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# Tactical Police Officers, Romantic Attachment and Job-Related Stress: A Mixed-Methods Study

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TACTICAL POLICE OFFICERS, ROMANTIC ATTACHMENT  
AND JOB-RELATED STRESS: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY

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DISSERTATION

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the  
College of Arts and Sciences  
at the University of Kentucky

By

Natalie Ann Susan Fagan

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Carrie Oser, Professor of Sociology

Lexington, Kentucky

2015

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## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

### TACTICAL POLICE OFFICERS, ROMANTIC ATTACHMENT AND JOB-RELATED STRESS: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY

Stressors stemming from tactical policing such as social isolation and increased work responsibilities often spill over into the home and affect personal relationships. Using attachment theory as the guiding framework, this mixed methods study aimed to obtain a better understanding of the factors involved in maintaining long-term relationships between tactical officers and their romantic partners. Phase I consisted of surveys administered to tactical officers in Kentucky and measured romantic partner attachment, organizational and operational police stressors. Research questions examined how operational and organizational stress correlated with attachment while controlling for demographics. Analysis indicated that holding a rank above an officer has a significant relationship to both operational and organizational stress. Influenced by the findings from phase I, phase II consisted of 30 qualitative interviews with both tactical officers and their romantic partners. Using elements of attachment theory, symbolic interactionism, and components comprising the spirit of grounded theory, four primary themes with supporting subthemes were discovered: (1) communication, a key component of successful relationships; (2) isolation, particularly from socializing with those outside policing or tactical policing; (3) job related stress, where participants indicated more stress with tactical duties; and (4) tactical team as family and trust where participants indicated that personal support among team members was essential to building the mutual trust needed for the dangers of tactical policing. These themes indicated important findings including better communication between couples who had a romantic partner working in a criminal justice related field and discovery of stressors unique to tactical policing including increased job-related stress pertaining to the higher physical, moral and intellectual standards needed for tactical policing. Participant-based advice and recommendations for more tailored support services for tactical officers and their families were also developed from the findings of phase II and included a need for

family notification systems and creation of family-oriented trainings. Relationships between the phases highlighted unique aspects of police subculture within tactical policing and its effects on the personal and occupational lives of tactical officers.

KEYWORDS: Tactical Police Officers, Romantic Attachment, Job-Related Stress, Kentucky, Attachment Theory, Symbolic Interactionism

Natalie Fagan

November 30, 2015

TACTICAL POLICE OFFICERS, ROMANTIC ATTACHMENT AND JOB-RELATED  
STRESS: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY

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This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Paul Fagan, who made all of this possible. I hope that this achievement reflects my unending appreciation for all of the love and support you have given me over the years.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

The formation and growth of tactical teams within police departments is rapidly increasing, as are the questions regarding the need for military style operations in civilian law enforcement (Balko, 2006; Fisher, 2010; Hill & Beger, 2009; Kraska, 2001, 2007). Yet, the majority of information regarding law enforcement agencies' use of military-style tactical teams has not been supported by empirical sources (Balko, 2014, 2006; Blair & Martaindale, 2014; Fisher, 2010; Hill & Beger, 2009; Meeks, 2006; Navarrette, 2011). The unprecedented and most current research on the growth of tactical policing was conducted by Kraska and Cubellis (1997) and Kraska and Kappeler (1997). These studies found that 89% of police departments serving municipalities with populations of 50,000 or more in the late 1990's had at least one paramilitary law enforcement unit. This number represents almost double the number reported by the same population in the 1980's (Kraska & Kappeler, 1997). The contrast over a decade was even more striking for municipalities serving populations between 25,000 and 50,000. During the 1980's, only 20% of departments from small towns reported having at least one paramilitary law enforcement unit, but by 2007, that number had jumped to over 65% (Kraska & Cubellis, 1997). The exponential growth in tactical teams supports the need for quality academic research that focuses on the rise of military-style teams and the individuals who occupy those teams. In addition, despite the growing number of studies regarding the occupation of policing and its effects on officers and their families (Alexander & Walker 1996; Beehr, Johnson & Nieva, 1995; Patterson, 2003; Westphal & Openshaw, 2009), the



nature and impact of tactical police work on romantic relationships has not been well-explored.

Furthermore, there is a gap in the literature regarding the relationships between work-related stressors and the personal lives of tactical police officers. Police stressors have primarily been categorized into 4 major categories: organizational, operational, external, and personal. Organizational stressors stem from the police agency itself and often come from a lack of organizational and supervisor support within the department (Anshel, 2000; Taylor & Bennell, 2006; Violanti & Aron, 1993). Operational stressors stem from work-related tasks such as excessive paperwork, but also include the dangers inherent within policing such as injury and death (Oliver & Meier, 2004; Slate et al., 2007; Violanti & Aron, 1993). External stressors originate from outside the police agency and can include political and economic constraints that affect salary levels and negative or distorted press accounts (Oliver & Meier, 2004; Slate et al., 2007). Finally, personal stressors for officers can include conflicts between family life and the police occupation as well as the lack of social support for police officers from family and friends (Anshel, 2000; Maloy & Mays, 1984; Patterson, 2003; Oliver & Meier, 2004).

The effects of these stressors, both physical and mental, are reported at higher rates for police. In comparison to the general public, police officers report higher rates of stress-related illness such as peptic ulcers, hypertension, and heart disease, as well as higher rates of alcohol and drug abuse, marital and family discord, divorce, and suicide rates (Anshel, 2000; Beehr et al., 1995; Kirschman, 2007; Newman & Rucker-Reed, 2004; Maloy & Mays, 1984; Violanti & Aron, 1993). Spouses of police officers can experience increased levels of stress by default due to stressors within policing including

the inflexibility of schedules, continually changing hours, dangerousness of the officer's duties, and public anti-police sentiments (Maynard et al., 1980; Violanti, 1996). There is a need for mixed-methods research that focuses on tactical officers' and their romantic partners' thoughts regarding officers' membership on these teams, job-related stressors, and the possible impact these stressors may have on their romantic relationships.

Specifically, given the stressors present within policing and how they can affect both the officer and those close to them, what elements allow for tactical officers and their romantic partners to sustain long-term romantic relationships?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors, including operational stress, organizational stress, and attachment that influence the relationships between tactical officers and their romantic partners. Specifically, this study will examine if tactical officers and their romantic partners define their relationships as successful and what factors contribute to that success. In addition, this research will help to provide more guidance on offering tailored support services to tactical officers and their families in the future. This study will contribute to the literature in the following ways.

Firstly, prior research has not examined romantic relationships with officers serving on tactical teams. Secondly, what research that has been conducted within the field of general policing has focused on why the relationships between patrol officers and their romantic relationships fail rather than why they succeed (Alexander & Walker, 1996; Borum & Philpot, 1993; Burke & Mikkelsen 2004; Gershon, 2000; Hageman, 1997; Maynard & Maynard, 1982; Maynard et al., 1980; Roberts & Levenson, 2001; Violanti, 1996). Thirdly, there are few, if any, programs or services available to tactical

officers and their romantic partners about maintaining romantic relationships. Tactical officers face additional risks above and beyond that of typical police duties, often receive little to no additional financial compensation for being a tactical officer, and are often required to be on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. These additional aspects contribute to both the added fears and unpredictable schedules that strain the personal lives and relationships of tactical officers and their romantic partners. While there have been no studies focusing on the specific stressors of tactical police work, findings from previous studies (Arter, 2008; Finn & Tomz, 1997) indicate that officers working in specialized units such as "undercover" work reported more operational stress and acts of deviance than officers in other positions. These studies highlight the relationship between specialized units within policing and higher stress levels. Taking these additional stressors into consideration, this dissertation hopes to provide more guidance on offering detailed support services to tactical officers and their families in the future.

### **Development of the Study**

This study developed from both personal experience as the romantic partner of a tactical police officer and the lack of prior research pertaining to the field of tactical policing. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed during this study to give proper representation to the participants in this study. Although the possibility of bias existed when speaking to both law enforcement officers and their romantic partners, the researcher remained neutral and only used her position as a romantic partner of a tactical officer to facilitate data collection. A mixed-methods approach was utilized for this study to both fill in the holes left by prior research and to strengthen the quality of the

evidence discovered in this study. An explanatory sequential design, which occurs in two distinct and interactive phases, was used in the development and implementation of this study. Like the explanatory sequential design process, this study began with quantitative data collection and moved to quantitative data analysis which then influenced the development of the second qualitative portion of the study. Four primary steps make up the explanatory design process (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Step one is the design and implementation of the quantitative phase, including collecting and analyzing the quantitative data. Phase I utilized survey data including a modified version of the Experiences in Close Relationship Scale-Short Form (ECR-S) to measure adult attachment in romantic partner relationships (Wei, Russel, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2007) and The Operational and Organizational Police Stress Questionnaires (PSQ-Op and PSQ-Org) (McCrearcy & Thompson, 2006). Step two connects the first phase to the second phase by identifying the specific quantitative results that need additional explanation and using the quantitative results to guide the development of the qualitative second phase. The analysis of phase I, including the identification of significant relationships between rank and both operational and organizational stress, influenced the development of the interview questions used in phase II.

Step three is the implementation of the qualitative phase including the collection and analyzing of data. In phase II, the principal focus was exploring the relationship between tactical police officers and their romantic partners through qualitative measures that allowed the participants to share their own thoughts and experiences. Qualitative methodology was used to enhance the study by providing more nuanced and complex aspects of participant perceptions regarding romantic attachment and tactical policing.

The qualitative interview questions conducted with tactical officers during phase II examined several topics including the following: the experiences of being a tactical police officer in a romantic relationship; coping with and separating tactical police work from home life; what could be done to assist officers in balancing their roles as tactical police officers and romantic partners; and what would be helpful for other tactical police officers in romantic relationships to know. The interview questions conducted with romantic partners examined similar topics: the experiences of being a romantic partner to a tactical police officer; coping with aspects of tactical police work; what could be done to assist romantic partners in their roles as romantic partners to tactical police officers; and what would be helpful for other romantic partners of tactical police officers to know in their own romantic relationships.

Step four is the interpretation of what ways, and to what extent, the qualitative results from phase II explain and add insight to the quantitative results from phase I. This is also where the researcher steps back to determine what was learned overall in response to the study's purpose. Sequential exploratory strategies of inquiry were used to both explore the phenomenon of romantic attachment and work-related stress in tactical officers and to better understand the research problem itself. By letting the quantitative phase (phase I) influence the qualitative phase (phase II), the researcher was able to explore quantitatively significant (or non-significant) results, surprising results, and/or outliers in the qualitative phase in a way that provided insight into why these findings may have come about in the first phase (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This study utilized attachment theory as a guiding framework for the development of the study as

well as elements from symbolic interactionism and aspects comprising the spirit of grounded theory for the qualitative analysis.

### **Definition of Terms**

Throughout this study several terms were used that are commonly misunderstood by those unfamiliar with the field of law enforcement and/or tactical policing. The responses of participants often contained jargon that is regularly used by those within or familiar with law enforcement and/or tactical policing. Below are definitions of key terms which will be used throughout the dissertation.

*Militarization*: a social process or act of giving military character to something. Kraska (2001) believes that militarization embodies many aspects including, but not limited to, the following: the collaboration between the defense industry and the crime control industry; the use of military language to characterize drugs, crime and social disorder; an ideology and theoretical framework that emphasizes effective problem solving will require activities that correspond with modern military thinking and operations; and a blurring of lines between external and internal security functions.

