement.

The tension associated with the job is not confined to external physical danger. In fact, it is not even isolated to law enforcement agencies in the United States within modern highly populated communities. For example, research on the Slovenian police force identified similar stressors as those identified in Western culture. Contributing factors identified in overall job stress in this recently liberated European country were very similar to those attributed to officers

working in cities across America. The contributing factors found in this research were shift schedules, lack of recognition, and lack of autonomy in performing duties.<sup>vii</sup>

Whether police work is the most stressful occupation in society has, and will always be, subject to speculation. People who own personal businesses are often considered to have a tremendous amount of pressure in their lives as well. The difference between police work and business ownership is that business owner strain is more likely to be associated with the financial demands of being directly responsible for their income. Emergency medical service employees and correctional officers are often compared to police officers and reported to have even more stress.<sup>viii</sup>

Researchers commonly add to the occupational stress debate by using indicators found among law enforcement personnel to quantifiably measure the amount of stress. These indicators tend to serve as warning signs that there may be a problem in the arena of marriage. Stress indicators are more than likely to be consistent with one of the partners involved in the marriage or relationship, particularly the one who is a police officer. Without appropriate professional intervention, e.g., marital counseling and stress management, these significantly stressful indicators can result in two highly problematic outcomes: divorce or suicide.<sup>ix</sup>

### *Police Divorce*

In November 2001, noted U.C. Berkeley researchers Nicole Roberts and Robert W. Levenson conducted an extensive study probing the impact of job stress on police couples. Roberts and Levenson (2001) could have selected their sample from other occupations, e.g., doctors, judges, emergency medical service employees, or correctional officers. However, there appeared to be a great deal of research literature on occupational stress in those occupations while there was a lack of research that specifically addressed police officer stress. Therefore, it

was deemed important to focus this study on police officers and their spouses due to the stressful nature of this line of work. Police marriages were particularly well suited for this study in terms of occupational stress and fatigue.

The results of Roberts and Levenson's (2001) study reveal that the sample of police officers carried job stress home, which, in turn, influenced interactions with their spouses. The study results also revealed that job stress in police marriages had a toxic effect on marital interaction and positively correlated to high divorce rates seen in police marriages.<sup>x</sup>

It also found that on high-stress days, it was difficult for either spouse to think clearly and effectively problem solve. Instead, they often reverted back to well-known defensive behaviours.<sup>xi</sup>

Another remarkable finding was that officers and their spouses showed increased cardiovascular levels and lower bodily movement on high-stress days. A pattern of high cardiovascular arousal, with low somatic levels, is similar to the kind of "freeze" response linked to states of intense fear. This pattern may be a psychological stance of vigilance and defensiveness – a state believed to help an officer survive in the field. Roberts and Levenson (2001) speculate that on highly stressful days, officers maintain this posture at home during their interaction with loved ones. Wives, who sense their husband had a stressful day, also become defensive and vigilant either in anticipation of difficult marital challenges or in an effort to avoid increasing their husband's stress.<sup>xii</sup>

Unfortunately, the results of the Roberts and Levenson (2001) study predict an unhappy outcome for many police families. Police marriages were at a heightened risk for a number of negative outcomes associated with marital conflict due to stressors inherent to this occupation, e.g., separation and divorce.<sup>xiii</sup> In addition to the prevalence of separation and divorce among

police officers, police suicide is another troubling phenomenon that is confounding interaction between police administration and its rank-in-file.

### *Police Suicide*

A common belief in the command echelon of the police culture is that police suicide is simply not an issue. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that very little training is offered to police recruits that would help them identify the signs unique to police suicide.<sup>xiv</sup> However, information is frequently available to higher-ranking department members who wish to learn about this troubling phenomenon.

One ironic example is Tacoma Police Chief, David Brame, who attended a voluntary training course on emotional survival training for law enforcement officers in January 2003. Chief Brame was so impressed with the content of this course that he arranged to have the instructor come to his agency so his entire workforce could have the benefit of this knowledge. In a tragic twist of fate, Chief Brame shot and killed his wife in front of his two children before fatally shooting himself on Friday, April 25, 2003. Those who knew Chief Brame said he seemed fine during the days preceding the murder-suicide. City Manager, Ray Corpuz, stated “what made this situation particularly difficult to understand is that Chief Brame recognized and was concerned about how emotional stress can affect police officers.”<sup>xv</sup> Chief Brame appeared to have an awareness of his problem, yet did not summon change within himself before committing such a devastating act.

This is relative to domestic violence investigations where officers are taught to solve domestic disturbances between spouses and significant others in a calm and efficient manner. They are expected to do so in a composed fashion while being mindful that other calls await their attention. Officers must be able to enter a disposition and clear the event at the end of every call.

Although this seems straightforward in theory, simple answers often become elusive when officers try to resolve their own domestic issues.

In 1998, another similar situation unfolded in Brunswick, Ohio. This situation involved a recently retired police detective, his wife, and their seventeen-year-old daughter. After enduring years in a difficult marriage, Jesse Wofford and his wife, Lisa, found themselves in the final stages of divorce. This case differs slightly from the Brame incident in that Jesse not only killed his wife, but also killed his daughter before turning the gun on himself. What was comparable to the Brame incident is that Jesse Wofford had also talked to several people that day and everyone stated that Jesse seemed fine.<sup>xvi</sup>

These examples of David Brame and Jesse Wofford are not aberrations. Statistically, police officers are more likely to die by suicide than others in society. The nation's largest police organization, the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), studied suicides among 33,800 of its 270,000 members in 1995 by looking at insurance records in 92 local chapters in 24 states. The FOP found a suicide rate of 22 deaths per 100,000 officers. This was nearly twice as many as the national average of 12 per 100,000 people.

#### *Other Stress-Related Costs*

Work-related stress clearly represents a major problem, but the wrong impression is sometimes given that such stress is a subjective phenomenon that is both difficult to define and manage. As a result, employers are often left feeling helpless and unsure of how to address this problem.<sup>xvii</sup>

This challenge is even greater for police managers. Anybody who has been in law enforcement for any period of time understands the importance of evidence to back a position. Unfortunately, arguments regarding improperly managed stress and its direct effect on

organizational costs are often perceived as nebulous. This is because subjective definitions of police stress that lack statistical support are not likely to receive much attention from veteran managers who are accustomed to demanding proof before taking action. Although their approach makes perfect business sense, something is lost in the translation as officers continue to take their own lives.

As bleak as this all may sound, there are things that law enforcement administration and management can do to help alleviate some of the psychological burden that the job places on its officers. Simply monitoring some of the areas where stress is believed to have the most impact can serve as a good starting point for data gathering. The most common effects of police stress, in terms of cost to law enforcement, are listed below.

*Absenteeism:* Work-related stress has been consistently identified as a major workplace problem in Europe over the last decade. This challenge not only affects the individual, it also affects the overall health of their employers and organizations.<sup>xviii</sup>

Besides the effects on workers' mental and physical health, the impact of work stress is obvious in terms of "organizational symptoms" such as high levels of absenteeism and employee turnover.<sup>xix</sup> Studies suggest that between 50-60% of all working days in the United Kingdom are related to stress.<sup>xx</sup>

According to the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, more than half of all the 550 million working days lost every year in the United States are stress-related. This equates to \$602 per employee on an annual basis.<sup>xxi</sup> Supervisors should be mindful of increased absenteeism rates. Absenteeism is a prime indicator of stress that manifests itself in the form of physical symptoms.

In a website dedicated to military health, the U.S. Army Center for Health and Preventative Medicine identifies stress as contributing to migraines headaches, ulcers, and muscle spasms.<sup>xxii</sup> This site lists various relaxation techniques to counter the effects of stress and increase the chance of staying in service.

*Fatigue:* Stress can lead a person to feel unhappy and filled with despair. It can cause lethargy and forgetfulness, negatively impacting job performance.<sup>xxiii</sup> A typical fight or flight response causes the release of neurotransmitters called catecholamines such as adrenaline, nor epinephrine, and dopamine. The area of the brain that controls long-term memory is activated and the impressions of the experience are stored away so the threat can be recognized quickly in the future. However beneficial this process is, repeated chronic stress is exhausting. Chronic stress interferes with job performance and problem solving abilities. Furthermore, it incites irritability and anxiety.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Since police officers encounter stressful situations on a daily basis, the result of being tired and worn out is magnified. It is extremely critical that officers report to work alert and ready to handle the endless variety of requests for police service. In fact, many law enforcement organizations have long-standing policies prohibiting officers from working excessive hours without an opportunity to get needed rest between shifts. The Fresno Police Department limits its officers to work no more than 70 work hours per week. This includes mandatory court appearances. Additionally, members are required to have at least one non-work day per week.<sup>xxv</sup> The primary reason for regulating work hours within and without the department is due to the extremely sensitive nature of their jobs and the catastrophic consequences that could occur due to a miscalculation in judgment.

A recent report was published in the November/December 2002 issue of *Psychosomatic Medicine*, which linked Chronic Fatigue Syndrome to stress and offered the following rationale for linking fatigue to stress.

Subtle alterations of a hormonal stress response system called the HPA (hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal) axis may play a role in chronic fatigue syndrome. A smoothly functioning HPA axis helps the body remain stable under physiological and psychological stress through the actions of the three hormones. Chronic fatigue syndrome is characterized by debilitating fatigue that can include muscle aches, low-grade fever and sleep disturbances.<sup>xxvi</sup>

*Heart Disease/Premature Retirements:* In addition to fatigue and frequent illness, police officers are twice as likely as the rest of the population to suffer heart attacks, strokes, and other cardiovascular disease.<sup>xxvii</sup> “Part of it is the stress of the profession,” said Warren D. Franke, associate professor of health and human performance at Iowa State University.<sup>xxviii</sup>

For many years, police officers have known that they are at special risk. In fact, heart disease is presumed to be work-related for peace officers in general. Science is beginning to provide evidence of why this is so. In a 2002 journal report, the American Heart Association stated that mental stress causes the inner layer of the blood vessels to constrict, which may increase the risk of sudden cardiac arrest. This study provides baseline evidence that sudden mental stress induces endothelial dysfunction. This condition can increase the risk of heart attack or stroke.<sup>xxix</sup>

In 2003, the American Heart Association reported that mental stress can trigger a lack of blood flow to the heart and increase the risk of death in people with coronary heart disease.

Patients who had ischemia in response to mental stress had a three-fold increase in the risk of death compared to people without mental stress,” said David S. Sheps, MD, lead author and associate chief of the division of cardiovascular medicine, University of Florida Health Sciences Center, Gainesville.<sup>xxx</sup>

*Illness:* The body's response to stress is commonly referred to as "fight or flight." When it comes to warding off a true threat, this response is a blessing and a true advantage.<sup>xxxii</sup> Whereas persistent mode of stress can put people at risk for obesity, heart disease, cancer, and a variety of other illnesses.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Recent research suggests that long-term activation of the stress system can have hazardous effects on the body. In fact, medical science has estimated that a healthy human body was designed to live 120 years. However, an unhealthy level of stress speeds up this decline by adding wear and tear on bodily systems.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Pat Goudy, in "The Unofficial Guide to Beating Stress" links heart disease, type II diabetes, digestion disorders, asthma and skin rashes to recurrent acute stress and chronic stress.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Goudy adds that a bout with the common cold is the frequent result of a bout with acute stress. Furthermore, research has shown that 25% more colds occur with when people are under stress.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Most police personnel are assigned to patrol function, which typically have minimum staffing requirements to meet the demands of calls for service. The absence of a beat cop, due to illness, frequently results in another officer having to be hired back to replace them at a premium pay. These officers, in turn, run the risk of illness themselves as shift demands place them in a position of not getting enough rest. Police officers who are not well-rested fall ill more often.