*Stressor*: anything that can bring on a reaction of stress, including a person, place, or event. Stress can be good (eustress), bad (distress), or mixed (Melucci, 2004). Police stressors have primarily been categorized into 4 major categories: organizational, operational, external, and personal. For the purposes of this study, a stressor was not solely limited to bad stress and included stimuli that were described by the participants as simultaneously stressful and rewarding (e.g., situations that required the implementation of tactical policing practices).

*Tactical Officer (TO)*: a police officer who has received specialized training in the use and implementation of tactical equipment and maneuvers in high-risk situations. The focus of this study was on police officers belonging to a tactical team in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

*Tactical Team*: police units within the United States which use specialized or military tactics or equipment. These units are often tailored after military special operations groups such as Army Rangers or Navy Seals (Kraska, 2001). Similar acronyms include, but are not limited to, the following: SWAT (special weapons and tactics), ERU (emergency response unit), SRT (special response team), ERT (emergency response team), CRT (critical response team), HRT (hostage rescue team), SOT (special operations team) and PPU (police paramilitary unit). Although these units can vary in size, training, capabilities and requirements, for the purposes of this study, the term *tactical team* was used to encompass all those units falling within the parameters of this general definition.

### **Organization of the Remainder of the Study**

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. The first chapter, the Introduction, has provided a brief overview of the problems to be addressed in this study. Chapter Two reviews the literature surrounding tactical policing, organizational and operational stressors present in police work, the effects of work-related stressors, effective measures departments use to combat police stress, and spouses' perspectives on romantic relationships with police officers. In addition, Chapter Two discusses attachment theory as the theoretical framework supporting and guiding this study as well as the elements of symbolic interactionism and components comprising the spirit of grounded theory that were used with the qualitative component. Chapter Three discusses the methodology

surrounding both phases of this study including the study design, data collection, research participants, instrumentation, variables, reliability of measurements, and analytic approaches. Chapter Four discusses the quantitative results from phase I including survey findings, descriptive summary analysis on variables, summaries of both operational and organizational stress rankings, ANOVAs, correlations and regression analysis that were used to examine the connection between organizational and operational stress and relationship factors, cross tabs analysis used to further explore the connection between work and romantic relationships among tactical officers, bivariate correlations associated with organizational and operational stress among tactical police officers, and linear regression models examining the factors associated with organizational stress and operational stress among tactical officer participants. Chapter Five discusses the qualitative results from phase II including reflections and considerations, the coding process, discussion of themes and subthemes, and an overview of participant based advice and recommendations. The final chapter, Chapter Six, focuses on the fourth step of the explanatory design process and examines the connections between phase I and II, reviews the significance of the findings within the larger context of the existing literature, explores participant based recommendations, and examines limitations and recommendations for future investigation.



## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

The following review of the literature serves as a guide for the design of this study and includes four primary sections. The first section will focus on the establishment and modern day understanding of tactical policing including studies conducted with or about tactical policing. The second section will examine prior research conducted with police officers concerning work related stress, repercussions of work-related stress and measures developed to reduce stress for police officers. The third section will examine the literature surrounding the effect of work-related stress on the families of police officers. The fourth section will discuss attachment theory, the theoretical component guiding the framework of this study. In addition, elements of phenomenological and grounded theory approaches will be examined as they support phase II of this study, the qualitative component.

### **Tactical Policing**

The term “tactical policing” represents a style of policing that has been increasing in police departments throughout the country over the last 40 years. Tactical policing is a label that designates the use of weapons and force above and beyond that of normal policing (Klinger & Rojek, 2008; Kraska, 1994, 1997, 2001). Other common names for tactical units within policing include, but are not limited to, the following: Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT); Emergency Response Units (ERU); Paramilitary Policing Units (PPU); and Special Operations Teams (SOT). The most common (and media favorite) name for tactical units is SWAT. The National Tactical Officers Association

(NTOA) (2011) provides the following definition of SWAT in their publication "SWAT Standards for Law Enforcement Agencies":

A Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team is a designated law enforcement team, whose members are recruited, selected, trained, equipped and assigned to resolve critical incidents involving a threat to public safety which would otherwise exceed the capabilities of traditional law enforcement first responders and/or investigative units. (p. 12)

The NTOA is considered the governing body of tactical policing within the United States. While membership, or even application, of its standards is not required for the creation or sustainment of a tactical team, many tactical teams model themselves after the recommendations of the NTOA and consider it the primary source for tactical information.

Tactical units first began to appear in the mid 1960's due to civil unrest and political turmoil in large urban areas. High profile and deadly events such as the Watts Riots in Los Angeles in 1965 and the Texas tower shooting at the University of Texas in 1966 helped to contribute to the realization by American policing that specialized units were a necessary component in how law enforcement dealt with the changing nature of crime (Mijares & McCarthy, 2015). By 1969, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) had established their SWAT unit and faced one of its most violent and paradigm-shifting incidents to date, a raid on The Black Panther Headquarters on December 8, 1969 (Mijares & McCarthy, 2015). By the mid 1970's, most large metropolitan police agencies duplicated the LAPD's model in establishing SWAT units (Klinger & Rojek, 2008; Kraska, 1999). These units typically consisted of 10-40 officers who were trained and used exclusively for situations involving civil disturbances, barricaded suspects, hostage situations, and maniac shooters, among other intense situations (Kraska &

Paulsen, 2007; Kraska & Cubellis, 1997; Kraska & Kappeler, 1997). By 1983, John Kolman, a Lieutenant from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, established the NTOA in order to assist both established and newly developing tactical teams in networking and information sharing (NTOA, 2015). The NTOA (2011) developed a set of standards for tactical teams including a purpose which is to "increase the likelihood of safely resolving critical incidents" (p. 12).

In addition to the descriptions given earlier, tactical units can be distinguished from traditional policing in five primary ways. First, tactical units are highly trained and disciplined teams of police officers who often respond to rare and severe situations. The NTOA (2011) asserts that the primary characteristic that distinguishes SWAT from other law enforcement units is the focus of effort. Specifically, SWAT units focus on tactical solution rather than other law enforcement functions such as investigation. In addition, tactical teams differ significantly from traditional law enforcement in their ability to threaten or use force collectively, as opposed to the individually-based approach found in traditional policing (Kraska & Kappeler, 1997; Kraska & Paulsen, 1997). A second distinguishing characteristic of tactical policing is their choice of militaristic style equipment and technology. Tactical teams use a range of "less-than-lethal" weapons such as percussion grenades (explosive devices used to disorient), stinger grenades (similar devices that use rubber pellets), CS and OC gas grenades (tear gas), and shot-gun launched bean bag systems (nylon bags of lead shot) when conducting dynamic entries (i.e., search warrants) (Kraska & Kappeler, 1997; Kraska & Paulsen, 1997; Kraska & Cubellis, 1997). When these units conduct dynamic entries, apparatuses are required for opening doors including battering rams, hydraulic door-jamb spreaders, and C4

explosives. Additionally, the use of “fortified tactical vehicles” such as military armored personnel carriers and specially equipped tactical cruisers are often purchased and incorporated into training and actual use by these units (Kraska & Kappeler, 1997; Kraska & Paulsen, 1997; Kraska & Cubellis, 1997). The military surplus program, also known as the Department of Defense's 1033 program, provides military grade equipment to police departments for which the Pentagon no longer has a use. This program is often the primary source of military-style equipment and technology used by tactical teams. Kraska (2001) cites this program as one of the major driving forces behind the rise of military-style tactical teams in American policing.

A third distinguishing characteristic of tactical policing is how tactical teams are modeled. The structure of most tactical teams are modeled after military and foreign police special operations teams such as Army Rangers and Navy Seals. In keeping with a military-style model, tactical teams often train collectively under a military command structure and discipline (Kraska & Kappeler, 2007; Kraska & Cubellis, 2007). The fourth distinguishing characteristic is the choice of clothing for tactical teams. Clothing for tactical teams is similar to military fashion as they typically wear black or urban camouflage battle dress uniforms (BDU's), lace-up combat boots, full body armor, and Kevlar helmets. These units often strive for group solidarity and view themselves as “elite” officers (Kraska & Paulsen, 1997). Finally, the majority of officers who serve in tactical units also function as patrol officers during their regular duties. However, some larger law enforcement agencies are able to employ full-time tactical teams. Teams can serve individual agencies or form a multi-jurisdictional unit that encompasses

membership from multiple smaller agencies which are typically located in geographical proximity (Kraska, 1999; NTOA, 2011).

As indicated through the literature above, the formation and growth of tactical units throughout the United States has been primarily documented by Peter Kraska and colleagues (Kraska & Cubellis, 1997; Kraska & Kappeler, 1997; Kraska & Paulsen, 1997; Kraska, 1999; Kraska, 2001; Kraska, 2007; Kappeler & Kraska, 2013). Up to this point, this unprecedented research conducted in part by Kraska and his colleagues during the mid 1990's had produced the largest empirical studies on the growth of tactical units in the United States. Prior to Kraska's research, only one other small study had been conducted in the United States regarding tactical units. Stevens and MacKenna (1988; 1989) surveyed law enforcement departments serving populations over 50,000 which were already known to have tactical units. Although a low response rate hindered significant findings, the study did provide some useful information about the structure of tactical units at the time, including the placement of tactical units within the respective departments, the formal titles of the tactical units, intergovernmental coordination between tactical units and other agencies, and barriers to internal coordination and cooperation between tactical units and their respective departments. One important finding indicated that the typical assignments of tactical units were most often reported as hostage situations, barricaded subjects, and dignitary protection, respectively (Stevens & MacKenna, 1988; 1989). While this study was small in nature, the findings helped lay the groundwork for future studies to examine more closely the rapid increase of tactical policing within the U.S.

Not long after Stevens and MacKenna's (1988; 1989) study, Kraska and colleagues set out to better understand and document the growing trend of tactical policing that had been occurring in the U.S. In 1997, Kraska and Kappeler conducted surveys with police agencies across the U.S. serving municipalities with populations of 50,000 or more about the creation of tactical units. Their data, as discussed in Chapter 1, was groundbreaking and provided the first comprehensive national data on tactical units at that time. The study by Kraska and Cubellis (1997) which focused on smaller jurisdictions during the same time frame also contributed to the first comprehensive national data set. These studies and their findings argued against the notion that the rapid rise of tactical units was in response to changes in crime. Rather, they felt it was a direct reflection of changing police tactics in the war on drugs hidden behind the discourses of community and problem-oriented policing reforms (Kraska & Cubellis, 1997; Kraska & Kappeler, 1997).