The additional job tasks and individual workload associated with minimum staffing results when others have to pick up the work that is not being performed by absent police officers. Furthermore, the normative consequences of absenteeism in specialized units, e.g., domestic violence or homicide need to be considered. A common outcome is additional cases assigned to detectives that are already overwhelmed by their current workload. In the case of

patrol officers, additional workload demands can arouse acute levels of stress that may prompt an officer to resort to an inappropriate use of force.

*Improper Use of Force/Lawsuits:* When a person is under stress, the mental capability of processing information is not as acute as if the person were not under stress.<sup>xxxvi</sup> It is this rationale that is imparted to officers during frequent training sessions. Especially during high-risk, low-occurring situations, e.g., shooting a firearm, using a taser, or tactics related to SWAT operations. The training sessions are reinforced with this rationale and offered frequently to bolster this knowledge. This is done in hopes that officers will act properly on this knowledge should one of these rare high-risk situations take place.

When formulating a plan under stress, a person is more likely to come up with an irrational solution due to an inability to perceive new information.<sup>xxxvii</sup> In fact, the greater the stress, the greater the likelihood the decision-maker will chose a risky alternative.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

The Yerkes-Dodson Law, or so-called "performance-anxiety curve," explains this principle. In 1908, Robert M. Yerkes and graduate student, John D. Dodson, noticed that a rat's ability to find food at the end of a maze was related to its stress level: underfed rats solved the maze more quickly. Yerkes and Dodson also noticed that rats receiving a strong electric shock before running the maze found the food before rats that had received milder shocks, or no shocks at all. However, in both cases, there was a point at which too much stress became a hindrance – where anxiety no longer helped speed the rats through the maze. Instead the rats either froze in fear or made unwise hurried decisions.<sup>xxxix</sup> Although unwise and hurried decisions may not amount to much in a rat experiment, poor decisions made by officers as a result of stress can have grave financial consequences that fly in the face of the governing body and its police force, leaving both open to civil liability suits.

The costs associated with civil liability are great in circumstances where officers wrongfully take someone into custody, enter a home without a warrant, or use any weapon capable of deadly force. In recent years, various police departments across the nation have spent millions of dollars on lawsuits related to the inappropriate use of deadly force. For example, inappropriate use of force cost Detroit taxpayers in excess of \$32 million between 1997 and 2000. Seventy-eight percent of that money was paid in cases involving a small number of officers who were sued multiple times. One angry council member stated that something should be done to isolate repeat police offenders.<sup>x1</sup>

Similarly, the expenses associated with the loss of public trust are seen in many different forms. An increase in complaints, lack of cooperation in police investigations and resistance to report crime are just some examples of public distrust. These costs become increasingly significant as more members of the public are impacted by inappropriate use of force. A loss of public trust takes a long time to overcome. Another negative financial consequence directly related to peace officer stress can manifest itself through poor job performance.

*Poor Job Performance:* The amount of money that workplace stress extracts from the national economy is estimated to be in the billions. One reason for this loss is directly related to accidents in the workplace and lower levels of performance and productivity.<sup>xli</sup> This is because overly-stressed employees are simply not as careful as their calmer counterparts. The actions of these overly-stressed employees have an overall neglect for safety in the workplace.<sup>xlii</sup>

This is of great consequence for police officers, who are charged with driving vehicles throughout their shift, under challenging conditions. Additionally, officers are trusted to use force in carrying out their mission. In doing so, they routinely handle weapons such as handguns, tasers, and batons.

### *Historical Perspective*

In the past, departments either ignored officers with problems related to stress or dealt with them informally by assigning them to desk jobs.<sup>xliii</sup> Generally speaking, many police employees, from patrolman to the chief, ignored the topic of stress altogether.

In a personal interview with a sergeant who retired after 29 years of service with the Fresno Police Department, Robert Milla explained that officers were expected to be tough and handle anything that came their way. New officers came on the job scared and looking for acceptance. They quickly learned that humor and alcohol were acceptable outlets to deal with stress encountered from a day's worth of work. "If something hurt emotionally, you could either laugh it off or drink and forget about it," he explained.<sup>xliv</sup>

"What was interesting was that officers really stuck together through tough times and bad; just not emotionally," Milla stated. Milla offered an example of an officer encountering a tough financial situation and how the shift would rally around to help. "This support was something you would get from members up through the chain of command... However, it did not extend into the area of mental or emotional challenges, the line was clearly drawn here," Milla explained. Cops who took the time to analyze their thoughts and emotions were considered "wimpy" and fully expected to "suck it up." Somebody acquiring a reputation for being in touch with his or her emotions would definitely have a difficult time advancing or promoting through a traditional police agency.<sup>xlv</sup>

In the late 1960s, however, some positive changes began to occur. There was a move to help officers with problems that were deeply rooted and assist them with healing on the inside. The rationale was to provide stressed out officers with healthy interventions their well-intentioned co-workers interceded with an ineffective and unhealthy "suck it up and drink it off"

quick fix. Some departments began to formalize their responses, usually by incorporating officer-initiated Alcoholics Anonymous groups made up exclusively of alcoholic officers.<sup>xlvi</sup>

In the 1970s, the psychological field took a serious look at how stress was affecting police officers. Officers were questioned as to what bothered them most about their job and how they felt in the weeks following a stressful incident. Some agencies even took psychologists on as consultants.<sup>xlvi</sup> Successful cops were also questioned about how they best dealt with the rigors of the job. Retired Fresno Police Sergeant, Bob Milla, remembers this trend. He warned, however, that this trend was not necessarily about helping a cop get over a personal challenge. Milla vividly described a member of executive staff explaining the need for a psychologist so that “chinks in the armor” could be identified and removed. Milla clarified that “[it] certainly wasn’t to help officers.”<sup>xlvi</sup>

Out of this era, came the introduction of a short two-to-eight-hour block of academy training and the need for critical incident stress debriefings. Departments instituted employee assistance programs to deal with problem officers, particularly those suffering from alcoholism.<sup>xlix</sup>

The benefit of a firm foundation of college education was also identified as being good for officers; but not much else changed. The organizational leaders in most law enforcement agencies were still those officers who had been hired and inculcated with strongly held beliefs about what it took to be a successful cop back in the 1950s and 1960s.

As a result, new officers were going into the workplace equipped with a firm understanding about what police work could do to a person and a basic understanding of how to best deal with it. However, during the 1970s through the 1990s, rookie cops were not likely to put their newly acquired education to work unless administrators changed the police culture.

Thus, this project examines the issue of continuous mandatory stress management education, which does not currently exist in law enforcement, and how it will have a positive impact in large urban police agencies by the year 2009. The information provided by this research is designed to use as an organizational policy or a strategic plan for large urban law enforcement agencies.

### *Definitions*

*Stress* is the result of the biological/psychological self responding to any demand made on it no matter how big or small, pleasant or unpleasant.<sup>1</sup> Stress can be either acute or chronic.

*Acute (immediate) stress* is a one-time incident that usually comes and goes quickly. Its effect can last from minutes or hours to days or weeks. Examples of acute stress include narrowly avoiding an automobile crash (in a personal or patrol car) or a violent incident with someone. It can happen while in uniform, in the line of duty, or off-duty with friends or relatives.

*Chronic (long-term) stress* is caused by a continuing string of stressful incidents or an ongoing situation. Chronic stress is more difficult to see or pinpoint as its source can be from different areas of a person's life and the associated indicators, e.g., headaches or gastrointestinal problems, often attributed to some other cause. Examples of chronic stress include a difficult job environment, caring for someone with a chronic disease, or a state of loneliness.<sup>li</sup>

*Industrial stress retirement* results from a physically- or mentally-related disability that evolves during the retiree's career in law enforcement.<sup>lii</sup> In cases of stress retirement, these injuries can be a one-time incident or the accumulative result of repetitive incidents.

*Stress education* is a formal curriculum established by an expert on police stress. It is intended to educate police officers on stress identification and management of such stressors.

*Mandatory stress education* is defined as training imposed by an agency having the authority to force this change upon a law enforcement organization in this country.

*Mandatory, continual stress management training* is defined as a course that all department members are required to attend on a recurring basis. There are similarities to mandatory range qualification courses or CPR training which police personnel are already familiar with. By mandating this type of instruction, and assigning financial resources to it, management demonstrates the perceived value in the content. This “buy in” at the top of an organization is part of the cultural shift that must occur for line personnel to view the material seriously.

The degree of repetition of this instruction is contingent on the amount of time dedicated to each segment. For example, a 2-day workshop schedule once a year would have similar benefits to a revolving 30-minute briefing tape viewed on a monthly basis. The key is that the training be binding and takes place on a returning basis throughout an officer’s career.

### *Organization of the Project*

Chapter I, Issue Identification, provides background information in the form of justification for this modification to occur and a historical perspective, as well as giving information about the current costs related to improperly managed stress in law enforcement.

Chapter II, Futures Study, provides a forward-looking approach that examines trends and events that assist in forecasting a probable future. Chapter III, Strategic Plan, is designed to create a plan that transitions continual mandatory stress management education into the training programs of one model urban law enforcement agency. Chapter IV, Transition Management, explores the initiation, maintenance, and evaluation of change within an organization. It explains

how a mandatory stress management education curriculum can be successfully introduced to a law enforcement agency and effectively maintained to help alleviate officer stress thereby causing a positive outcome to occur for both agency and officer. Chapter V, Conclusion, provides a summary and recommendation for the future and implications for leadership.

In sum, studying the issue of mandatory stress education in law enforcement is of major importance to individual police members, executive managers, and department heads. Since stress is proven to have such a detrimental effect on the officer, their family, the public, the criminal justice system, and law enforcement agency budgets, it would behoove law enforcement administration to address stress in a direct and aggressive manner. Law enforcement leaders simply cannot afford to inadvertently miss, or be intimidated by, the various signs of stress within their rank-and-file. Indeed, law enforcement agencies can no longer afford to look the other way as its officers attempt to deal with negative encounters on their own. Therefore, various methods for combating workplace stress needs to be examined and tested for effectiveness and optimal results.

Furthermore, the effects of untreated stress among officers poignantly serve as proof that policy change is in order. Either new internal policies have to be written or old policies need to be revised. Policies and procedures delineating how mandatory stress education is accessed and utilized by officers, staff, and administration alike will ensure its longevity. Once officers realize that this curriculum is genuinely there to help them and will not be used to eliminate or disqualify them from their livelihoods, they will be more likely to support it. In any case, these policies should be penned to protect officers with the same spirit and energy that officers so courageously use to protect the public.

That said, this project will explore how such education is beneficial to police organizations and their communities. This project will also examine the impact that continual mandatory stress education will have on a large urban agency by the year 2009. The following chapter will identify the various trends and events used to make projections regarding this issue over the next five years.

## CHAPTER TWO

### FUTURES FORECASTING

#### *Introduction*

In trying to anticipate the future, there simply is no magical way to do it. A precise future projecting how mandatory stress training will impact law enforcement is impossible to foresee with exact certainty. Simply stated, there are just too many factors involved that could perplex assumptions and make them meaningless. However, a scientific method could increase the odds of correctly guessing what potential future outcomes by taking perplexing factors into account.