In addition to documenting the growth of tactical units at that time, the studies by Kraska & Kappeler (1997) and Kraska and Cubellis (1997) also collected data on the number of call-outs performed by tactical units in the U.S. during their respective study time frames. Call-outs indicate any activity which requires the deployment of a tactical unit (i.e., barricaded individuals, hostage situations, serving high-risk search and arrest warrants). For tactical teams serving populations of 25,000-50,000 people, there was an average of 3.7 call outs per year in 1980. By 1995 the average number of call outs for reporting agencies jumped to 12.5, an increase of 238% (Kraska & Cubellis, 2007). For teams serving populations of 50,000 and over, there was an average of 13 call-outs per year in 1980. By 1995, the average number of call-outs for reporting agencies jumped to

83, an increase of 538% (Kraska & Kappeler, 2007). Kraska (1999) further documented these same trends in the Commonwealth of Kentucky in a smaller study. He found that the ten documented tactical units in KY at that time carried out a yearly average of 15 call-outs in the 1980's. This number significantly increased by 1995 when the average number of call-outs jumped to 36 per year (Kraska, 1999). Findings from this study also indicated that the function of tactical units within KY was shifting from reactive calls (e.g., barricaded subject) to proactive deployments (e.g., no-knock drug searches). In addition, the indicated growth potential of tactical teams in smaller and rural communities raised questions about the necessity of those units in smaller jurisdictions, whether or not those teams would receive adequate training as well as the cost-effectiveness of those tactical teams (Kraska, 1999).

The growth of tactical teams in Kentucky has continued to increase since the work done by Kraska in the 1990's. By 2007, the Kentucky Tactical Officer's Association (KTOA) identified 60 tactical teams in the Commonwealth of Kentucky with an average of 10-15 officers per team (Foreman, 2010). Only one team in the state functions on a full-time basis and is run by the Kentucky State Police. Other units are multi-jurisdictional, such as the Northern Kentucky Emergency Response Unit, which is made up of 10 different agencies. The remaining tactical teams are run by individual municipal or local police agencies, which may seek support through the KTOA for development and maintenance, but do not have to participate in the KTOA to be considered a tactical team (Foreman, 2010). The KTOA follows the guidelines set forth by the NTOA which provide guidance, leadership, and training for tactical teams in

Kentucky. The standards created by the KTOA have been modeled after those of the NTOA.

The NTOA has developed standards by which they hold law enforcement agencies accountable when their tactical team applies for membership in the NTOA. These standards include policies, procedures, training, and tactics that relate to SWAT team organization, operations, personnel, and equipment. For example, the NTOA (2011) suggests that a part-time tactical team train, at a minimum, for the following durations: 40 hours of a basic SWAT course, 16 hours training per month, 8 hours additional (in addition to the 16-hours requirement) for personnel with specialized skills identified as requiring additional training, and 40-hours annual in-service team training event, including at least one annual training event that focuses on the SWAT team's role in "All Hazards Manual" response. Full-time teams should train 25% of their on-duty time with additional suggested areas of training provided by the NTOA (2011).

The National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA) began a two part research project in the late 1990's in an effort to address topics that were not covered in the studies conducted by Kraska and colleagues. Specifically, the topics of focus were how SWAT teams were structured (e.g., full vs. part time units), how these units were trained, how they responded to specific situations, and how they dealt with the use of force by citizens against them. The first program developed by the NTOA was called the "Post Critical Incident Report (PCIR) Project" and collected information about specific aspects of SWAT activations (Klinger & Rojek, 2008). These aspects included the following: the type of incident, the type of location where it occurred, the involved offender(s) and his/her/their equipment (e.g., weapons, body armor, etc.), what the offender(s) did,



victim(s)/hostage(s) characteristics, the negotiation process, police activity (including the use of force), and incident resolution. The second program instituted by the NTOA was a survey of police jurisdictions that served populations of 250,000 and above called "The SWAT Operation Survey" (SOS) (Klinger & Rojek, 2008). This study was designed to obtain information about the development and growth of SWAT teams in large agencies, how often these teams were mobilized for different types of incidents and the use of deadly force in these operations. The survey consisted of two instruments: the Operations Form which asked various questions about the organization and functioning of SWAT teams, and the Firearms Discharge Report which asked questions regarding incidents involving SWAT officers and suspects discharging firearms during SWAT operations (Klinger & Rojek, 2008). Findings from this initial study were not published. However, Klinger and Rojek (2008), with the endorsement and assistance of the NTOA, designed a follow-up study using elements from the original NTOA studies to further examine and explain the structure and make-up of tactical units across the U.S.

With funding from The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Klinger and Rojek (2008) built upon the twin data collection efforts developed by the NTOA and helped to develop a better picture of the role that SWAT played in contemporary American law enforcement. The study had four main components designed to enhance the knowledge of and gather systematic information about the structure and make-up of tactical teams. The first was to expand upon the PCIR; the second was to re-vamp and expand the SOS; the third was to conduct a series of site visits to several cities to observe their SWAT teams; and the fourth was to accompany SWAT teams in areas where Klinger was employed for in-depth observation of training and field deployment.

While efforts were made to improve the PCIR and SOS, response rates were low. Only 341 of the 1,183 agencies contacted for inclusion in the SOS data responded for a 29% response rate. Only 105 agencies submitted any after-action reports, and the degree of participation varied substantially among those agencies. Of the 476 PCIR forms completed, 186 came from a single agency, 88 came from the six agencies that submitted between 10 and 20 reports, while the remaining 202 came from the 98 agencies that submitted fewer than 10 reports (Klinger & Rojek, 2008). Patterns of SWAT team development and number of teams in the United States mirrored the research conducted by Kraska and Kappeler (1997) and Kraska & Cubellis (1997). However, the SOS's did indicate several new key findings: smaller departments were contributing to multi-jurisdictional SWAT teams to better serve their communities; a large majority of SWAT teams were conducting their training in full and half-day increments with an average of 11 hours of monthly training; and the vast majority of teams in the study were rarely deploying at civil disturbances and instead spending their time responding to barricades, hostage incidents and warrants (Klinger & Rojek, 2008).

After the initial data collection, Klinger & Rojeck (2008) conducted field observations with participating agencies which provided insightful findings regarding tactical team membership, training and deployment. Seven tactical teams were chosen for inclusion in field work, and their departments varied in size from several thousand sworn officers to just over 300. Two agencies were located on the west coast; two were in the Southwest; two were in the Midwest; and the last was located in the Northeast. The largest SWAT team followed had members in the hundreds, while the smallest had just 17. Five teams consisted of officers who served as SWAT team members full-time,

while the other two teams included both full and part-time SWAT officers. Field work included observation of training, call-outs to 17 high risk warrants, 20 barricaded subject incidents, 7 miscellaneous operations (e.g., security details) and finally officers' ancillary duties if applicable (Klinger & Rojek, 2008). The results of the SOS and field observations indicated that while all SWAT teams train on a regular basis, there is substantial diversity in the time and types of training the teams conduct. However, some similarities including an emphasis on safety, teamwork and realism in training (e.g., that training should mimic the actual conditions team members would encounter in real operations) were observed across all six teams (scheduling conflicts prevented one team from being observed during its training). A proficiency in firearms was also a common theme in all of the teams observed. However, the time and diversity in firearm training varied greatly across the teams (Klinger & Rojek, 2008).

Pre-planned SWAT activations, such as the service of warrants, and unplanned SWAT mobilizations, such as barricaded subject(s), were also observed by the researchers. All but one of the warrant operations were narcotics search warrants, which officers from the various units informed the researchers, constituted the majority of the warrants they served (a finding that was consistent with the survey data). As indicated with the findings from the SOS, teams differed in the service of warrants as well: specifically, how the team was notified that their services would be needed in a warrant, their pre-raid activity, their execution of the warrant, their approach to the location, their entry to the location, and their search of the location during the warrant differed (Klinger & Rojek, 2008). Unplanned SWAT mobilizations, often called call-outs, were more difficult to observe given their unpredictable nature. However, the researchers did see a

pattern amongst the teams in the "formula" they used to deal with whatever circumstance they confronted consisting of three steps: staging (e.g., how the team prepares to take action); deploying (e.g., how the team assigns officers during a call-out in a way that enhances surveillance and protects officers from threats posed by the suspect(s)); and working the problem (e.g., taking a deliberate approach to handling call-outs designed to peaceably resolve the problem). The actual steps taken by particular teams varied within this "formula" across the observed call-outs (Klinger & Rojek, 2008). This research sheds light on the need to continue the study of tactical officers. Low response rates hindered the researchers from drawing any kind of clear-cut indicators of SWAT performance. Specifically, how closely are the actions of SWAT teams in line with standards set forth in training? And, is one approach to SWAT better than another? Furthermore, none of the research focused on the individual officers serving in these units.

This section has discussed tactical policing. Specifically, it has covered what tactical policing is and how it differs from typical policing and past and present research concerning the number and types of tactical teams in the United States. The demands and requirements of tactical policing go above that of typical policing, and stress can be inferred as an apparent part of both traditional and tactical policing. The topic of stress in policing will be discussed in the next section, including what types of stressors are present in the field of policing, the possible outcomes of stress, and the practices used to address or reduce stress for officers.

## **Stress on Officers**

A stressor is anything that can bring on a reaction of stress including a person, place, or event. The stress response is a combination of mental and physical responses to challenges that humans face in everyday life. Stress can be good (eustress), bad (distress), or mixed (Melucci, 2004). In the occupation of policing, research has primarily focused on distress. A great deal of research has been conducted on the general subject of stress, particularly the stress-illness connection (Melucci, 2004). The term “burnout” was developed to describe a syndrome that depresses mental and physical functioning. The syndrome is usually the result of chronic work-related stress. In addition, research concerning Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has also been linked to work-related stress. These events go well beyond the usual levels of daily stress and can result from traumatic experiences such as witnessing a car accident or surviving a violent crime (Melucci, 2004). The field of policing is full of these types of traumatic experiences leading to stress, many of which have been the focus of academic literature.

Law enforcement has been identified as one of the most stressful occupations (Arter, 2008; Anshel, 2000; Finn, 1997; Violanti & Aron, 1993). This belief has also been called the police stress hypothesis (Malloy & Mays, 1984). The police stress hypothesis is the assumption that the occupation of policing is highly stressful and is challenged each time a study on police stress is conducted. The perception of police stressors and the actual types of stressors that police experience have been examined in various ways over the past forty years (Oliver & Meier, 2004). In 1974, the work of Reiser focused on the role of stress in police work. Reiser's theory asserts that police

officers experience a constant state of stress, to varying degrees, from physiological arousal or hypervigilance, a term later conceptualized by Gilmartin (2002) as a constant state of awareness which factors into physiological maladies. In addition, Resier (1974) argued that the organizational structure of a police department was a source of significant stress for individual officers. Research has determined that psychological stress as a result of working in law enforcement has been linked to a number of personal and professional problems including family disturbances, substance abuse, cardiovascular disease, premature natural death, and a perceived need for counseling (Reiser, 1974; Malloy & Mays, 1984; Walker, 1999; Westphal & Openshaw, 2009). Police stressors have primarily been categorized into four major categories: organizational, operational, external, and personal.

### **Organizational Stressors**

The first category of police stressors are organizational police stressors. These types of stressors often stem from a lack of organizational and supervisor support within policing (Violanti & Aron; 1993; Anshel, 2000). In 1984, Maloy & Mays found that the authoritarian nature of police organizations breed alienation among line officers and management, thus leading to organizational stress. In their study, they found several organizational stressors within policing including court leniency with criminals, lack of consideration when scheduling court appearances, poor condition of equipment, lack of equipment, changing shift routines, and lack of available counseling (Maloy & Mays, 1984). In a study done almost a decade later, Violanti & Aron (1993) found both similar and additional forms of organizational stressors present for police officers in their study including court decisions restricting police activity, assignment of disagreeable duties,

lack of recognition for good work, disagreeable department regulations, lack of participation in job decisions, and excessive inappropriate discipline. Finn and Tomz (1997) found while developing a stress program for police officers and their families additional organizational stressors for police officers including the following: the paramilitary structure of the police, perceived excessive or unnecessary paperwork, antagonistic subcultures within the department (between different squads, units, or shifts), lack of career development opportunities, and the police culture (e.g., code of silence, corruption).

In later research focusing on police stress, Stinchcomb (2004), while studying the many and varied organizational stressors present within policing, termed what he called "chronic organizational stress." This type of stress is defined as being continually present in the everyday work environment and can stem from sources such as uncooperative co-workers or unsupportive administrators. Later studies further explored work-related stressors for police officers and added inadequate support from the department, expectation to do too much in too little time, political pressure within the police agency, lack of family friendly policies, and favoritism to the ever-growing list of organizational stressors in policing (Slate et.al. 2007; Kirschman, 2007). The studies both identified and supported the presence of organizational stress within policing, but they also highlighted that policing faced many of the same bureaucratic and structural stressors identified in the general sociology of work and occupation (Violanti, 2012). What researchers felt made policing different was the additional presence of occupational stressors, many of which are inherently dangerous.

## **Operational Stressors**

The second category of police stressors are operational police stressors. These stressors are considered dangers inherent within police work and daily tasks which the police must perform (Violanti & Aron, 1993; Oliver & Meier, 2004; Slate et al., 2007). Operational stressors can range from excessive paperwork to killing someone in the line of duty (Slate et al., 2007). Violanti & Aron (1993) cited that responding to felonies in progress, high speed chases, dealing with crises, physical attacks upon one's person, and death or injury of other officers are some major operational stressors for police officers. Finn & Tomz (1997) expand upon this list of operational police stressors by adding the following: role conflict for the officer (officer, social worker, counselor, and public servant all at the same time), roller-coaster routine (frequent boredom interjected by sudden need for alertness and quick action), and frequent exposure to depravity and human suffering. Patterson (2003) added to this list with the stress of appearing in court and handling domestic disputes.

Operational stressors can be further exaggerated for those within specialized units of policing. Finn and Tomz (1997) along with Arter (2008) found that officers working "undercover" reported more operational stress than officers in other positions. Results from Arter's (2008) study indicated a correlation between higher levels of stress and reported acts of deviance in officers working undercover assignments. He also found that those officers who had never worked undercover assignments reported the least amount of work-related stress and the fewest acts of deviance in comparison to those officers who had or were previously working undercover assignments (Arter, 2008). These studies highlight the relationship between specialized units in policing and higher stress levels.



They also demonstrate a need to explore and further understand how, why, and what types of specialized units are related to higher levels of stress.

### **External Stressors**

The third category of police stressors is external police stressors. This type of stressor stems from outside the police agency itself and can include political and economic constraints that affect salary levels, negative or distorted press accounts, frustration with the criminal justice system, belief that courts are too lenient with offenders, ineffectiveness of the judicial system, ineffectiveness of the correctional system, lack of interagency cooperation and funding for training within the department (Oliver & Meier, 2004; Slate et al., 2007). Finn and Tomz (1997) found the following as external stressors in their study: lack of follow-up with police to tell them how cases turn out, perceived lack of respect from judges, lawyers, and other criminal justice personnel, negative media coverage, and political correctness.

In addition, several researchers noted in their examination of external stressors in policing the relationship between the officer and his/her community. Specifically, the community often has a negative image of the policeman which can lead to distrust and disrespect both against the police and by the police against the community (Finn & Tomz, 1997; Maloy & Mays, 1984; Anshel, 2000; Slate et al., 2007). The portrayal of law enforcement officers by the media, particularly negative portrayals, can affect officers on a personal level as well. How society views police officers and their duties and responsibilities can sometimes be in stark contrast to the reality of what police officers actually do on a daily basis. This often leads to additional personal stressors for officers.

## **Personal Stressors**

The fourth and final category of police stressors is personal police stressors. These stressors often include family life, conflict between family life and the police occupation, and personal feelings of self-actualization and expression (Oliver & Meier, 2004). The lack of social support for police officers from family and friends is often ranked as the highest of all personal stressors (Maloy & Mays, 1984; Anshel, 2000; Patterson, 2003). However, personal stressors in general are often less stressful for officers as indicated in a study by Slate et al. (2007). In their study, Slate and colleagues (2007) surveyed 128 police officers and found that participants ranked personal stressors lower than organizational, occupational, and external stressors. However, personal stress for officers is still supported by a number of factors. For example, law enforcement is a 24 hour commitment. An officer carries a badge and often a gun around the clock. While an officer may not be looking for crime while off duty, his or her training and commitment to uphold the law often leads to involvement in work while off duty (International Association of Police Chiefs, 1990: p.10), thus further compounding personal stressors for officers. In addition, the lack of understanding by family and friends about police work and its difficulties, along with anxiety over the responsibility to protect the public, were cited as personal stressors by officers (Finn & Tomz, 1997). While personal stress may have been listed lower than other forms of stress by officers, the realization remains that the combined effects of all forms of stress impacts both the officers and those close to them.

## **Outcomes of Stressors and Stressor Effects on Officers' Romantic Relationships**

The outcome of these four main categories of police stressors can lead to many problems for officers, both physical and mental. Specifically, police officers report higher rates of stress-related illness such as peptic ulcers, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, heart disease, and stomach disorders particularly in comparison to the general population (Maloy & Mays, 1984; Anshel, 2000). In addition, police officers report higher rates of alcohol and drug abuse, marital and family discord, high divorce, and suicide rates in comparison to the general population (Violanti & Aron, 1993; Beehr et al., 1995; Anshel, 2000; Newman & Rucker-Reed, 2004; Kirschman, 2007). The effect of these stressors can be felt on those close to the officer, particularly those romantically involved with officers.

Most of the research conducted on patrol officers' relationships has focused on the effects of job stressors on the quality of their relationships (Alexander & Walker, 1996; Borum & Philpot, 1993; Burke & Mikkelsen 2004; Gershon, 2000; Hageman, 1997; Maynard & Maynard, 1982; Maynard et al., 1980; Roberts & Levenson, 2001). These studies support the finding that one individual's stress can spill over from his or her job and have harmful effects on relationships outside of work. Violanti (1996) has even suggested that the field of policing has "institutionalized marital and family conflict into the profession" (p.2). Spouses of police officers can experience increased levels of stress by default due to several occupational aspects of policing including the inflexibility of schedules, continually changing hours, dangerousness of officers' duties and public anti-police sentiments. Maynard et al. (1980) found that police families must survive through what they called an endless system of continual adaptive compromises. A later study

also conducted by Maynard and colleagues (1982) found evidence that police spouses believed police departments did not value families and preferred that officers be divorced or single. They also found that conflicts arise between officers and spouses about the sacrifices spouses make to accommodate the demands of the policing profession, thus leading to additional stress within these relationships. This finding was supported by the work of Roberts & Levenson (2001) who discovered that officers carried their job stress home with them, and this had a negative impact on the police officers' marriages. In addition, they found that a psychological stance of vigilance and defensiveness, similar to what Gilmartin (2002) conceptualized as hypervigilance, was present for the officers in their home lives after a stressful day at work.

Another problem for police couples is the officers' unwillingness to share stressful experiences from work with their partners. Officers fear that they will scar or taint their partners through vicarious exposure to their jobs. Conroy & Hess (1992) found that officers often feel guilty about sharing their stressful experiences with their spouses because of a "rebound" effect, which can result in the traumatization of their partners. This can then lead to these officers feeling more stress when their partners are anxious about the dangerous details of their jobs. In addition, officers often refrain from sharing traumatic job stories with their partners for fear that their partners won't understand. This conscious disconnection between officers and their partners can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness, which are harmful to relationship intimacy (Henry, 1995). When studying intimacy levels between officers and their spouses, Maynard & Maynard (1982) found that intimacy levels between officers and their spouses can also be negatively influenced by the officers' lack of boundaries between work and family. They

found that a high percentage of officers' wives felt that officers placed their careers before their families. The wives also reported receiving little support from police departments that often expected flexibility from police families, but gave little or no flexibility and benefits to those families in return. These studies draw attention to the role of significant others in the stress-work relation and highlight the need to include significant others in stress reduction efforts for police officers.

### **Measures to Address or Reduce Stress in Officers**

The primary action by police agencies across the United States to deal with police stress has been the implementation of stress management programs. Successful programs have not just focused solely on work-related events and situations, but have also incorporated the development of cognitive skills necessary to utilize both emotion-focused coping and social support seeking in response to stressful events experienced in work and non-work domains. In addition, successful programs tailor themselves towards several factors including the following: the size of the department, understanding the basic concepts of stress including the signs and symptoms of stress and stress management, introduction of peer support and counseling programs such as Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD), seeking program credibility through local or national accreditation agencies such as Federal Law Enforcement Training Accreditation (FLETA), and making services available to family members of officers (Finn & Tomz, 1997; Patterson, 2003). Several studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of stress management for police officers. These studies indicate that the most effective measures for stress management include departmental policies addressing stress management and job satisfaction, social support from others outside law enforcement,

and departmental training on identifying and addressing stress (Anshel, 2000; Beehr et al., 1995; Patterson, 2003; Violanti & Aron, 1993). These studies, however, were quantitative in nature and were not able to truly "hear" the officers' thoughts and perceptions on stress management within law enforcement, nor did they take into consideration the thoughts of the significant others of police officers.

In an effort to break from the past quantitative nature of stress management studies, a qualitative study by Arter (2008) used interviews to "hear" officers' thoughts on stress and deviance within policing. Here police stress was examined in an effort to test general strain theory using interviews of thirty-two officers who had served currently, formerly, and never in undercover police assignments. As discussed previously, undercover police assignments were reported to be one of the most stressful of all duty assignments within policing. Results indicated a correlation between higher levels of stress and self-reported acts of deviance. These acts of deviance included behaviors that would result in departmental sanctioning, were in violation of departmental policy or procedure, were a violation of the law, were sub-culturally scorned by other members, or behaviors that were inconsistent with the formal and/or informal code of conduct for policing. Examples of these types of deviance included rude behavior toward citizens, excessive force, acts of nonfeasance, malfeasance, or misfeasance, failure to assist a fellow officer, endangering self or others, and the exhibition of fear during assigned duties. The reported acts of deviance also included behaviors that deviated from either expected or accepted social or cultural practices. Examples of this type of deviance included over-indulgence in alcohol, promiscuity, dishonesty, failure to enforce certain laws, selective enforcement of laws, and rude or insolent behavior. Findings from this

study indicated that those officers who had never worked undercover reported the least amount of work related stress and fewest acts of self-reported deviance (Arter, 2008). These results are indicative of the need to target specific types of stress within different police assignments, including specialized units (e.g., SWAT), to aid in the development and sustainability of successful stress management training including those programs that incorporate family members.