Determining what impact mandatory stress training may have on law enforcement in the future seems best done by scanning the horizon of upcoming trends from social, technological, economic, environmental, and political sources.<sup>liii</sup> The nominal group technique (NGT) is a technique commonly used for organizational decision-making and problem solving. This methodical technique for forecasting noteworthy trends and events allows for the best projection of a potential future. The NGT process continuously evolves in a manner that assists the panel in achieving the desired future outcome relative to the particular topic under exploration. The particular topic explored in this case is how ongoing mandatory stress management training will affect negative work-related stressors experienced by the officers of this particular law enforcement agency. The next section contains a description of this specific NGT process and how it was formed.

### *Nominal Group Technique*

In January 2004, a Nominal Group Technique (NGT) process was conducted to identify and forecast trends and events that could influence how continual mandatory stress management training would impact a large urban law enforcement agency. The NGT panel forecasted trends and events ten years into the future, beginning in early 2004 and ending in 2014.

#### *Benefits*

One benefit associated with the NGT process is that it balances participation across members and balances influence of individuals. The NGT process produces creative ideas through the equal interaction by members of the group, thereby generating a greater number of ideas than do traditional interacting groups where a strong personality might tend to dominate. The results are greater participation and satisfaction for participants. It also reduces the conforming influence common to most face-to-face group meetings and encourages participants to confront issues on a problem-solving basis rather than on a personal assault basis. Overall, the NGT process leads to greater sense of closure and accomplishment.<sup>liv</sup>

#### *Limitations*

A limitation associated with the NGT process is that it requires extended advance preparation. This means it cannot be a spontaneous technique. The NGT process tends to be limited to a single-purpose, single-topic meeting. Therefore, it is difficult to change topics in the middle of the meeting. The NGT process requires agreement from all participants to use the same structured method, which some people might resist.<sup>lv</sup>

### *Panel Selection*

The process began with a selection of eight panel members. Once selected, the panelists individually and collectively brainstormed through various trend analyses, event analyses, and cross impact analyses.

The panel members brought forth varied and broad life experiences that provided a rich and diverse knowledge base. The members were provided with a thorough explanation of what the issue statement was and what the process was meant to elicit. The panel was composed of a clinical psychologist who had experience working with police officers, a wife of a 24-year veteran police detective, the vice president of Alliant University (formerly known as California School of Professional Psychology), a Fresno police K-9 officer who works with officers struggling with emotional challenges, two doctoral-level Ph.D. students in forensic psychology, a Fresno police sergeant with a bachelor's degree in psychology, and a Fresno police SWAT Commander.

### *Trend Analysis*

Prior to beginning, the panel members were educated on what precisely a trend was and how a trend differed from an event. Panelists were told to think of a trend in the past, present and future and give their opinion on whether the trend was increasing or decreasing. Examples of trends provided to the group were the direction of the stock market, housing sales or crime rates.

Panelists were asked to think of the trend as it progressed through time. To assist panelists in assigning this trend a numerical value, they were instructed to assign the trend a numerical value of "100" as the perceived level of the trend in the present moment. A higher level of the trend in the past or future would result in a larger number. A decrease, conversely,

would result in a smaller number. The degree of change in the numerical value would depend on the degree of increase or decrease in the trend.

Lastly, panelists were asked to assign a numerical value to the level of concern this trend would have on the issue statement. The greater the level of perceived concern on this issue statement, the greater the number. They were instructed not to justify or defend their thoughts and ideas when initially presenting them to the group.

Each individual in the group silently generated ideas and wrote them down. The panel members engaged in a round table feedback session to concisely record each idea. Each recorded idea was then discussed to obtain clarification and evaluation. The panel members voted privately on the priority of ideas then the group decision was made based on these ratings. Several things were needed in order for the NGT process to work: Adequate time for thinking and reflection; social facilitation from seeing others working on the same task; sufficient time for generating ideas; and the discipline by panelists to remain problem-centered.

Several areas that panelists needed to avoid were: Interruptions; undue focus on a small number of ideas; competition; status pressures and conformity pressures; choosing between ideas prematurely; presenting the question or problem to the group in written form; verbally reading the question to the group; directing the group to write ideas in brief phrases or statements; or asking the group to work silently and independently.<sup>lvi</sup>

Members identified 25 trends (see appendix A). These trends were narrowed down to the top eight as determined by panelists who cast their votes for those trends they believed to have the greatest impact on the issue statement “what impact will a continual, mandatory stress management training have on a large, urban law enforcement agency by 2009?”

The trend “complexity of the job task,” for example, indicates the panel believed the job to be less complex five years in the past, as represented by the number designation 75. Conversely, the panel believed the job would become more complicated five years in the future through the selection of the number 120. Ten years in the future, the panel believed the complexity of the job would increase even further. This is demonstrated by the assignment of the number 150. Panelists believed the level of concern to be rather high. On a scale of one to 10, the panelists rated the complexity of job task trend at 8.5 as delineated in the following trend statement chart. All values were determined using the median.

*Trend Summary Table*

(2.1)

	<b>Trend Statement</b>	<b>-5 years</b>	<b>Today</b>	<b>+5 years</b>	<b>+10 years</b>	<b>Level of Concern 1-10</b>
1	Complexity of job task	75	100	120	150	8.5
2	Law Enforcement’s respect for mental health professionals	90	100	110	145	7
3	Funding level allowed for stress education	90	100	120	140	6
4	Credibility of stress education	80	100	125	165	10
5	Perceived competency of mental health professionals	90	100	120	145	5
6	Number of critical incidents	110	100	100	120	8
7	Police willingness to accept stress education	70	100	125	140	6
8	Leadership’s view of job stress as relevant	40	100	125	140	10

*Trend Analysis*

*Trend 1: Complexity of job task*

“Complexity of the job task” refers to the variety of topics, responsibilities, policies and procedures a police officer must be intimately familiar with in order to accomplish their tasks.

Members felt the role of the police officer was less complicated five years ago compared to today. Panelists felt the complexity of the police job would increase by 20% in five years and 50% in ten years. They pointed to changes in technology and weapon options as a major culprit. They felt that even though technology was meant to make the police job easier, it often had an opposite effect. They discussed a recent case involving a Madera police officer who accidentally drew a firearm instead of a taser and fatally shot a handcuffed prisoner as he sat in the back of a patrol car.

The panel felt the continual modification, addition, or elimination of laws required officers to perpetually train for their jobs. Members pointed specifically to the issue of domestic violence and the major changes that have taken place in this area over the past few years.

One member felt that technology would make the job less complicated. Others, however, felt that increasing technology would require an officer to learn even more tasks in order to carry out the job. Overall, the group believed that as the job became more complicated, there would be a greater chance of an officer becoming overwhelmed. This would cause officers to become “stressed out” on a more frequent basis, leading to a greater need for a mandatory, continuous form of stress education.

#### *Trend 2: Law enforcement’s respect for mental health professionals*

“Law enforcement’s respect of mental health professionals” was defined as the degree of esteem which law enforcement had for those making up the mental health field. Compared to today, the group felt there was 10% less respect for the field five years ago.

One panelist felt this was due to the Freudian-based therapy that once dominated mainstream psychology. She felt this was very ineffective with police personalities who are indoctrinated in the demand for proof and results based on statistical evidence.

This panelist felt that the psychological field, as a whole, was in the process of changing to an emerging cognitive-behavioral model. She felt this results-oriented process was much more acceptable to the personalities making up law enforcement. She felt police officers have a tremendous need for control at work and very reluctant to give it up to anybody unless there is trust. One way to gain trust is through statistical evidence, which she felt was present via the use of cognitive psychology.

As a group, panelists were confident that respect for mental health professionals would improve by 10% in the next five years and 45% in the next ten years. This was deemed plausible by the panel as law enforcement and mental health professionals are increasingly collaborating with one another in the areas of education, research, and training. The simple act of working with each other and achieving consensus will increase the odds of cooperation percentage-wise.

Currently, mental health professionals are seen as having the primary responsibility over stress-related issues. One panelist felt there would continue to be a reluctance to invest time and money into stress-related solutions until psychologists are seen as worthy of respect and trust by both police officers and their administrations.

At the current time, the psychological expert opined that there is little respect for the psychological field by police officers and very little trust. Until this level of respect changes for the better, the chance for true benefits is minimal.

The panelists, as a whole, concurred that law enforcement's general lack of respect for mental health professionals was of great concern. Resistance to continuous mandatory stress management training will naturally be a concern in the implementation and normalization phases of the operation. This was exhibited through a score of seven on a scale of one through ten.

### *Trend 3: Funding level allowed for stress education*

This trend is the funding level designated from police budgets for stress education. The panel felt that five years ago, this amount was very minimal. Presently, however, the picture has not improved much. Ten years in the future, the panel saw gradual increases. As a result, the panel assigned the number 90 for funding levels five years ago, 120 for five years in the future and 140 for ten years in the future. They felt these low funding levels are due to the fact that very little data backs the link between stress and negative impacts on police organizations. The level of concern was designated as a six. The panel didn't rate it higher as they believed that sources could be identified to accomplish this training through non-traditional police funding.

### *Trend 4: Credibility of stress education*

“Credibility of stress education” refers to the level of confidence that law enforcement members have for stress education and its ability to deliver measurable results. Stress education or “psycho-education” is not the same as the relationship created between a client and professional psychiatrist or psychologist.

Formal mental health treatment is typically done on a one-to-one basis, where the treatment expert and the patient share a doctor-client relationship. This relationship is recognized by the court system and certain confidentiality protection exists in this association.

Stress education, on the other hand, is usually accomplished in a group, classroom-like setting. The presenter or facilitator generally speaks with the group in a more general fashion. There is no expectation of confidentiality in this relationship.

Panelists believed credibility of stress education in law enforcement was greater today than it was five years ago. They felt this credibility would increase by 25% in five years and jump by 65% in ten years. One panelist reported of recently witnessing favorable outcomes in

programs that were meant to educate police on stress. This panelist believed that as the word spread, credibility would continue to rise in the future.

The panelists felt that observable results in the credibility of stress education trend would be of great relevance to the issue statement. This was obvious in the assignment of the number ten on a scale from one to ten.

Consensus among the panelists revealed that law enforcement leaders would require evidence that the costs associated with stress education was worthwhile. Stress education would have to be seen as worth the cost as it would be a tool used to counter the high cost of stress associated with negative stress behavior, e.g., excessive use of force lawsuits, absenteeism, and early retirement.

Without this proof, law enforcement leaders are likely to scrap cutting-edge stress education programs to replace them with alternatives they felt showed a concrete benefit. It is for this reason the panelists offered that credibility would be of absolute importance.

*Trend 5: Perceived competency of mental health professionals*

The psychologists represented on this panel were very vocal on this trend. They felt the perceived competency level of mental health professionals was presently very low. They gave examples of incompetent treatment that had been recently publicized. They believed that these types of mistakes would not be easily forgiven by police personalities who have a difficult time trusting others to begin with. Overall, the panel believed that perceived competency levels have improved somewhat in recent years and could be expected to improve even more in the future. The panel assigned the number 90 to five years ago, 120 for five years in the future and 145 for ten years in the future. The panel believed the level of concern for this issue statement was moderate through the number designation of five.

Due to this perceived confidence level, the panel pointed out that psychologists might not be the best instructors on this topic for the training. They believed police instructors, with a background in psychology, would be better suited to do so.

*Trend 6: Number of Critical Incidents*

The panel noted the “number of critical incidents” trend refers to the quantity of events that can bring a great degree of external stress to the life of a police officer through first-hand observation.

Panelists felt the number of critical incidents was greater five years ago by 10%. They pointed to the violent nature of crime that peaked in recent history, leading to the high number of critical incidents that officers were dispatched to. They felt crime had decreased significantly at the present moment and could be expected to remain at these lows over the next five years. This was a big factor in the lower number of critical incidents officers were now encountering.

Overall, panelists felt crime would increase by 20% in ten years and critical incidents for police would increase as well. One lone panelist felt that critical incidents would decrease due to the impact of proactive efforts currently taking place to minimize domestic violence related crimes. In her opinion, this would have an overall impact on crime and reduce the number of critical incidents responses.

The panel believed the number of critical incidents lent support to the issue statement in that continuous mandatory stress management training would affect officer stress in a positive way. It would do so by making law enforcement officers aware of their particular state of being during acute or chronic stress events. As critical incidents increase, there are greater outside factors leading to stress. This, in turn, increases the likelihood that officers will encounter problems associated with overall stress symptoms. The panelists felt the number of critical

incidents would contribute to officer stress. As it result, an eight reflected their concern for the training to occur.

*Trend 7: Police willingness to accept stress education*

The panel believed that an individual must see a personal need before becoming open to the education. Without this willingness, there is little chance the information will make a difference. They noted that in order to increase openness, there must be a change in the culture of the profession. The panel believed this is gradually occurring. They believe that five years ago there was much less willingness to accept stress education as relevant (70). They felt there would be an increase in this willingness in five years (125) and even more so ten years in the future (140). The panel had moderate concern regarding this trend. The panel believed that even though there would still be many employees unwilling to accept the education, they would not block the education from becoming mandatory and continual. In fact, they believed that employees initially unwilling to accept the education would later become more accepting.

*Trend 8: Leadership's View of Job Stress as Relevant*

Basically, the group felt the profession witnessed major improvements in recent history. One panelist pointed to the fact that convening an NGT session to discuss the topic was evidence that positive change was occurring. Overall, the panel felt that 60% more of today's law enforcement leaders viewed job stress as relevant than just five years ago. Sadly, law enforcement leaders, in general, have been slow to change their opinion. Another panelist stated that traditional management's solution for stress management has been to, "suck it up and do your job." However, one panelist stated that educated line officers have begun to see the connection between job stress and health in recent years. The leaders of tomorrow's law enforcement will be drawn from this pool of officers.

In the next five years, panelists felt there would be a 25% increase in leadership's view of job stress as relevant to the job. They felt this would increase an additional 15% between years five and ten. One big reason for such a dramatic change was the panel's opinion that leaders will begin to see the favorable outcome of intervention efforts.

The panel felt leadership's view of job stress supported the impact statement because leaders have a final say as to where funding is channeled. So long as leadership sees range and pursuit training as more important than stress education, they will continue to push revenue to topics traditionally viewed as important. Greater acceptance is a high concern. Therefore, the value ten was assigned to the level of concern.

The panel found that the agency's culture, as primarily controlled by leadership, had to shift first in order for continuous mandatory stress training programs to be enacted. This is what the panel referred to as a culture shift. A culture shift must start with leadership by altering their opinion of continuous mandatory stress management as being a good thing, which would then be demonstrated through their decisions related to funds dispersal.

Once the panel addressed significant trends that impacted the issue statement, possible events that could alter the program's implementation and success were considered. The panel subsequently conducted the following event projection to address various possibilities of the program's future.

#### *Event Analysis*

It was explained to the panel that events occurred at a single moment in time and could have a substantial influence on the issue statement. Events were described as monumental events that grabbed headlines. Panel members identified 26 potential events that could significantly affect the issue (appendix B). After discussion, the events were narrowed down to

the top six. The table on this page shows the top event statements as compiled by the nominal group panel. Next to each event statement is the first year in which probability exceeds zero. In the next two columns, the probability of that event occurring in the next five or ten years is shown. The final column represents a number designation for the impact, either positive or negative, on the issue statement, should the event actually occur. The median was used to calculate group projections.

*Event Summary Table*

(2.2)

	<b>Event Statement</b>	<b>Years Until Probability Exceeds Zero</b>	<b>Probability +5 years</b>	<b>Probability +10 years</b>	<b>Impact on Issue if Event Occurred -10 to 10</b>
1	Record level of stress retirement claims	5	50	75	10
2	Successful lawsuit by officer for not receiving stress education	5	45	80	10
3	Large scandal attributed to stress	5	60	87	10
4	Lawsuit by officer due to stress education	15	0	0	-8
5	Officer freezes up due to stress causes injury to another	5	32	50	9
6	Mass attack on police causes high stress	5	40	60	6

The panel identified the following events as having the greatest impact on the issue statement.

*Event 1: Record level of stress retirement claims*

A record level of stress retirement claims was described as a number that had never been seen before. This number of claims would have to be so high that it would cause retirement programs, its members, and the public to take serious notice. For sake of this discussion, a 25% increase in the number of law enforcement stress retirements was selected.

The panelists, as a group, felt it would be at least five years before the probability of this event occurring exceeded zero. They felt there was a 50% likelihood that stress claims exceeding a 25% increase would occur by year five. They felt there were already high levels of stress retirements in law enforcement; however, not much attention has been paid to this topic in the past. They felt this was currently in the process of changing. Panelists pointed to the fact that worker's compensation fraud units were being created within many law enforcement agencies lately due to the increased awareness of premature stress retirements that were fraudulent in nature. They felt the implications of doing nothing about it were high. Panelists felt abuse of stress claims had become less tolerable in unstable fiscal times.

The panelists discussed the changing profile of employees taking early retirement and pointing to stress as the reason. They felt there was no longer a negative stigma associated with doing so. In the past, such persons would never show up at retirement celebrations. However, it has not been an embarrassment for an officer receiving a premature retirement in recent years.

One panelist felt there was one major obstacle for many officers considering a stress retirement: the inability to carry a firearm once they accepted a stress retirement. In his opinion, the firearm was such a significant part of being a police officer that it was like losing a part of their anatomy once they were unable to carry it.

Overall, the panelists felt that a record level of stress retirement claims would have a major positive impact (+10) on law enforcement to do something creative to solve this problem, such as continual, mandatory stress education. With this added incentive, agencies would be more willing to spend some of their limited budgetary dollars to save some of the money currently being spent on stress retirement claims.

*Event 2: Successful lawsuit by officer for not receiving stress education*

This event was defined as a successful lawsuit brought on by a current police officer claiming to have suffered some loss due to not getting proper stress education. The panelists, as a group, felt it would take five years before the probability of this event occurring to exceed zero. They felt there was a 45% chance of a successful lawsuit by an officer against his agency for not receiving continual stress education in five years. This probability increased to 80% in ten years.

Most panelists felt that one reason for this likelihood was the deep pockets of municipalities. Another reason was the cultural norm in finding external fault rather than looking at oneself for blame. Blaming a police agency for not providing education is one way for employees to avoid looking at themselves.

One panelist disagreed with this line of reasoning, pointing out that rarely do police agencies currently get sued internally due to a lack of training. Conversely, other panelists felt that a successful lawsuit by an officer against his employer for not receiving stress education would have a major positive impact on the issue statement. The value of ten was assigned to the impact. Once this occurs, the dissenting panelist argued that there would be legal precedence related to mandatory stress training. This would cause stress education to be seen similar to the training required for the use of firearms or driving of an emergency vehicle. This, in turn, would cause police managers to scramble to do something to protect their organizations. One way to accomplish this would be through continual stress education.

*Event 3: Large police scandal attributed to stress*

The panel recognized that large scandals in police organizations were anything but novel, e.g., the Rodney King beating of the early 1990s. They readily admitted that recent scandals in New Orleans, Los Angeles and Philadelphia were old news and well covered in the press. There

was a major difference between past events and this futures-related event. The futures-related event, openly and vehemently pointed to the stress of their jobs as the cause.

Panelists, as a group, felt it would take five years before the probability of this event occurring exceeded zero. Of the top five events, a large scandal in a police organization attributed to stress had the highest probability. Panelists felt there was a 60% likelihood of this happening after five years and 87% after ten years.

One panelist felt that although officers might blame stress for large scandals, police management would work hard to refute this claim. Police leaders would do so in an attempt to show that such behaviors are isolated events unlikely to recur in the future.

Another panelist felt the media would play a major role in such an event. Since the media has a history of finding fault within an organization rather than the individual officer, there would be a strong push for the development of training for the masses. This training, it would be argued, would minimize the chances of a similar scandal from ever happening again.

All panelists agreed that such an event would have a positive impact (+10) on the issue statement, as stress-related training would become a major focus by the media.

#### *Event 4: Lawsuit by officer due to stress education*

This event was described as an officer bringing a lawsuit against their employer for causing them to attend stress education training. A panelist argued that there are many employees who refuse to look at themselves or doing anything to improve their condition. He felt that because of this, there was a possibility that an association might take up their cause and try to block this movement through the courts. The panel felt it would be fifteen years until this was probable. The impact of this event on the issue statement would be disastrous as it would

make it impossible to impose continual, mandated stress education. This was demonstrated through a rating of -8.

*Event 5: Officer freezes up due to stress causes injury to another*

This event was described as an officer failing to take action due to well-known stress the officer had recently been under. This officer's failure to take required action, in turn, resulted in another officer being injured.

The likelihood of an officer freezing up, due to stress, resulting in injury to another could exceed zero within the next five years. There was a 32% chance of this happening within the next five years and 50% chance within the next ten years.

One panelist felt the issue of police stress is recognized by researchers and discussed extensively in the current literature. This panelist stated there are countless websites and books devoted to police stress. This abundance of information allows officers to be very aware of what to look for in their environment, to diagnose their work associates, and to recognize indicators and see a negative consequence in the making before it happens. This has good implications. In the past, officers might know that something was wrong but did not quite know what was wrong. Since fellow officers did not know how to identify symptoms, there was a sense of helplessness as to how to best help the distressed officer.

This panelist also suggested that a well-liked officer who freezes up would result in a much different result than an officer who was not respected or liked. In the case of a well-liked officer, there would be a propensity to blame stress as the cause rather than looking at the individual officer.

Another panelist felt that such an event might have a negative impact on the issue statement. He felt there might be some police managers who would lean towards simply

increasing fitness for duty examinations or internal affairs investigations, rather than training, as a way to guard against repeat events.

Overall, panelists felt that an officer freezing up and causing injury to another officer would have a positive impact on the issue should it occur. This is demonstrated by the assignment of the value ten. The panelists believed this event would create thrust to mandate some form of continual stress education. Police agencies and their attorneys would mobilize quickly to create such training that would help shield them from future liability.

#### *Event 6- Mass attack on police causes high stress*

This event was described as a high profile, nationally recognized event, where police were targeted and killed simply because of their police affiliation. The group agreed they had never heard of such an occasion. As a group, they felt that should something like this take place, all police personnel would be on edge and unable to function at a optimal levels. The panel believed this was possible after five years. The probability of it occurring would be moderate after five years. The probability would be somewhat higher after ten years (60%). Should this event occur, it would have a positive impact (6) on the issue statement. Panel members felt there would be less reluctance to create a mandated, continual form of stress education with this event fresh on their minds.

#### *Other discussion*

Concern over a “staggering level of officer suicide” arose during the event discussion, however couldn’t be categorized as an event. There was, however, good dialogue relative to this topic and is included in this section as a result. Panelists agreed there are already many suicides occurring within law enforcement as indicated in Chapter One. The suicide rate for police officers is currently double the rate of the general population

One panelist stated that there were far too many factors involved in a person committing suicide. Relationships at home and their financial picture were just some of those factors.