### **Stress on Officers' Families**

In addition to the scholarly studies discussed earlier, many books have been directed towards police officers and their families regarding the occupation of policing and stress management. These books cover various subjects as the following titles illustrate: *I Love a Cop: What Police Families Need to Know* (Kirschman, 2007); *Cops Don't Cry: A Book of Help and Hope for Police Families* (Stone, 2007); *In Harm's Way: Help for the Wives of Military Men, Police, EMT's, and Firefighters: How to Cope When the One You Love is in a High-Risk Profession* (Matsakis, 2005); *A Chip on my Shoulder: How to Love Your Cop with Attitude* (2011); *Bullets in the Washing Machine* (2011); and *CopShock: Surviving Posttraumatic Stress Disorder* (Kates, 2008). The information provided in these books range from tips and advice on keeping communication open between officer and spouse, how to recognize stress, how to deal with legal issues, how to deal with the media, how to handle issues of stress that relate to children, and general information regarding shift work, job demands, and fear. Unfortunately, there has been little academic research conducted on the spouses' perspectives of being married to law enforcement officers. However, what researchers have identified is that the spouses of police officers can experience significant disruptions in their lives as a result of their

partners' occupation. This can include family disruption due to rotational shift work, lack of support for the family from police administration, long and often inconvenient hours of work, anxiety over the physical dangers of the profession, fear of line-of-duty death, and intense public scrutiny (Alexander & Walker: 1996; Kirschman, 1997; Blum, 2000; Burke & Mikkelsen, 2004; Matsakis, 2005; Stone, 2007; Westphal & Openshaw, 2009).

In an early study, Maynard, Maynard, McCubbin and Shao (1980) looked at the coping strategies police wives found helpful in managing the hardships that the profession of policing place upon their husbands, and thus, themselves. The authors found that police wives faced chronic stress and thus employed and changed between a multitude of personal, social, and intra-family coping strategies. These strategies included developing self-reliance, accepting the demands of the profession, developing social support, maintaining family integration, and role maintenance. Achieving and maintaining the balance between individual development and family functioning was found to be one of the major objectives of coping behaviors in families. Importantly, wives found value in seeking and developing social supports from the community for themselves and other members. When viewed together, these coping strategies emerged as a conscious effort by police wives to promote family organization, maintain emotional stability, promote personal growth and development, and promote the independence of individual family members (Maynard et. al., 1980).

Additional studies have incorporated perspectives from both officers and their significant others. Borum and Philpot (1993) found in their study of therapy with law enforcement couples that a law enforcement agency can often compete with an officer's



marriage for his/her time and commitment. The extra time required by policing can detract from time that could potentially be spent with the officer's spouse and/or could interfere with plans that were previously made with a spouse. This in turn creates resentment by the officer's spouse toward the department. In addition, the police organization encourages isolation and solidarity. This creates a tremendously rigid boundary around officers, which is often stronger than the boundary around the officer's marriage (Borum & Philpot, 1993). In another study conducted with both police officers and spouses, Roberts and Levenson (2001) found that job stress, rather than physical exhaustion, had more potentially negative consequences on police marriages. Their findings indicated that the stress of the job was carried home by officers, thus influencing interactions with their spouses. These influences were found in spite of the couple's marital satisfaction, officer's work shift and the couple's parenthood status. The authors also found that job stress dampened the quality of marital interaction and was far more “toxic” than exhaustion from the job (Roberts & Levenson, 2001).

Not all marital relationships can survive the occupation of policing. Several studies have been conducted on the divorce rate of police couples. Calderone (1980) found in a study of New York City Police officers, the highest rates of divorce for officers occurred within the first three years on the job and again between seven and ten years on the job. Maynard & Maynard (1982) supported the findings of Calderone's study by discovering a 70% divorce rate in the police officers they studied within the first five years on the job. This was in comparison to national divorce rates of approximately 41% for first time marriages, 60% for second marriages, and 73% for third marriages (Maynard & Maynard, 1982). In contrast, a latter study by Hageman (1997)

looked at occupational stress and marital relationships of officers using a survey given to officers and their wives or girlfriends at a family orientation for a law enforcement academy. The study found that rookie officers experienced less marital conflict and higher rates of marital happiness than veteran officers. This finding was credited to the degree of role commitment that veteran officers demonstrated during their career. Role commitment was defined as the amount of resources, time, and energy an officer demonstrated to their occupation. Hageman found that as an officer's role commitment increased, the spouse's satisfaction and perception of the officer's commitment to their family and marriage decreased. It is worth noting that, given the divorce statistics discussed in the earlier studies, a follow-up study with the same group may have provided differing results.

While there has been a great deal of research and literature aimed at police stress, the fact remains that more needs to be done. Specifically, more research on police stress needs to be conducted to provide current statistics and to update previous studies. Furthermore, there have been no stress management programs found that target police officers serving on tactical units, let alone programs that target tactical officers and the relationship work and stress has on their romantic partners. Thus, there is a need to hear and address these particular officers' needs. There has been little, if any, research focused on the transition from patrol officer to tactical team member and how that change may affect family members. It has been suggested that transitions within police work (e.g., transferring to different posts or positions) are not as difficult for the officer as they are for the family. This is because the officer is able to move from one familiar work

situation to another. This is not true for family members who must adjust to entirely new situations (Alexander, 1996 & Stone, 2007).

This section has provided an overview of the literature related to stress on officers and stress on officers' families. Special attention was paid to the types of stress that officers face including organizational, operational, external, and personal stressors. The outcomes of these stressors were discussed including measures that can be used to address and possibly reduce stress in officers. Stress on officers' families was also discussed in this review including the lack of research surrounding the partner's perspective of being in a relationship with an officer. This dissertation seeks to fill in the gaps left in previous research by examining a group of individuals distinct from typical patrol officers (i.e., tactical officers). The relationship between tactical officers and their partners has not been examined. Particularly, there is a need to examine the factors that influence the success of these relationships. The next section will provide the theoretical framework for the design of this dissertation.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The design of this study, particularly the quantitative portion of this study, has been supported by attachment theory. The analysis of the qualitative portion of this research will be influenced by the results of the quantitative data, and thus also, attachment theory. However, the qualitative portion of this study also used elements from both grounded theory and phenomenological approaches by letting the participants' descriptive stories of being in relationships with tactical officers shape the theoretical component. A discussion of attachment theory, including how it will influence the

framework for the quantitative portion of the study and the resulting hypotheses, will be next followed by a discussion of elements from grounded theory and phenomenological approaches.

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969/1982) was originally formulated by the joint work of Ainsworth and Bowlby. Their work demonstrated that infants need attachment figures to make an emotional bond or tie for both their instinctive survival and manufacturing of their own felt security. According to Bowlby (1969/1982), the primitive nature of attachment is to keep infants close to their caregivers. This is to secure their own comfort, to stay away from danger, and to ensure their survival (Wallin, 2007). Attachment theorists argue that emotional bonds are established during infancy and are formed on the basis of attitudes and behavior patterns that individuals will later bring to adult relationships. An attachment relationship is defined as an “affectional bond” (Feeney & Noller 1991; 187) where one individual seeks to maintain closeness to another (Ainsworth, 1989). The goal of these relationships, in both infants and adults, is to maintain an emotional and physical proximity and a sense of felt security. Observations of attachment behavior began by focusing on the responses of infants and young children to separation from, and reunion with, their primary caregiver (Ainsworth et al., 1978). The infants’ experiences of their caregivers’ responses to these behaviors lead to the development of an attachment relationship (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Campos et al., 1983). The formation of strong bonds with significant others is a matter of survival for human infants, and the ability to do so is instinctive (Campos et al., 1983; Reis & Knee, 1996). Humans have a behavioral system that maximizes survival by ensuring there is close proximity to the caregiver. Humans use the caregiver as a source of

protection and as a secure base from which to explore their environment (Shaver et al., 1996).

These attachment patterns continue into adulthood, even though the relationship strategies used by adults are not the same as those used by infants and children (Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Main et al., 1985; Shaver et al., 1996). Adults have a broader range of behaviors in relationships as compared to infants. An example of this would be that infants cannot physically follow their caregiver. In addition, attachments in adults have a variety of functions which are usually characterized by reciprocity, companionship, sexual bonds, mutual experiences and goals (Crowell & Treboux, 1995; Weiss, 1982, 1986). When discussing both infant and adult attachment, there are two primary types of attachment labeled as secure or insecure.

### **Types of Attachment**

Depending on the nature of the relationships and individual experiences throughout one's life, attachments can be labeled as secure or insecure. If a caregiver is sensitive and responsive, a secure attachment relationship can form. Infants who are secure tend to be happy, willing, and able to explore their environment; they are also responsive to comforting in times of distress. Adults in secure relationships will have high levels of trust, support and intimacy, and they will have a sensitive and appropriate sharing of feelings and ideas (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Mikulincer & Nachson, 1991; Simpson et al., 1992). In contrast, infants who do not develop a secure attachment relationship with caregivers will have insecure attachments. This can occur when the care provided to them is slow, inappropriate, inconsistent, or absent. Insecure attachments can be labeled as either “anxious/ambivalent” or “avoidant.”

Infants who are anxious/ambivalent tend to have received slow and inconsistent, or overly-intrusive, care giving. Infants in these situations tend to cry easily, are not easily comforted, and are reluctant to explore their environment. Adults categorized with anxious/ambivalent attachment styles fall in love easily, fear abandonment, experience emotional ups and downs, display “needy but angry” patterns of behavior, tend to be obsessively jealous and overly dependent on and/or merge completely with their partner (Brennan & Shaver, 1995; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Mikulincer & Erev, 1991). Children who have developed avoidant attachment patterns have typically received consistent rejection by a caregiver. Avoidant infants tend to appear emotionally detached and unconcerned about whether their caregiver leaves or returns (Shaver et al., 1996). Adults characterized as having avoidant attachment styles tend to deny attachment needs, are reluctant to trust others, avoid closeness with others and are often over involved with activities such as work (Brennan & Shaver, 1995; Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1990). It is important to note that insecure infants, those who are anxious/ambivalent and avoidant, do not necessarily grow up to become insecure adults. This is possibly due to positive life experiences and indicates that attachment styles can change throughout one’s lifespan. In addition, research by Hayashi & Strickland (1998) found that insecure men and women differ in a variety of ways. Women who are insecure tend to experience jealousy and fears of abandonment, while men tend to lack trust, have low relationship satisfaction, and experience ambivalence towards others.

### **Working Models and Indicators of Attachment Types**

Bowlby referred to the experiences infants have with caregivers as the construction of lifelong belief patterns that lead to the formation of “working models” of

both the caregiver and of the self (Belsky, 2002; Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1973). The core concept of working models is that infants internalize core beliefs and experiences regarding the self, their caregivers, and the world they live in, termed the “model of other” and the “model of self.” When infants receive consistent and secure care, they see their world in a positive and trustworthy way. In contrast, they will internalize the world as unsafe and untrustworthy if they are given inconsistent and neglectful care (Collins & Read, 1990; Goodvin, 2007; Pietromonaco & Barrett, 2000; Wallin, 2007). Working models help to organize information about an individual's search for security (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985). Whether an individual has success or failure in finding security in their life is integrated into their personality. Working models are applied to new relationships and are typically generalized to people considered significant others. Attachment styles are specific behaviors that characterize an individual's actions and reactions in a relationship. When an adult forms a new relationship, they bring with them their own working models and related behaviors. These relationships are shaped by the individual's respective styles of relating and the interaction of each individual's relationship style, which will in turn influence the experience of the particular relationship. Because working models are based on experience, these models can be adapted when an individual faces significant new experiences and information (Crowell & Treboux, 1995; Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Adult attachment behavior in marriage is comprised of two primary dimensions, “anxiety about abandonment” and “comfort with intimacy.” These dimensions are a measure of beliefs and attitudes about relationships (Feeney, 1990; Feeney, Noller & Callan, 1994). Secure attachment is indicated by strong comfort with intimacy and a lack

of anxiety over abandonment. These two dimensions are related to working models because they help to describe both positive and negative models of the self and others. A positive model of self and of others indicates a secure attachment style, while a combination of positive and negative models of self and others indicates an insecure style. A positive model of self is indicated through comfort with intimacy, while low anxiety about abandonment suggests a positive model of others.