Another panelist felt agencies would be more concerned about the economic impact of employee turnover. This, she reasoned, would cause agencies to react with prevention strategies to keep suicides from occurring.

As a group, the panel felt that suicides are often considered to be the last resort of a very troubled person. Such a traumatic condition to occur within the mind of a person sworn to protect the public would cause great societal concern.

#### *Cross Impact Analysis*

Shortly after the Nominal Group Technique discussion, the author and one member of the panel met to do a cross-impact analysis. The impact of events on trends was discussed. A rating of one to five was assigned to each, with five representing the highest degree of impact. The average of the two scores was used. A plus (+) or minus (-) was selected depending on whether the impact was seen as being positive or negative as it pertained to the impact on continuous mandatory stress management training. This process was beneficial in helping leadership determine whether an event should be encouraged or discouraged from occurring in order to achieve a desirable future.

*Cross Impact Analysis Table*

**(2.3)**

<b>Trend / Event</b>	<b>T1 Complex job task</b>	<b>T2 LE respect for mental health experts</b>	<b>T3 Funding level allowed for stress education</b>	<b>T4 Credibility of stress education</b>	<b>T5 Perceived competency of mental health experts</b>	<b>T6 Number of critical incidents</b>	<b>T7 Police acceptance of stress ed</b>	<b>T8 Leadership view of stress as relevant</b>
E1: Record level of stress claims	2	2	4	4	2	2	4	5
E2: Successful suit for not receiving stress education	1	3	5	5	2	2	5	5
E3: Large scandal attributed to stress	1	2	5	5	2	2	2	3
E4: Lawsuit by officer due to stress ed	1	-3	-3	-3	-4	2	-3	1
E5: Officer “freezing up” causes injury to another	4	5	5	5	2	2	5	5
E6: Mass attack on police causes high stress	2	4	4	4	1	2	3	3

*Cross Impact Analysis Discussion*

Following is discussion related to the cross-impact analysis. It appears the following trends: respect for mental health experts, funding levels for stress education, credibility for stress education and police acceptance of stress education, are impacted to a large extent by many of the events discussed.

*Event 1: Record Level of Stress Claims*

A record number of stress-related claims would have a favorable impact on the funding levels allowed for stress education programs and the credibility of stress education. There would also be many in law enforcement who would shift to accepting stress education as relevant. Police leadership would be impacted to a greater degree, as stress claims would cause high turnover and hurt police experience for years to come. Allowing such an event to occur would not be recommended.

*Event 2: Successful Lawsuit for not Providing Stress Education*

A future successful lawsuit against a law enforcement agency for not providing stress education would create precedence other agencies would be obligated to follow. As such, there would be a major impact on the funding allowed for stress education, credibility of stress education and police acceptance of stress education. Police leadership would be forced to see stress as relevant in order to avoid potential lawsuits to their agencies. It would be unethical to allow conditions to occur that would cause such an event.

*Event 3: Large scandal attributed to stress*

A large scandal attributed to workplace stress would have a favorable impact on the funding levels allowed for stress education. A scandal would likely get the attention of political figures who might be quick to divert funds in hopes of mitigating another such event. It would also favorably impact the credibility of stress education, as visible nexus to police operations would become apparent. Police leadership would also be quick to get a stress curriculum in place for fear of a negligent training claim.

*Event 4: Lawsuit by officer due to stress education*

A successful lawsuit by an officer objecting to mandatory stress education would have a very negative impact on the issue statement. Law enforcement respect for mental health experts, funding levels allowed for stress education, credibility of stress education, perceived competence of mental health experts and police acceptance of stress education would all be impacted harmfully. As such, there should be a concerted effort to help police unions and their membership understand the personal employee benefits related to such a change. By doing so, there is less likelihood that such an event would occur.

*Event 5: Officer Freezes Up Causing Injury to Another Officer*

An officer freezing up due to stress causing injury or death to another would have the greatest impact across all trends. Those in law enforcement would see an increase in their respect for mental health professionals. At the same time, there would be a funding augmentation towards stress education and an increase in credibility in learning relative to stress. Police, across the board, would be much more willing to accept stress education; both at the line level and leadership. Obviously, allowing such a horrible incident to occur is unthinkable.

*Event 6: Mass attack on police causes high stress*

A mass attack on police personnel would cause high anxiety in the profession. This event would have a favorable impact on the respect for mental health experts, as their services would be highly sought. There would also be a freeing up of funding for stress education and credibility for the topic.

*Alternative Future Scenarios*

Although these scenarios are a fictitious, they serve as realistic projections as to what could occur if continuous mandatory stress management training is not implemented in law

enforcement agencies. These scenarios incorporate projected trends and events, allowing planners to explore alternative realities and underlying implications for the future of stress management in law enforcement.

SCENARIO 1:        Normative

Dateline- October 30, 2009 USA Today

*“Soaring crime rate due to stressed out cops”*

California crime rates have seen a major upswing over the past two years. This increase is up from the 30-year low achieved just four years ago. This increase has many in Sacramento wondering what has caused this reversal of positive momentum.

Dr. Jorge Negrete, a psychologist at Stanford University, believes he has one reason for this sudden change. He points to the dwindling number of arrests being made by once energetic police officers. In 2004, there were 35,000 arrests by California cops. Last year, this number was down to around 24,000, despite a five percent increase in California’s population. “This drop in production, at first, is baffling,” says Negrete.

Negrete, however, believes he understands what is happening just beneath the surface. While arrests are down, stress claims for California cops are up nearly 50%; a record level since record-keeping began in 1980 (event #1). Many of these officers are away from their duties on long-term absences. Their absence is causing other officers to pick up the slack, resulting in tremendous amounts of overtime and time spent away from their families. This simply adds to the stress across the workforce. “What started off as a small problem has now blossomed into an epidemic that affects one in every two officers. The visible symptom is the increase in crime due to officers who are tired, resentful and don’t feel like working or even care anymore,” Negrete added. But there are other factors in the overwhelming feeling that many officers are

now experiencing. Negrete adds that being a police officer in 2010 is far more complicated than being a cop in 1970 (trend #1). This only adds to the stress levels absorbed by those applying for the job. “When you add it all together, it isn’t a good recipe for success,” added Negrete.

The solution may be present in communities that have taken proactive steps to address police stress. One such city is Fresno, where the chief of police supported implementation of an Employee Intervention Program four years ago (trend #8). In Fresno, arrests have remained high and crime rates low. Coincidentally, stress claims in this Central Valley city are about half of those seen in the rest of the state (event #1).

SCENARIO 2:        Pessimistic

Dateline: March 13, 2009 San Francisco Chronicle

*“Officer freezes up, leaving his partner dead”*

Amy Jefferson and her daughter, Cindy, were in San Francisco to watch an afternoon Giants baseball game. They ended up seeing much more than they had planned on. Amy and Cindy could only watch helplessly as a knife-wielding suspect attacked a police officer repeatedly with a knife, resulting in his death. This happened just two blocks from SBC Park, moments after the Giants had defeated the visiting Los Angeles Dodgers. “We were talking about the game when a big commotion broke out just outside the right field gate entrance,” explained Amy. “At first, we thought it was a couple of drunks fighting, then we realized the cop was getting stabbed,” she added.

After the two-minute attack, the suspect simply put the knife down and gave up. What astonished Jefferson most was that the dead officer’s partner was right next to him, however, he never reacted (event #5). “He just stood there like he was watching TV,” Amy said. “We all yelled at him to shoot the suspect, but he just stood there frozen,” Amy continued.

The deceased officer has been identified as Raymond Smith, a 12-year veteran with S.F.P.D. His partner has been identified as Greg Watson, a 15-year veteran. Early accounts point to recent, numerous critical incidents that Watson has been involved in as the source of his issues (trend #6). Watson shot and killed a motorist on a traffic stop in 2004. He also shot and wounded a burglary suspect in 2007. Both shootings were ruled as justified by the District Attorney's Office.

Officer Sam Gines, who has known Watson for several years stated, "I don't know what happened out there yesterday, but I know Greg hasn't been right for a couple of years now. We've all tried to get him help. Everybody knew he wasn't right." Smith leaves behind a wife of eight years and three children.

This tragedy sent a shock wave through the S.F.P.D., still grieving the death of three officers who committed suicide over the past year. These untimely deaths contributed to the overall staggering level of police suicide across the country that appears to have reached epidemic proportions (other discussion).

San Francisco Police Chief Raymond Smith has been a vocal proponent of mandated stress education for police officers on a continual basis (trend #8). "This tragedy highlights the need for our department to implement ongoing education related to stress for all of our personnel. We've been going to far too many funerals. This has to come to an end," stated an emotional Smith. San Francisco Police Officers Association president Milt Channing joined Chief Smith at news conference Friday and vowed to support any efforts to help his officers cope with the rigors of the job (trend #4 and #7).

SCENARIO 3:        Optimistic

Dateline: July 4, 2009 Sacramento Bee

*“Cop Stress Training Signed into Law”*

Yesterday, the Governor of California signed into law a bill requiring all police agencies with over fifty officers to implement mandatory stress training. This act is representative of actions that have taken place over the last five years to assist police personnel more effectively deal with workplace stress. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger said, “the job of a police officer has become very complicated (trend #1) and demanding due to critical incidents (trend #6). We have to do something to make sure officers continue take care of themselves first.”

Five years ago, 45 police officers from across the country took their own lives. By contrast, only 19 officers did so in 2008. Dr. Jana Price-Sharps, who has worked with police agencies for the past ten years believes the positive trend is due to a police culture more willing to examine itself and accept stress management as a relevant tool to improve their performance (trend #7). “Over the past five years, police managers have worked much closer with the psychological profession and we’ve gotten to respect one another. I believe this is one reason for the positive trend,” Sharps added (trend #2).

Police budgets have begun shifting significant funding into their training budgets to accommodate this mandate (trend #3). At the Fresno Police Department, Chief Robert Nevarez has placed \$500,000 into his 2009 coffers to finance a mandatory stress management curriculum. “I firmly believe the upfront cost will pay off in reduced numbers complaints, lawsuits and stress retirements,” Nevarez said (event #2).

In Chapter II, events and trends were studied to determine which were most likely to have a significant impact on the issue statement. The Nominal Group Technique was used to do so. Several trends such as complexity of job task, law enforcement’s respect for mental health

professionals, credibility of stress education, number of critical incidents and leadership's view of job stress were selected as having the greatest level of concern for the issue. Several events such as record levels of stress retirement claims, successful lawsuit by an officer for not receiving stress education, a large scandal attributed to stress, an officer freezing up due to stress causing injury to another officer were the identified as having the greatest potential impact on the issue statement. Alternative future scenarios were also utilized to peer into the future and probe potential outcomes.

In Chapter III, a strategic plan will be created to implement a mandatory, continuous form of stress management in a large, urban law enforcement agency.

## CHAPTER THREE

### STRATEGIC PLANNING

#### *Introduction*

In Chapter II, events and trends were discussed that could have an impact on the issue statement “what impact will continuous mandatory stress management training have on large urban law enforcement agencies by the year 2009?” The insights gained from the comprehensive and multi-perspective discussion of the nominal group process and future-based scenario projections provided glimpses into the future related to the issue statement.

In Chapter III, Strategic Planning, a strong vision will be created that leadership truly desires for the benefit of their organizations. Once this vision is firmly established, the groundwork has been established for the proper decisions to be made in the current reality that will allow the vision to become a certainty.

Long time author, Lou Tice, believes there is a strong psychological reason for the vision to be established first. In his curriculum, “The Pacific Institute-Imagine 21,” he explains the subconscious mind has a principal goal to keep people and their organizations exactly as they are in the present moment. Hence the well-known phrase, “we are creatures of habit.” In his workshops, Tice encourages leaders to “set the vision first, without spending too much time worrying about how it will be achieved.”<sup>lvii</sup>

The subconscious mind has and will always work hard to maintain sanity between who we believe ourselves to be and current reality as we perceive it. There is a check and balance system within all of us that makes sure that you always behave like the person you know yourself to be.<sup>lviii</sup>

Tice teaches that every person has a mental filter that keeps unneeded information out. Without this filter, also known as a “reticular activating system,” every human would be overwhelmed by the volume of stimuli in the environment. Tice defines “scotomas” as walls that the human mind creates to keep unnecessary information out.<sup>lix</sup>

Even within the human range, there is too much information bombarding your central cortex. If you needed to be aware of all of the light, the smells, the feelings, and all of the information that is hitting you all the time, you could not concentrate or focus, because you would be too distracted. There is too much light, sound and movement to be taken in, so a human being is built, physiologically, with a Reticular Activating System. It is a filter system, located from the base of your brain to the central cortex. The reticular activating system has the job of building a scotoma to information that is not essential or significant to you right now.<sup>lx</sup>

Once the vision is changed to something different, however, this mental filter begins allowing different information in as now deemed relevant. This information serves to drive the owner of the vision towards it. Data that may have been previously in a person’s environment may not have been visible due to the reticular activating system keeping it out.

When you set a new goal of what you want, you are opening your awareness to information that becomes significant. Do not set the goal based upon your present awareness of resources, because those resources have been all around you. You didn’t need them so you didn’t hear them or see them. The goal comes first and then you perceive. You need to know significantly, in your own mind, what is important. Then, you open to information that will lead you to the accomplishment of your objective. That is called faith, or belief without evidence. Most need the evidence to establish their belief. Goal setting is declaring a new importance. You open your awareness to resources, information and people who could have been in your environment, but were behind your scotoma, too.<sup>lxi</sup>

The strategic plan is the process utilized to create the new vision for the desired changes to take place. When done properly, a strategic plan drives an organization to a futures oriented

method of managing an organization. As a result, a foundation is created that justify budgets and operations which emphasize the goal. This allows for a concentration of resources on pre-planned priorities. Furthermore, there is enhanced internal coordination, accountability and more control toward the established direction.

### *Vision and Goals*

The current Fresno Police Department vision statement states (in part), “We are a model law enforcement agency...We treat our employees and citizens with dignity and respect, continually meeting their needs.” A mandatory, continuous stress management training program is consistent with this vision. Continuous, mandatory stress management training promises to greatly enhance services delivered by police officers to members of the community.

### *Organizational Description*

Up to this point, the issue of continuous mandatory stress management training has been examined through a review of current literature, the nominal group technique, and alternate future scenarios. As described earlier in chapter one, the Fresno Police Department will be used as a model organization in which a mandatory, continuous form of stress management will be utilized. It is important to comprehend the current reality of the Fresno Police Department as part of the strategic planning development.

### *Community*

The City of Fresno has a population of 441,900 and a county population of 826,600. Fresno is the 6th largest city in California, serving as the county seat for Fresno County.

### *Chief of Police*

The Chief of Police is an innovative leader who takes proactive steps to ensure his agency doesn't become self-satisfied. Chief Dyer is appreciative of the role that emotional and

mental wellness plays in the ability of officers to effectively serve the community. In a recent newspaper interview regarding a mass murder of nine people, Chief Dyer said, "You're prepared for anything when you take a call, but I don't know that anything can prepare you for this. A 30-year veteran came out of the house with a look of disbelief in his eyes." Dyer added, "Police are already receiving peer counseling, they're struggling emotionally, and understandably."<sup>lxiii</sup>

### *Employee Support Services*

Within the Fresno Police Department, there are various support elements in place to assist personnel struggling with stress related symptoms. The services are not completely proactive in the sense that continual, mandated education would be.

### *Employee Intervention Program*

The Fresno Police Department has recently created an Employee Intervention Program. The goal of this program is to place all employee support programs under one manager. In the past, all such programs were in different areas of the organization, making coordination difficult and disconnected.

### *Companion Officer Program*

The Fresno Police Department's Companion Officer Program is a peer-counseling program that started in 1991. The program offers assistance and appropriate resources to employees when personal or professional problems negatively affect their work performance, family unit or self. The program is confidential within certain limitations.

Companion officers provide support to officers involved in critical incidents, such as officer-involved shootings, in-custody deaths and more. Support is also provided to officers suffering a personal crisis, such as the loss of a loved one. Each companion officer receives

significant training prior to being recognized as a companion officer. They provide service on a volunteer basis.<sup>lxiii</sup>

### *Police Chaplaincy*

The Fresno Police Department's chaplaincy program went into effect in 1981. The purpose of the program is to provide spiritual crisis support to law enforcement personnel of the Fresno Police Department. One paid Chaplain Coordinator and a part-time assistant spearhead the program. The remaining chaplain volunteers donate their time and services. Members of the chaplaincy strive to fulfill all reasonable requests for service.<sup>lxiv</sup>

### *Critical Incident Stress Management*

A Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) method of response to high profile stressful events has been in place at the Fresno Police Department since the year 2000. The CISM technique was developed by Jeffery Mitchell, a paramedic who later became a clinical psychologist. Dr. Mitchell developed a series of interventions beginning in the mid-1980s designed to be used with emergency service workers who had experienced traumatic calls for service and other critical incidents.

These interventions are used today in a variety of settings such as schools, industry, healthcare, retail, and financial. The CISM technique has evolved to become known as the standard of care for emergency mental health. The CISM technique is not one intervention, but rather it has become a multi-component system of interventions that can be applied in various situations before, during and after a critical incident. The overall goal of these interventions is to mitigate the impact of an event, accelerate recovery and to identify individuals who may require additional care.

### *Behind the Badge Peer Support Group*

This group has been in place for the past three years. Started by police employees, this group provides guidance for employees suffering with stress-related symptoms such as anxiety, depression, panic disorder, and PTSD. It does not serve as a substitute for professional therapy or counseling.

It would seem to the objective observer that these approaches are sufficient to combat job-related stress. Although current interventions offer arguably limited help, they do not thoroughly address the problem of job-related stress, suicidality, and other psychological disorders in a timely manner. These programs currently act as a bandage over an arterial wound. As helpful as they are, most officers do not find out about them before their symptoms have grown disproportionately to their acute or chronic stressor. More in-depth intervention is required to address the problem and make it more acceptable within the law enforcement community.

### *Organizational Analysis*

Psychologists have often wondered why I.Q. is not that well correlated with success and happiness in life. Several authors have explained the keys to what Robert Sternberg calls “Successful Intelligence.” In its simplest form, he says that the most successful people in the world know their strengths and know their weaknesses. They create a life around their strengths and spend enough time on their weaknesses so that they’re not liabilities.<sup>lxv</sup> The same is true for organizations. Before they can grow into something new, their leaders must look in the mirror and see where they are at in the present moment.

An assessment of an organization is essential to creating a vision of its future. It allows for an awareness of all relevant weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and strengths.

An inventory can be taken in a very systematic fashion using the “WOTS-UP” model.

Weaknesses and strengths are seen as being internal to the organization and are either positive conditions or possible challenges to achieving the desired future state. One positive condition that would assist continual, mandatory stress management to occur would be an understanding and supportive leader. A police chief who recognizes the benefits of such a program would be extremely valuable to the change being possible.

On the other hand, a mid-level staff that still believes in avoiding the discussion of stress would be detrimental to the change occurring. Opportunities and threats are factors external to the organization, including events and trends. These are addressed below.

#### *Internal Weaknesses*

Executive staff is still dominated by members who do not see stress as relevant to the workforce. Those who seek help with stress related issues are perceived as weak. Executive staff members do not recognize their own stress indicators. Additionally, there is a common belief by the workforce that job stress in policing is not relevant. There is a lack of trust and respect for local mental health professionals by police members. Furthermore, there is a lack of department funding and POST funding allowed for stress education. More importantly, there is a general lack of self-examination done by police officers.

#### *External Opportunities*

There have been recent high profile critical incidents, which have shed light on police stress. The community is currently very supportive for officers encountering stress in the workplace. Local media outlets have recently covered stories on police stress and attention is currently focusing on costs related to premature stress retirements. This serves to educate society of stress related disorders such as anxiety, depression, and panic disorder. The high

volume of pharmaceutical ads on television, radio, and newsprint supports this. Fortunately, a local psychological university is willing to work with police officers and stress-related challenges. There are entities willing to creatively fund issues related to stress and anxiety in law enforcement. Additionally, a cognitive-based psychological education program has been implemented citywide through the City Manager's office.

#### *External Threats*

There are limited local and state budgets. There is a lack of local psychologists who see the value in proactive stress education among law enforcement. A limited number of psychologists exist who specialize in police stress. This is further compounded by a lack of communication between police human resource departments and workers compensation firms. Additionally, vocal members of the community believe that officers take the job knowing it to be stressful; therefore they should learn to deal with it.

#### *Internal Strengths*

Fortunately, the local law enforcement community has a supportive Chief of Police, City Manager, and Mayor. There are key tactical personnel, including SWAT members, willing to openly discuss the impact of stress on police officers. These key players have recently used stress awareness in tactical training, which has been very well received by the Chief and department members. The recent success of the physical wellness program in the police department has caused many officers to look at their condition.

#### *Stakeholder Identification and Analysis*

A very important portion of the strategic planning process is the early identification of all key stakeholders who might be impacted by the proposed change. Also critical to the process is an understanding of their expectations related to the issue statement. Stakeholders can be

individuals or groups impacted by what the organization is attempting to accomplish. They can also have impact an impact on the goal. It is crucial to identify all stakeholders in advance of proceeding with the plan to change the organization. This will help to avoid unseen and unanticipated “snail darters.” Snail darter is a common term for stakeholders who are not obvious to the planners. Once they make themselves known, however, they have the ability to stop progress dead in its tracks. Unidentified stakeholders can have a significant adverse effect on the strategic plan, particularly when they become known late in the planning stage. They can cause much progress to be undone once their protests are made. Much time and effort may go to waste as a result. After all stakeholders have been identified, it should be determined how they can potentially impact the strategic planning process.

The following table contains potential stakeholders in the issue of how continual, mandatory stress management will impact law enforcement agencies. The table reflects the desired place the stakeholder should be during the strategic planning process. The psychological profession is a possible snail darter due to the possible intrusion into an area of expertise, which they currently control. Another potential snail darter is the FPOA as they might perceive this effort as an attempt to identify problem employees and terminate them from employment. As a result, the psychological profession and the FPOA should be included early in the strategic planning process to avoid last minute intrusion into the process, thus delaying or even stopping the process.

*Stakeholders and their expected role in the Strategic Planning Process*

(3.1)

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Inclusion</b>	<b>Recognition</b>	<b>Information</b>	<b>Leadership</b>
City Manager			X	
Mayor			X	
Chief of Police	X	X	X	X
Executive Staff	X	X	X	X
Fresno PO Association	X	X	X	
POST	X	X		
Psychological profession	X		X	
Retirement board			X	

*Strategy Development*

A well-created strategic plan will provide a framework to meet the needs of the various stakeholders. Some of the stakeholders will have similar concerns, while others may have specific input from a unique perspective.