### **Hypotheses**

Based on the discussed premise and theoretical assumptions of attachment theory, two research questions and four hypotheses were developed for this study, particularly in phase I:

Research Question 1: How is attachment style (e.g., anxiety about abandonment versus comfort with intimacy) correlated with organizational stress while controlling for demographic characteristics?

H1: The anxiety dimension of insecure attachment is correlated with organizational stress. Specifically, anxiously attached individuals will report higher levels of organizational stress than those individuals not within the anxiety dimension of insecure attachment, even when controlling for demographics.

H2: The avoidance dimension of insecure attachment is correlated with organizational stress. Specifically, avoidantly attached individuals will report higher levels of organizational stress than those individuals not within the avoidance dimension of insecure attachment, even when controlling for demographics.



Research Question 2: How is attachment style (e.g., anxiety about abandonment versus comfort with intimacy) correlated with operational stress while controlling for demographic characteristics?

H3: The anxiety dimension of insecure attachment is correlated with operational stress. Specifically, anxiously attached individuals will report higher levels of operational stress than those individuals not within the anxiety dimension of insecure attachment, even when controlling for demographic characteristics.

H4: The avoidance dimension of insecure attachment is correlated with operational stress. Specifically, avoidantly attached individuals will report higher levels of operational stress than those individuals not within the avoidance dimension of insecure attachment, even when controlling for demographic characteristics.

Data collection and analysis from phase I addresses the research questions and hypotheses given above and will be discussed further in the following chapters. The analysis of phase I influenced the development of phase II. Thus, attachment theory had a role in the second phase of this mixed methods study. In addition to attachment theory, the study loosely uses principles from grounded theory and symbolic interactionist approaches for the analysis of phase II and will be discussed in the following sections.

### **The Spirit of Grounded Theory and Symbolic Interactionist Approaches**

The design for phase II, the qualitative portion of the study, was influenced by the results of the quantitative data from phase I, and thus also, attachment theory. However, the qualitative portion of this study also utilized elements comprising the spirit of grounded theory and symbolic interactionist approaches by letting the participants'

descriptive stories of being in relationships with a tactical officers shape the theoretical component. These approaches will be used to describe details about the participant couples in terms of their feelings, thought processes, and emotions during the analysis of phase II. For example, Strauss and Corbin (1998) indicated that grounded theory is best used when the methods are employed to explore areas about which little is known, as is the case of this study. They proposed that social behavior is complex, variable and that people act based on the meaning they attribute to circumstances. Therefore, utilizing elements with roots in grounded theory allows the researcher to bring the participants' stories to life. Components with foundations in grounded theory will refine the existing literature by reviewing preexisting theories for internal consistency and to fill in poorly developed categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In addition, by utilizing Glasser's (1978, 1992, 2010) term "emergence," phase II will allow the findings to shape the framework where the emphasis is placed on finding deeper meanings from the actions and interactions of the everyday lives of tactical officers and their romantic partners. While the strict methodology of grounded theory was not used in this study, elements pertaining to it were, thus utilizing the spirit of this approach. Kathy Charmaz (2006) reminds us that grounded theory entails learning about both the specific and the general of our data and exploring their links to larger issues or discovering larger unrecognized issues within our study population. In addition, the spirit of grounded theory can provide a way for examination of the study process and data that allow one to see beyond the obvious, or set theory, and move towards more imaginative interpretations of the findings.

Elements from symbolic interactionism were also utilized for a deeper understanding of the analysis of phase II. Symbolic interactionism, based on the work of

George Herbert Mead (1964) and built upon by Herbert George Blumer (1969) and Ervin Goffman (1959, 1963, 1967, 1971), focuses on the interpretation of meanings that individuals develop through their everyday interactions with others. More simply stated, symbolic interactionism is the study of the relationships between individuals and society and focuses on the symbolic process of communication between the participants. Mead's (1964) theories of the self-influenced Blumer's (1969) development of symbolic interactionism, specifically the three propositions that summarize his approach to symbolic interactionism. Firstly, individuals act towards things and other people based on the meanings that they have given to those things or people. Secondly, language is a means by which individuals negotiate meaning through symbols. Thirdly, individual thought modifies the interpretation of symbols (Blumer, 1969).

Goffman (1959, 1963, 1967, 1971) further developed symbolic interactionism using a dramaturgical approach. Specifically, this type of approach to symbolic interactionism believes that the world is a stage and that people are acting during their face-to-face interactions with other individuals. Central to this perspective is the idea that individuals are putting on a show for others. This show is an attempt to manage the verbal and non-verbal impressions received by others about oneself, which is also known as impression management (Appelrouth & Edles, 2008). Individuals will carefully play out situations weighing the rules of interaction that limit certain kinds of things that can be done or said in certain situations, thus saving face and avoiding embarrassment (Goffman, 1967). Another central idea to Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach is the idea of front stage and back stage. The front stage is where the performance takes place and the tools of impression management are utilized by individuals. The back stage

is where the venerable true self of an individual lies. Goffman (1959) believed that individuals must build a strong barrier between the front and backstage in order to both maintain the authenticity of the front stage while protecting the vulnerability of the backstage.

This section has discussed the theoretical framework of attachment theory as well as elements comprising the spirit of grounded theory and symbolic interactionist approaches. Specifically, there has been an examination of attachment theory, including how it has influenced the framework of this study and the resulting hypotheses. In addition, this section has discussed the influencing elements that contributed to the spirit of grounded theory being used as well as the symbolic interactionist approaches as they apply to the analysis of phase II. The following chapter, Chapter Three, will discuss the study design and methodology for both phases of this study. Topics will include a review of the present study, selection of participants, instrument development, data collection and data analysis procedures.

## Chapter Three

### Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology of the current study which examined connections between operational stress, organizational stress and romantic attachments between tactical officers and their romantic partners. A mixed methods design was used to answer the research questions and address study goals. A mixed methods approach was chosen due to the lack of and need for these types of studies in the existing literature. This method also draws out the positive aspects of both types of research, while decreasing the negative aspects of each (Creswell, 2013). This study used a sequential explanatory design consisting of two distinct phases and four primary steps as outlined in the first chapter (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Creswell, Plano Clark, Guttman & Hanson, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). In this design, quantitative data was collected and analyzed first, while the qualitative data was collected and analyzed second in sequence, and helped to explain, or elaborate upon the quantitative results found in the first phase. In this study, the quantitative data helped to identify important demographics and areas of inquiry to explore in the second phase. Then, qualitative interview questions were developed to help explain why certain demographics and types of stress were significant for tactical officers and their romantic partners. Thus, the quantitative data and results helped to provide a general picture of the research problem, while the qualitative data and its analysis helped to refine and explain those important statistical results by exploring the participants' views in more depth.

The priority in this study was given to the qualitative phase because it focused on in-depth explanations of the results from the first quantitative phase. The quantitative and qualitative phases were connected (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) when developing the interview protocol based on the statistical results from the first phase and when selecting participants for phase II. The results of both phases were integrated during the discussion of the outcomes from the study as a whole. This chapter begins with a discussion of phase I of the study, including the sample and procedures, measures, variables, reliability of measures, and analytic approach. Next, the discussion of phase II is outlined including a discussion of the study design, participant demographics and analytic approach.

### **Phase I: Sample/Procedures**

In phase I, the principal focus was to explore the relationship between operational stressors, organizational stressors, and relationships as measured through the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Op), Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Org) and the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale-Short Form (ECR-S). Following the protocol approved by the University of Kentucky's Institutional Review Board, phase I consisted of a quantitative survey using these measures and given to tactical police officers attending the 2011 annual Kentucky Tactical Officer's Association (KTOA) conference. The survey asked tactical officer participants basic demographic questions and used a modified version of the Experiences in Close Relationship Scale-Short Form (ECR-S) and The Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Op) and Organizational Police Stress (PSQ-Org) Questionnaire. Participants for phase I of the study were recruited through purposeful sampling.

In order to gain a comparison between tactical officers serving in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the survey instrument was administered to as many tactical officers as could be reached. Each year, the (KTOA) holds a conference for any and all tactical officers in the Commonwealth to attend. Lectures, demonstrations and equipment vendors are available for all attendees. The 2011 KTOA conference was held in Lexington, KY, from August 7-10, 2011. A projected attendance of 125 tactical officers was expected at this conference. The researcher contacted the KTOA, and permission from the board of the KTOA was granted to administer survey material to conference attendees. An announcement was made at the opening session of the conference identifying the researcher and the study (see Appendix D for announcement). The researcher had a brief moment to introduce herself, the study, the survey instrument and her location in the vendor area. A booth with small snacks was set up in the vendor area of the conference. Advertising signs were posted stating the title of the research being conducted in order to attract participants (see Appendix C for recruitment flyer). Consent forms, surveys, pens, and envelopes to place completed consent forms, surveys and/or contact information for future study were present for participants to complete the survey. A copy of the consent form used during phase I can be found in Appendix A. The researcher was present at the booth to answer any questions participants had.

### **Phase I: Measures**

The quantitative survey instrument developed for phase I of this study, given to police officers serving on tactical units (n=74), included measures for demographic characteristics as well as three separate scales to measure attachment in romantic partner

relationships, organizational stress, and operational stress. A copy of the survey instrument can be found in Appendix B.

### **Dependent Variables**

Dependent variables consisted of two police stress scales, the Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Org) and the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Op), developed by Dr. Donald McCreary and available for use on-line (McCreary, 2004). Both of these questionnaires consist of 20 items. Participants were asked to circle how much stress each item caused them within the past six months. The scale for each item ranged from 1 (no stress at all) to 7 (a lot of stress). These scales have been validated by McCreary and colleagues using samples of Ontario police officers (McCreary, 2004). Both questionnaires have acceptable internal consistency scores, high levels of convergent validity as indicated by large positive correlations between the PSQ's, the Perceived Stress Scales (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983), and the Daily Hassles Scale (McCreary & Sadava, 1998); they also have high levels of divergent validity as indicated by large negative correlations between the PSQ's, the Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1997), and the Job-Related Affective Well-Being Scale (Van-Katwyn, Fox, Spector, & Kelloway, 2000). In the final set of analyses, both indexes were collapsed into a 3-item scale (low, moderate and high) in order to examine further the relationship between organizational, operational and relationship stressors.