*City Manager/Mayor*

The City Manager and Mayor will most likely be concerned that the program “pencil out” or be fiscally successful. There must be benefits that outweigh the cost associated with the effort. There should be a clear emphasis on the many benefits that can be expected from a well-established stress management program for police officers. The most obvious benefits are addressing work-related problems in their early stages, prior to escalating into more serious issues. It can also be expected there will be an improvement in community relations. At the same time, these political figures will want to be recognized as supportive of an idea that benefits the biggest union in the city. The ultimate beneficiary will be the community through better

service, less cost in terms of early retirement, and the fewer costs associated with lower turnover rates.

*Chief of Police/Executive Staff*

The Chief of Police and executive staff will want to ensure the program can be measured for success. An emphasis should be placed on the benefits related to a decrease in sick leave, complaints and premature retirements.

Since it is mandatory, executive staff will desire a funding source in place that obtains reimbursement for training and related overtime. They will also want to demonstrate a sense of caring for their workforce.

*Fresno Police Officers Association*

The Fresno Police Officers Association (FPOA) local union will need to be included in the beginning stages. In the past, there has been much controversy surrounding “early warning” systems. There should be a concerted effort to educate the association that this program has the potential to improve health, minimize premature retirements and improve community support. Without a doubt, this stakeholder has the biggest potential for delaying this desired change very quickly if its approval is not sought in advance.

*Peace Officers Standards and Training*

The Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) will be responsible for reimbursing the agency for this training if the agency can make a case for it. POST should be consulted early to ensure the format is acceptable. POST should also be consulted to determine if other agencies have expressed an interest in participating in this educational effort.

### *Psychological Profession*

The psychological profession has long been entrusted with providing reactive, stress-related support to officers. With a change to a proactive approach, input should be gained from key psychological leaders before designing the format. Working with local psychologists presents an opportunity to discover key representatives who are genuinely interested in serving the law enforcement community. This will minimize the chances of the psychological profession resisting due to a perceived elimination of them from the equation.

### *Retirement Board*

In the recent past, there has been an increase in the number of premature retirements due to a variety of reasons. One of these reasons is stress. Therefore, the retirement board should be advised of this change as they may become an indirect beneficiary of this effort. The board may be a source of support, influence, and possible funding.

### *Development of Alternative Strategies*

This section articulates the various ways that law enforcement agencies could pursue this project. It offers both the pros and cons associated with the project. Although detailed steps have been developed to guide the strategic plan to a successful conclusion, there should always be a contingency built in for alternative strategies. The alternative strategy that provides the greatest opportunity for getting the organization to the desired vision should be pursued.

### *Strategy 1*

The first strategy involves leadership making no change at all. They sit back and wait for change to occur without attempting to influence it. As a result, management avoids criticism from traditional law enforcement leaders for being too concerned about employee mental health.

The drawback is that the change occurs in a manner that may not be desirable by the organization.

### *Strategy 2*

The second strategy involves the department head unilaterally implementing the change. Rather than seek “buy in” from the rest of the organization, the Chief or Sheriff simply mandate that stress management training become part of the continual, mandated education curriculum. The positive impact is that the training reaches all employees in a timely fashion. The drawback is that some employees may be suspicious of the information and hesitant to accept it. Training related to stress management is preferably delivered to a department member willing to accept it and make it part of their lives. As a result, “buy in” is essential.

### *Strategy 3*

The third strategy involves the organization taking proactive steps to explain the value of a mandatory, ongoing stress-management training curriculum. Scientific evidence would be presented that explains the benefits to be obtained by employees through this process. Key department members would meet with all stakeholders, in advance, and explain the proposed changes. A consensus is sought before getting too far into the process. Once this vision is set, all involved members move in the same direction, taking full advantage of opportunities that present themselves.

Chapter III investigated the present state of the organization and opportunities and threats at hand. Stakeholders were evaluated for their expected role in the strategic planning process, and alternative strategies were developed. The purpose of this research is to assist in developing a strategy that drives the organization toward changing the current manner in which work-related

stress is addressed. The desired vision is a workforce that addresses stress related challenges in a structured, mature and effective approach.

Chapter IV will examine successful transition management through commitment planning, dealing with the critical mass of stakeholders, and effective change implementation.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### TRANSITION MANAGEMENT

#### *Introduction*

Once the strategic plan has been put in place, the foundation for the change has been established. This, however, is simply the beginning of the drive towards the desired change. The elements for a successful transition arrangement and management roadmap include commitment planning, implementation of change, and transition evaluation.<sup>lxvi</sup>

#### *Commitment Planning*

All parties who will have an impact or influence on the change should be identified and solicited for support. The degree of support will directly impact the ease of the transition. Effective commitment planning calls for identification of those parties, creation of a plan to obtain their assurance for the change and the tracking of direction towards or away from the transition.

In Chapter III, the stakeholders listed below were identified as holding a significant role in the change, e.g., the City Manager, Mayor, Chief of Police, Executive Staff, Fresno Police Officer's Association, P.O.S.T., Psychological profession, and the Retirement Board. In this chapter, the commitment level of the stakeholders are identified and discussed in the form of commitment charting.

*Commitment Charting*

Commitment charting is a process used to determine where every involved party is in the transition process. A determination must be made as to where each party should be to maximize the opportunity for the desired change to occur. Ideally, every party would work towards the change occurring, however this is not likely or even necessary. It may be enough for a particular party to move from blocking the change to simply moving out of the way and allowing the change to occur.

As stated before, it is not required that every stakeholder be on board. The critical mass of stakeholders is defined as the minimum number of persons required to make the change come about.<sup>lxvii</sup> The below listed table explains who the stakeholders are (X) and where they need to be to make the change happen (O):

*Critical Mass Commitment Table*

(4.1)

<b>Critical Mass Members</b>	<b>Block Change</b>	<b>Let Change Happen</b>	<b>Help Change Happen</b>	<b>Make Change Happen</b>
Chief of Police			X	O
Executive Staff		X	O	
FPOA		X	O	

**X=Current position O=Desired position**

*Intervention Strategies*

In order for stakeholders to change their position, the benefits must be clearly explained and understood. After all, it is well known that change is very uncomfortable for most people and their organizations.

Change is so hard for us because we are familiar with the path we're on and we like familiarity. Familiarity gives us a sense of balance, ease, and steadiness. These are strong feelings. So strong

that even if we know there is a better path to take we need an enormous amount of energy to overcome these feelings.<sup>lxviii</sup>

An emotional or nebulous argument cannot be expected to provide the fuel needed for change. Convincing evidence must be revealed and presented, explaining the clear advantages for the changes.

The Chief of Police and his executive management team must be equipped with information showing that any program makes sense from a cost-benefit analysis. In larger, municipal police agencies, executive management is commonly known as Assistant Chief, Deputy Chief and Captain. In county sheriff organizations, executive management is often known as Assistant Sheriff, Undersheriff and Captain. Concurrence at the executive staff level is crucial since law enforcement executives frequently manage the work required to make changes in an organization. The return derived from a mandatory, continual stress management program must be greater than the outlay associated with the program. Otherwise, the exertion associated with the change would make no sense to endure. Expenses related to absenteeism, premature retirements, improper use of force, and lawsuits must be well identified and accurately presented.

The police union (FPOA) should be given information that clearly shows the change is primarily intended to benefit their constituency. Verifiable data should be presented that highlights the current, heavy price being paid by their membership as a result of improperly managed stress. Statistics related to divorce rate, suicide and physical ailments rooted in stress would greatly assist in proving this point. This information would assist in providing the motivation needed to convince the police union to embrace this change.

## *Implementation of Change*

In order for a police agency to achieve a successful change, there must be support from throughout the organization. Support from the top of the organization is absolutely critical; however there must be general support from other equally important components.

To get a deep appreciation for the skills required to making a change occur, there should be a thorough understanding of why humans resist it so much. Thomas P. Anderson, Ph.D., of Anderson Consulting explains that one main reason is “cognitive dissonance:”

Simply stated, this well known theory dating back well before the era of organizational change, states that when one is confronted with information that goes against their beliefs of what is true, a state of cognitive dissonance (‘mental discomfort’) is evoked. To reduce the state of ‘dissonance,’ or discomfort, three alternatives are available: a) change one's opinion so that it corresponds more closely to the other's own opinion, b) change the other's opinion so that it corresponds more closely to one's own opinion, or c) attribute the difference in opinions/beliefs to the characteristics, motives and experiences of the other person.<sup>lxix</sup>

As such, it is necessary to put together a thoughtful plan to guide people through such a difficult and potentially traumatizing experience. In the article, “Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail,” J.P. Kotter laid out the following eight steps to a successful organizational transformation:

- Establish a sense of urgency.
- Form a powerful guiding condition.
- Create a vision.
- Communicate the vision.
- Empower others to act on the vision.
- Create short-term wins.
- Consolidate improvements and produce further change.
- Institutionalize the new approach.<sup>lxx</sup>

The guidelines provided by Kotter give a simple formula that can be of assistance as the leaders of any organization attempt to guide their agency through any variance from a well-established way of doing things.

### *Implementation Techniques*

It is significant to put a transitional team in place to ensure that essential tasks are carried out during the conversion. They are responsible for ensuring the vision stays focused, deadlines are established and met, and connections are made that further the image becoming reality.

Even more important to the transition, is selecting a single person to lead this process. This person is commonly referred to as the project manager or point person. This person must have the ability to see the desired change and the mental capacity to see a variety of methods for getting there. This person should be well-versed in thinking “outside of the box” and allowing members of the team to be equally creative.

The transitional leader must have the ability to help others see the same vision through the art of communication. The transitional leader must be passionate about the task and persuasive in helping others to be equally as concerned. His or her ability to keep the team unified and focused is vital.

The leader of the transition should have equally sound management skills. The transitional leader should recognize the benefits of organization and have good skills at doing so. The transitional leader must understand the consequences of tracking all necessary factors involved with the change. Furthermore, the leader should understand the value of sound policy and procedures necessary to carry out the idea.

*Responsibility Charting*

The role of the personnel involved in the implementation portion of the organizational change is imperative to spell out. Involved persons may be directly involved in the project or they may be the superiors of those involved. They can be either groups or individuals. They can be people internal or external to the organization.

For the purpose of charting, there are four categories that each actor can fit into. They are responsibility, approval, support and informed. The following chart identifies the suggested role for key players involved in this change:

*Responsibility Table*

(4.2)

<b>Decisions or actions</b>	<b>Mayor</b>	<b>City Mgr</b>	<b>Chief</b>	<b>Exec Staff</b>	<b>FPOA</b>	<b>POST</b>	<b>Psy prof.</b>	<b>Retirement board</b>
Set objectives/priorities	I	I	A	R	S	I	I	I
Decide key strategies	I	I	S	R	I	I	I	I
Provide resources	I	I	A	R	I	I	I	I
Allocate funding	I	I	A	R	I	I	I	I
Design training	I	I	S	R	I	I	I	I
Allocate personnel	I	I	A	R	I	I	I	I

R= responsibility

A=approval

S= support

I=inform

The responsibility chart is extremely useful for determining who is accountable for each step in the overall process. Without one, it is likely that key responsibilities would go unaddressed for forgotten. The preferable manner in making determinations is to bring all relevant players to a central gathering for purposes of having input. At this point, all differences in opinion can be discussed thoroughly and brought to a resolution. A problem may exist if there

is more than one key player with overall responsibility for a judgment or action as could be evident in a power struggle or duplicated efforts.

The City Manager, Mayor, POST and Retirement Board should be kept informed of this process as it is created and implemented. The Chief of Police must approve the objectives and priorities, provide resources, allocate necessary funding, and allocate personnel. He must also be supportive of key strategies and the training design. By far, he is the most critical component involved in this change. Without his broad-based approval and support, the change has little chance of success.

Once this has been obtained, executive staff members will be responsible for all of the “heavy lifting” associated with this change. They are responsible for setting objectives, decision related to key strategies, resources, funding, a training plan and the allocation of necessary personnel. The local union will need to be supportive of the objectives and priorities of this process and kept informed of the rest. Due to their expertise in this specific area of interest, local psychological professionals will be responsible for assisting in setting objectives, deciding on the key strategies to be utilized and training preparation.

#### *Evaluation*

The evaluation phase is very important to the overall change process. Feedback received in the early stages can greatly assist in making necessary changes without causing a great deal of additional work. Once made, these changes can get all players headed back on the right course. It is also valuable to get all members of the transition team good news related to the change process. This news can serve to keep members motivated and excited about their roles. Without these reports from the field, enthusiasm can quickly diminish.

A well-constructed evaluation tool should put time lines in place that can serve to make certain progress is being made as originally envisioned. The evaluation tool should start with a simple baseline measurement of officer attitudes as ascertained by various psychological surveys. These same surveys would be given at the midpoint of implementation to a difference sample and at the end to yet another sample. Organizational development surveys could simultaneously be administered to upper level management to measure their attitudes about their perception of the issues statement. Furthermore, a process to correct stalled progress should also be in place. The assessment will clearly ascertain when the transitional process has been completed. Keeping track of the change should occur on a continuous basis. This repetitive assessment will serve to allow for necessary adjustments or a major overhaul, if necessary.

Chapter IV provided discussion into commitment planning, change implementation and evaluation as a method for a smooth transition management process. Every step in the transition development is intended make the change to a continuous mandatory stress management training program for police officers as trouble-free as possible.

Chapter V will provide the findings of research into desired future outcome of mandatory stress management training for police officers. Additionally, there will be discussion on how these outcomes will impact police leaders, their personnel and related budgets.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FINDINGS/IMPLICATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS/CONCLUSIONS

#### *Findings*

This project set out to explore the impact that a continuous, mandatory stress management training would have on a large, urban law enforcement agency by the year 2009. Specifically, the problems of police divorce, suicide and other expenses such as absenteeism, illness, lawsuits, fatigue and heart disease have been probed. An endeavor has been made to determine the true measure of the overall impact.

Stress leads to a variety of physical problems. Whether it be migraine headaches, ulcers, high blood pressure or heart disease, these issues can be significantly impacted for the benefit of the general health of the workforce.

There are quantifiable negative consequences associated with the improper handling of stress in the police occupation. Expert opinions have been collected that point to stress as a major contributor to the costs identified. In addition to statistical evidence, there has also been a strong presentation of living examples of what can occur when stress is not dealt with appropriately, as made evident in the David Brame tragedy.

#### *Implications on Leadership*

The potential benefits of mandatory, continual stress education to law enforcement and their leadership is enormously positive. Studies are unmistakable in stating that stress has a quantifiable impact on a person's life. Whether it be divorce, suicide or any of the other negative outcomes, it is clear there is a heavy price currently being paid due to the existing way stress is

dealt with by police personnel. Sadly, interventions currently in place are not enough to deal with job-related stressors that officers face on a daily or sporadic basis.

A person under stress is more likely to select an irrational solution due to the inability to perceive new information. It does not take much of a leap to see how an officer under heavy amounts of stress is more likely to lose his temper with a motorist, utilize poor officer safety habits, or select a method of force unsuitable for a tactical situation. Continuous mandatory stress management training will be a general improvement in job performance where critical decisions are made under pressure.

If created properly and monitored with scrutiny, a good stress management program will reduce complaints, minimize questionable officer-involved shootings, and lessen the number of successful lawsuits against an agency. Internally, there will be fewer internal grievances, decreased workplace frustration, retention of personnel, and a reduction in early retirement rates.

A major side benefit derived from an improvement in health is a lessening of absenteeism. This will have a direct result on replacement costs related to minimum staffing overtime.

### *Budgetary Implications*

Creating the desired future relative to a continuous, mandatory stress management training program comes with some cost. These costs, however, need not be passed onto individual law enforcement agencies. P.O.S.T. certifies essential training for California police officers. Some of these courses are certified for different levels of reimbursement.

In the year 2002/2003, P.O.S.T. had a training budget of \$56.9 million dollars. \$38 million of this funding is derived from fines and forfeitures and \$18 million from a driver training penalty assessment fund.<sup>lxxi</sup> A stress identification course approved for POST tuition

and backfill reimbursement would go a long ways in assisting law enforcement leaders to send personnel to such classes with minimal fiscal impact. Non-traditional grant funding sources to deal with police and military stress should also be examined.

It is simply a matter of reprioritizing what training has the biggest impact on a law enforcement organization and its community. This document maintains that status quo will result in a continuation of police officers with ruined marriages, alcoholism, suicide, and the various other physical problems seemingly inherent to those that chose to give so much to their profession. An argument can easily be made that the issue of improperly managed stress has the greatest impact on law enforcement than any other.

#### *Recommendations for the Future*

The issue of mandatory and continual stress education is one that must be made from secure, confident police leaders who want to make a true positive mark on their profession. Without a change in the culture of the organization, there is no chance for a meaningful change in a positive direction. Education efforts without this essential shift will result in knowledgeable officers who remain hesitant to apply it.

Dealing with this problem through ignorance can no longer be viewed as acceptable. It should no longer be tolerable to have such high incidence of heart disease and physical injuries. It can no longer be a joke to have short life spans, above average divorce rates, and drinking problems. Responsible police chiefs and sheriffs must be willing to lead the charge to make the most significant contribution in the history of law enforcement. Elected officials, such as local council members and state legislators, must be educated regarding the overwhelming costs associated with improperly managed police stress. Their support is essential.

Stress management programs initiated after the impact of September 11, must be recognized and studied for their worth. Successful components of these should be folded into any stress management efforts. Assistance from a local expert in the field of police stress is strongly encouraged. Their advice is vital when delving into a subject matter that sometimes uncovers very serious problems such as those addressed earlier in the discussion. Those involved in stress management efforts should clearly and frequently advise all participants these programs are not intended to take the place of formal psychological or psychiatric services.

### *Conclusions*

Clearly, prospective benefits will be achieved through the implementation of a continuous, mandatory form of stress education in a large, urban police agency. Such information has the potential to inform law enforcement officers as to what external and internal stress is and how it can affect them. This must be done in easy to comprehend language describing what physiologically occurs when officers encounter the challenges of their jobs and personal lives. Police officers must be exposed this information on a consistent basis throughout their career. A well-developed curriculum will provide an officer with fact-based information derived from a scientific foundation. A training program that is scientifically significant will more than likely have officer “buy-in,” ensure its future success, and provide the emotional and psychological support that has been long overdue.

Properly delivered stress education will also provide information on what stress looks like when it is happening to officers or their co-workers. Officers will complete the education with a clearer understanding of the connection between stomach discomfort and unresolved resentment for their commander. Officers will recognize the nexus between recurrent headaches and unfair standards they have set for themselves or how a bout with insomnia is likely

attributable to an officer-involved shooting. A well organized stress education program, presented on a continuous, mandatory basis, will help officers understand the deep reaching implications that improperly managed stress can have on them personally and the reverberations that impact their families.

Lastly, but most importantly, such a program will empower officers to change their state of discomfort. It is simply not enough for an officer to recognize that stress can ruin his or her life. Officers must be educated on how to end the negative repetition of handling life challenges improperly. The same principals inherent in a strategic plan that can move an organization to transform can be used in getting a police employee to change to a more effective manner in dealing with work-related and personal stress.

The foundation for this education includes an overview of the fight or flight response, the conscious and subconscious mind, explanation of various stress disorders and depression, critical incident stress, and physical and emotional indicators of stress. Also included would be an education on the benefits of relaxation techniques, support groups, self-talk control, affirmations and the identification and modification of unhealthy beliefs. The most important factor in this training is helping officers understand the benefits to incorporating changes into their lives based on this wisdom. Otherwise, the education is nothing more than information without personal transformation.

A good analogy to prove this point is related to an overweight college student who declares physical education as their major. After completing six years of college and obtaining a master's degree in physical education, is there a chance they will be in better physical condition by virtue of the information? After all, a degree serves as evidence of expert

knowledge in physical education. The obvious answer is no. The reason lies in the saying, “knowledge is knowledge, knowledge is not change, only change is equal to change.”

As such, a well-created stress management course will help employees to understand the benefits related to changing their thoughts and behaviors and how to accomplish this change.

A mandated, continual exposure to this potentially life-enhancing insight and skills related to stress is the preferred manner to deliver this wisdom. Providing it to those entrusted to protect the community is the right thing to do for individual cops and the citizens they are sworn to safeguard.

APPENDIX A

Nominal Group Technique Members	
Dr. Jana Price-Sharps	Police psychologist
Dianna Fain	Wife of police detective
Greg Timberlake	Assistant Vice-President of Alliant University, formerly known as the California School of Professional Psychology
Officer Tim Tietjen	SWAT officer/K-9 handler
Anna-Marie Larson	Ph.D candidate
Matthew Peck	Ph.D candidate
Sergeant Donald Gross	Police sergeant with bachelor's in psychology
Lieutenant Dennis Bridges	SWAT Commander

APPENDIX B

<p><u>List of candidate trends</u>          Psychological standards for new hires          Level of support of new media  <b>Number of critical incidents*</b>          Number of mishaps due to officer stress          Officer marital affairs due to job stress          Level of self-defense/ force technology  <b>Level of community support for law enforcement*</b>  <b>Level of competency in mental health profession*</b>          Staffing levels          Union acceptance of stress education          Level of priority for officer mental health  <b>Credibility of stress education*</b>  <b>Complexity of police job*</b>          Courts view of stress related lawsuits          Level of community relations efforts          Number of officer-involved shootings          Level of recognition of ability to impact stress  <b>Leadership’s view of job related stress*</b>          Level of scrutiny of officer behavior  <b>Law Enforcement’s respect of mental health professionals*</b>          Number of stress retirements  <b>Level of funding for stress education*</b>          Level of understanding of stress by community          Amount of money paid out due to stress-related lawsuits  <b>Officer’s willingness to accept stress education*</b></p> <p><b>*Denotes selected for forecasting</b></p>	<p><u>List of candidate events</u>          Officer commits mass murder due to job stress          Economic collapse          Court finds negligence for dept lack of stress education          Spouse files lawsuit over spouse’s suicide  <b>Officer successfully sues for not receiving stress education*</b>          Federal mandates annual psychological testing          Dramatic reduction of interested candidates due to negative stigma of job  <b>Number of line of duty deaths raises stress levels*</b>  <b>Crime rate soars due to officer stress*</b>          Stress education seen as cost prohibitive          Significant officers resort to substance abuse due to stress          Unions sue because of privacy intrusion          Police stress education training fails due to lack of acceptance  <b>Officer fails to act due to being overstressed resulting in injury to other*</b>          Spouse claims divorce was due to officer job stress  <b>Number of officer seeking stress retirements rises to record level*</b>  <b>Stress named as cause for large scandal*</b>          Chief recommends mandatory stress education to legislative body  <b>Officer shoots chief, claims stress over IA*</b>  <b>Suicide rate for officers reaches record level*</b>  <b>Office sues department because of stress education training*</b>          Racial tension in community moves into department          Class action against department members regarding unprofessional behavior          Job loss due to budget cuts causes officer to kill family</p>
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