### **Independent and Demographic Variables**

Preceding the scales used in the quantitative survey, participants were asked a series of questions regarding demographics which served as independent demographic variables. This section included questions asking age, number of years as a tactical



officer, current rank in their department, service in the military, marital status, number of times they had been married, number of years in their current relationship, number of children, and if they were currently in a monogamous relationship. Number of years served as a tactical officer was a continuous variable and represented years of service as a tactical officer. Rank within the department was a categorical variable and was coded with a dummy variable for multivariate analysis. The rank of “Officer” served as the reference category and the remaining categories were coded as a dummy variable (Detective, Sergeant and Lieutenant and Above and Other coded as 0=No and 1=Yes). Service in the military was a dichotomous variable and measured if the officer had served or was currently serving in the military (0=No, 1= Yes). Marital status was a categorical variable that was coded with a dummy variable for multivariate analysis. Married served as the reference category and the remaining categories were coded as a dummy variable (Never Married, Divorced/Separated, and Widowed coded as 0=No and 1=Yes). The number of times the participants had been married was a continuous variable and represented the number of times the participants had been married (i.e., 2 would indicate that the respondent was in his/her second marriage). The number of years that the participants had been in their current relationships was a continuous variable and represented the actual number of years in their current relationships. Finally, participants were asked if they had children, a dichotomous variable where 0= No and 1=Yes. If participants responded yes, they were able to list the actual number of children as a continuous variable which represented the actual number of children they had.

### **Independent Variables: Levels of Attachment**

The first scale used in the survey was a modified version of the Experiences in Close Relationship Scale-Short Form (ECR-S) developed by Wei, Russel, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel in 2007 and served as the independent variables of levels of attachment. This scale was designed to assess individual differences with respect to attachment-related anxiety (i.e., the extent to which people are insecure vs. secure about the extent of their partners' availability and responsiveness) and attachment-related avoidance (i.e., the extent to which people are uncomfortable being close to others vs. secure depending on others). Participants using the ECR-S were asked to circle how much they agreed with each question using a 7 point Likert-type scale. The categorical data was measured as 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= slightly disagree, 4= neutral, 5= slightly agree, 6= agree, and 7= strongly agree. In the final set of analyses, both indexes, anxiety, and avoidance were collapsed into a 3-item scale (low, moderate and high) in order to further examine the relationship between organizational, operational and relationship stressors.

This short-form scale uses 12 questions rather than the original 36 questions found in the Experiences in Close Relationship (ECR) scale developed by Brennan et al. in 1998. Using 6 different studies, Wei and colleagues (2007) were able to show that the ECR-S was comparable or equivalent to the original (36-item) version of the scale through internal consistency, test-retest reliability, factor structure and validity through factor analyses. While the coefficient alpha score for the ECR-S is lower than the original 36-item ECR, the ECR-S still has good internal consistency reliability for future research. Wei and colleagues (2007) also supported the validity of the ECR-S through equivalent factor structure analysis between the short and the original version of the ECR.

The ECR-S contains 6 items that measure anxiety and 6 items that measure avoidance. Participants using the ECR-S were asked to circle how much they agreed with each question using a 7 point Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). For classification, individuals who score high on anxiety and low on avoidance are categorized as the insecure-ambivalent/anxious group while individuals who score high on avoidance and low on anxiety are classified as the insecure-avoidant group. Low scores on both subscales of anxiety and avoidance indicate secure attachment, and high scores on both subscales indicate insecure-disorganized attachment. The scale used for this study was modified from its original version in one aspect. The original scale asked participants to answer the questions based on how they generally experience relationships. The current scale asked participants to think only about their current relationship when answering the questions.

### **Reliability of Measurements**

Internal coefficient alphas were calculated for this study to gauge reliability of the measurements. In most research, Cronbach's alpha of .70 or higher is considered acceptable reliability, but in some research (Murphy & Davidshofer, 2004), it is suggested that Cronbach's alpha of .60 or higher is also acceptable, particularly in exploratory research (Peterson, 1994). Organizational and Operational stress indexes for this study met these criteria. The Organizational Stress Index ( $\alpha=.92$ ) and the Operational Stress Index ( $\alpha=.92$ ) were both strong in internal consistency. This was also the case for the Anxiety ( $\alpha=.6$ ) and the Avoidance subscales ( $\alpha=.8$ ) with most single question items correlated with the index.

## **Phase I: Analytical Approach**

Quantitative data for this study was analyzed using the statistical package SPSS. Once all the surveys were administered, the researcher began entering the data into SPSS. The analysis consisted of independent and dependent variables. The independent variables consisted of demographic variables and levels of attachment measured from the ECR-S. The dependent variables consisted of police stressors measured from the PSQ-Op and PSQ-Org. Details for each of these categories will be described in the following sections.

### **Dependent Variable**

The dependent variables in this study were measured from the Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Org) and the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Op) developed by Dr. Donald McCreary (2004). Both of these questionnaires consisted of 20 items where responses were averaged into separate scale scores. A higher score indicated a greater degree of perceived stress in the operational or organizational policing domains. Means and standard deviations for the scales were also calculated. Summaries of both operational and organizational stress rankings were reported in order from most to least stressful. Rankings were calculated out of a possible 7-point rating. ANOVAs, correlations, and regression analysis were used to examine the connection between organizational and operational stress and relationship factors. Cross tabs analysis was also used to further explore the connection between work and romantic relationships among tactical officers.

## **Independent Variables**

The independent demographic variables used in this study included age, number of years served as a tactical officer, rank within the department, service in the military, marital status, number of times participant had been married, number of years in current relationship, number of children living in the home, and if the participant was currently in a monogamous relationship. Descriptive statistical analyses to describe the sample and each variable were examined. This included examining the means, standard deviation, frequencies, and creating scales from the analysis. The independent variable of levels of attachment were measured using the ECR-S. The ECR-S contains 6 items that measure anxiety and 6 items that measure avoidance. Attachment dimensions were calculated by summing participants' scores on the ECR-S scale. The subscales, consisting of anxiety and avoidance, were also calculated by summing the participants' scores. Four questions from the ECR-S, numbers 1, 5, 8, and 9, required reverse scoring to calculate the correct score for each participant. Means and standard deviations for the sub-scales were also calculated.

## **Data Analysis**

The first step of data analysis was to provide a descriptive summary of the sample and trends within each variable. This began with exploration of demographic characteristics including means, standard deviation, reliability coefficient, and frequencies. SPSS was used to calculate the data. Missing data was coded (i.e., 99) to allow for non-responses to be put into a category of their own for comparison against the remaining variables, called "simple contrasts" in SPSS. No patterns in missing responses were found and means substitution was not necessary during data analysis. The second

step was at the bivariate level and explored the relationship between organizational and operational stress and avoidance and anxiety in the participants' romantic relationships. Other factors (military service, rank, number of years as a tactical officer, number of years in current relationship, marital status, number of times married, does respondent have children and number of children) were also explored in accounting for levels of organizational and operational stress.. These variables were included in the third multivariate step of the analysis. Block linear regression was used to further explore the strongest factors in predicting levels of organizational and operational stress among tactical police officers. The following research questions and hypotheses were examined using the data collected during phase I. Hypotheses #1 and #2 emerged from the first research question while hypotheses #3 and #4 emerged from the second research question.

Research Question 1: How is attachment style (e.g., anxiety about abandonment versus comfort with intimacy) correlated with organizational stress while controlling for demographic characteristics?

H1: The anxiety dimension of insecure attachment is correlated with organizational stress. Specifically, anxiously attached individuals will report higher levels of organizational stress than those individuals not within the anxiety dimension of insecure attachment, even when controlling for demographics.

H2: The avoidance dimension of insecure attachment is correlated with organizational stress. Specifically, avoidantly attached individuals will report higher

levels of organizational stress than those individuals not within the avoidance dimension of insecure attachment, even when controlling for demographics.

Research Question 2: How is attachment style (e.g., anxiety about abandonment versus comfort with intimacy) correlated with operational stress while controlling for demographic characteristics?

H3: The anxiety dimension of insecure attachment is correlated with operational stress. Specifically, anxiously attached individuals will report higher levels of operational stress than those individuals not within the anxiety dimension of insecure attachment, even when controlling for demographic characteristics.

H4: The avoidance dimension of insecure attachment is correlated with operational stress. Specifically, avoidantly attached individuals will report higher levels of operational stress than those individuals not within the avoidance dimension of insecure attachment, even when controlling for demographic characteristics.

### **Multivariate Analyses**

During the analysis, if the independent variables were or were not associated with either of the dependent variables in the correlation matrix, they were still included in the multivariate analysis to examine their influence with other factors. In the first multivariate analysis used, organizational stress was assigned as the dependent variable while, in the second analysis, operational stress was assigned as the dependent variable. Demographic variables, including age, number of years as a tactical officer, rank in their department, service in the military, marital status, number of times married, number of

years in current relationship, and number of children were used as control variables in each of these analyses.

The previous sections have discussed phase I of the study including the sample/procedures, the measures, and the analytic approach that were used for the quantitative survey. The following sections will describe phase II of the study, the qualitative in-depth interviews conducted with tactical police officers and their romantic partners.

### **Phase II: Study Design**

Phase II consisted of qualitative in-depth interviews with tactical police officers and their romantic partners. Informed by the survey findings from phase I, phase II continued to explore the connection between stressors and relationships that could not be adequately addressed through quantitative measures. The survey instrument was developed from the findings of phase I and was reviewed by the researcher's husband, a tactical officer, to aid in the validity of the instrument. Specifically, the interviews conducted with tactical officers and their romantic partners included questions regarding the following: experiences of being in a romantic relationship where one partner is a tactical police officer, coping with aspects of tactical police work, separating tactical police work from home life, what could be done to assist officers and their romantic partners in balancing their roles as tactical police officers and romantic partners, and what would be helpful to know for other couples experiencing similar circumstances. Participants were also asked if they saw their relationship as successful and why. In addition, this study, particularly using findings from phase II, sought to provide guidance



on more tailored support services to these officers and their romantic partners in the future.

As with phase I, phase II of the study utilized purposeful sampling. In addition to purposeful selection, snowball sampling or chain referral sampling was used in phase II. This method began by asking an initial participant to participate in the study and then asked for that individual to refer a friend or acquaintance that may have also been appropriate for study, leading to new contacts and potential participants (Esterberg, 2002). Officers participating in phase I were asked at the end of the quantitative survey if they and their romantic partners would be interested in participating in a qualitative study at a later date. Interested participants were asked to record their contact information as well as their romantic partners' contact information and asked to detach the last page of the survey and place it in a separate envelope. This ensured confidentiality and that the participants' responses on the survey data were not associated with their names.

Following the protocol approved by the University of Kentucky's Institutional Review Board, phase II employed semi-structured in-depth interviews with 15 tactical officers and 15 romantic partners for a total of 30 participants between the dates of June 2013-December 2013. In order to qualify for participation in phase II of the study, tactical officer (TO) participants must have served on a tactical police team within the Commonwealth of Kentucky for at least one year and have been in a current relationship with a romantic partner for at least one year. Romantic partner (RP) participants must have been in a current relationship for at least one year to a law enforcement officer active within a tactical team in the Commonwealth of Kentucky in order to qualify for participation in phase II. Screener questions were used upon initial contact with potential

participants to deem eligibility for participation in this study. A copy of the screener questions used can be found in Appendix H. Participants who did not meet the above qualifications were not included in the study. Once eligibility was determined, a date and time for an interview was established.

Initial contact with potential participants was made using the list of potential participants generated from phase I. A copy of the phone and email scripts used for participant recruitment can be found in Appendix F and G. Every effort was made to recruit couples for participation in the qualitative study. In instances when participants had left their contact information after participating in phase I, but did not leave their romantic partners' contact information, the researcher asked upon initial contact if the participants' romantic partners would be interested in participating in the qualitative study. Participants would be included in the study regardless of their romantic partners' willingness to participate. However, all participants in this study were in a romantic relationship with their respective partners. Thus, 15 couples were included for analysis in phase II. Due to the gendered nature of tactical teams, no female tactical officers were found for inclusion in this study. After contact had been made with all the individuals from the list of potential participants generated during phase I, snowball sampling techniques were utilized to locate additional potential participants for study.

The interviews were conducted individually, with tactical officer and romantic partner at separate times, at a location and time of the participant's choosing. Before beginning the interviews, an Informed Consent Form, which outlined the purpose, nature, and confidentiality of the research was reviewed with each participant. A copy of the consent form can be found in Appendix I. Participants were also asked to give consent to

have their interview audiotaped in order to record their accounts accurately. Each interview was digitally recorded and saved under a confidential participant number assigned to each individual. Therefore, only names appeared on Informed Consent Forms and not on interview data. The average length of the interviews was 45 minutes, with some interviews lasting well over an hour. Participants were encouraged to allow their stories to unfold in their own words with the use of prompts and probes to elicit detail, clarify concepts and extend the participants' narratives when necessary. In staying with the common practice of qualitative interviewing, the sequence and specific questions asked during interviews could be modified during the course of the interviews to allow for expression of particular experiences of each participant (Esterberg, 2002; Maxwell, 2005). A copy of the interview schedule can be found in Appendix E.

In addition to consent forms, participants were notified of compensation for their participation in phase II. Compensation in the form of a \$25 gift card to Amazon.com was provided to RP participants. TO participants were notified that a \$25 donation to the Kentucky Law Enforcement Memorial Fund would be made for their participation in phase II of the study. TO participants were assured that this donation would be made in the form of a lump sum donation, in the name of the researcher, and at the end of the study to prevent the disclosure of any TO identifying information. Direct monetary compensation was not offered to tactical officers willing to participate in the personal interview due to government and/or law enforcement department policies that limit and/or deter officers from accepting gifts or money from citizens. This helped to prevent possible sanctions for officers who accepted compensation for participation in this study

which may have been considered by their department or governing body as payment for their services as police officers.

## **Phase II: Participant Demographics**

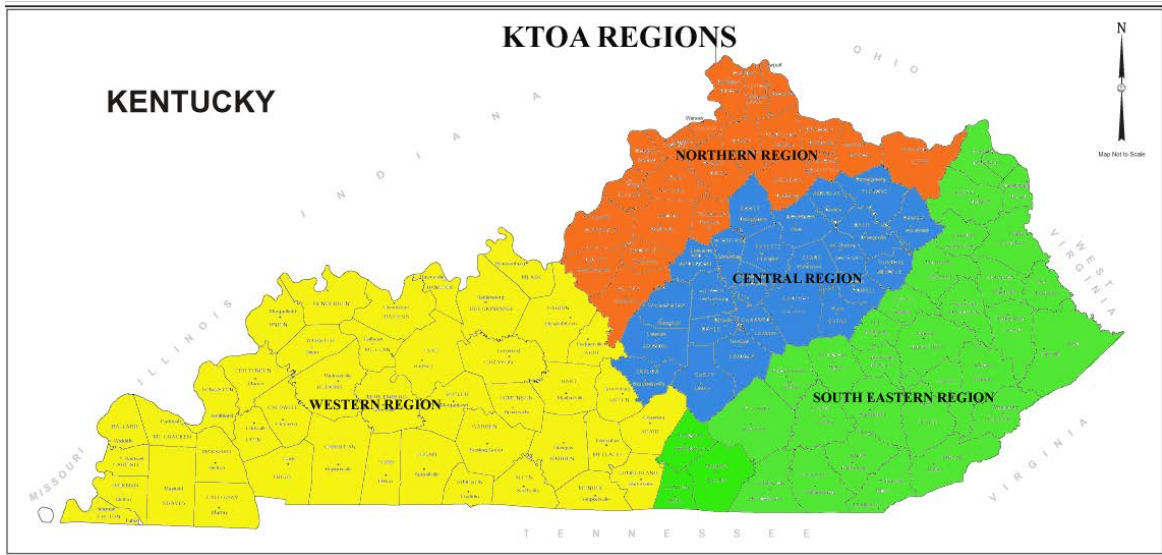
Participants for phase II were located across the Commonwealth of Kentucky. In an effort to aid in participant selection, the researcher contacted The Kentucky Tactical Officer's Association (KTOA) for information regarding the number of tactical teams in Kentucky and their locations while conducting phase II. The KTOA estimated approximately 60 tactical teams throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky (KTOA, 2014). Because the KTOA and its national counterpart, the National Tactical Officer's Association (NTOA), act only as voluntary governing bodies, law enforcement agencies can form and implement a tactical team without the direct knowledge or support of these agencies. Budgetary constraints and individual agency preference to train within their own department are common reasons that may inhibit tactical teams from seeking membership through the KTOA. Therefore, statistics regarding tactical teams throughout the Commonwealth are computed from those teams that sought membership and/or training through the KTOA.

In 2013, there were 27 agencies with teams that sought membership through the KTOA. The membership for these teams ranged from 10-43 tactical officers, with those teams serving the largest geographic areas having the largest number of team members. In addition, 16 law enforcement agencies were represented by individual, rather than team, membership with the KTOA for a grand total of 43 agencies represented. Individual officers from law enforcement agencies seeking membership through the KTOA often do so to participate in accredited trainings held throughout the year,

regardless of their departments' lack of a tactical team. The KTOA divides the state into four regions including northern, central, southeastern and western. Figure 3.1 shows which counties fall into each of the designated regions. As of 2013, the northern region had 9 agencies with active memberships; the central region had 9 agencies with active memberships; the southeastern region had 3 agencies with active memberships; and the western region had 6 agencies with active memberships (KTOA, 2014).

TO participants participating in phase II came from nine different teams representing all four of the KTOA regions (Figure 3.1). Four TO participants representing two law enforcement agencies came from the northern region; six TO participants representing four law enforcement agencies came from the central region; four TO participants representing two law enforcement agencies came from the western region; and one TO participant came from an agency which serves the entire state, including the predominantly underrepresented southeast region.

**Figure 3.1 KTOA Regions**



(Source: Kentucky Tactical Officers Association)

All participants in phase II met the criteria for participation in the study. The first group of interview questions asked to both groups of participants (TO & RP) were designed to identify and explore the demographics of the participants. The questions were not designed to focus specifically on age, race or gender, but, rather, they were designed to determine the participant's experiences and descriptive characteristics of being a TO or RP. During the course of the interviews, the participants often mentioned additional demographic information about themselves including sex, marital status, previous marriages, military experience, expecting children, and involvement in furthering their education.

Table 3.1 summarizes some of the demographics for TO participants in phase II. Each participant was given a pseudonym when his interview was transcribed. Some demographics in this discussion were not included in the table to protect the participants

from possibly being identified. All fifteen TO participants were male and indicated during the interview that they were married to their respective romantic partners at the time of study. Three TO participants indicated during the course of their interviews that they had been married previously. The majority of TO participants held the rank of patrol officer (n=6), followed by detective (n=4), sergeant (n=2), captain (n=1), corporal (n=1), and trooper first class (n=1). There were two TO participants who mentioned having a leadership role within their team as either an assistant team commander or assistant team coordinator. While these leadership roles do not assume overall or sole command over their respective tactical teams, they do require responsibility for the management, training and execution of tactical maneuvers as identified by the participants themselves. Prior military experience was mentioned by six of the TO participants during interviews. All but five of the TO participants had children in the home. Of the five TO participants with no children in the home, three mentioned that they were expecting their first child at the time of the interview.

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**Table 3.1. Tactical Officer (TO) Demographics (n=15)**

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<b>Participant</b>	<b>Marital Status*</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Military Experience*</b>	<b>Children or Expecting First Child*</b>
Henry	Married	Detective	No	Yes
Charlie	Married	PO	Yes	Yes
Alan	Married	PO	No	Yes
Zach	Married	Sergeant	Yes	Yes
Drew	Married	Detective	No	Yes
Todd	Married	TFC	No	Yes
Ryan	Married	Captain	No	Yes
Eric	Married	PO	Yes	Yes
Alex	Married	PO	Yes	Yes
Greg	Married	Detective	No	Yes
Ben	Married	PO	Yes	No
Michael	Married	PO	No	No
Mark	Married	Sergeant	No	Yes
Dustin	Married	Corporal	Yes	Yes
Peter	Married	Detective	No	Yes

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\* Categories were based on information gathered during the course of interviews and not a direct question from the interview schedule.

Note. Abbreviations for rank are: Patrol Officer (PO) and Trooper First Class (TFC)

Table 3.2 summarizes the RP demographics from phase II. Some demographics in this discussion were not included in the table to protect the participants from possibly being identified. All fifteen RP participants were female and indicated during the



interview that they were married to their respective romantic partners at the time of study. One RP participant indicated during her interview that she had been previously married. The majority of RP participants (12) reported working outside the home. One RP participant worked from home and the remaining two RP participants reported part-time employment. Nine of the RP participants reported working in a field related to criminal justice, which the participants indicated allowed them a greater understanding of the demands police and/or tactical officers face, and will be discussed further in the results. These criminal justice-related fields ranged from medical work, which, as reported by the participants themselves, provided a greater understanding of the demands of shift work and the demographic nature of individuals who are often served by those in both the medical and law enforcement fields. Other criminal justice-related fields reported by participants included work within a law enforcement agency itself and work in the judicial/court system. At the time of the study, two RP participants mentioned during their interviews that they were taking college courses in addition to working outside their homes. All but five of the RP participants had children in the home. Of the five RP participants with no children in the home, three mentioned that they were expecting their first child at the time of interview.

**Table 3.2. Romantic Partner (RP) Demographics (n=15)**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Marital Status*</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Occupation related to CRJ</b>	<b>Children or Expecting First Child*</b>
Amber	Married	WFH	No	Yes
Hailey	Married	WOH	No	Yes
Nicole	Married	WOH	No	Yes
Rachel	Married	WOH	Yes	Yes
Kate	Married	WOH	Yes	Yes
Ellen	Married	WOH	Yes	Yes
Tracy	Married	WOH	Yes	Yes
Sarah	Married	WOH	Yes	Yes
Heather	Married	WOH	No	Yes
Emily	Married	PT	No	Yes
Paige	Married	WOH	Yes	No
Rebecca	Married	PT	Yes	No
Susan	Married	WOH	No	Yes
Laura	Married	WOH	Yes	Yes
Ashley	Married	WOH	Yes	Yes

\* Categories were based on information gathered during the course of interviews and not a direct question from the interview schedule.

Note. Abbreviations for occupation are: Work From Home (WFH), Work Outside Home (WOH) and Part-Time Outside home (PT)

## **Phase II: Analytic Approach**

In addition to the audiotaped interviews, the researcher took personal notes following each interview on her personal experience of the interview. Specifically, notes were taken about the location, atmosphere, participant's demeanor, participant's body language, participant's reactions, any unexpected issues, and additional thoughts about the overall interview experience with each of the thirty participants. These notes were transcribed and used as part of the analysis process. After each interview, participants' responses were transferred to a computer to be transcribed verbatim. The initial transcription of each interview was completed as soon as possible after each interview. After the interviews were transcribed, each interview was reviewed alongside the transcription to catch any errors (e.g., transposed words). The researcher's personal notes were also used for clarification of the transcripts.

In an effort to protect the confidentiality of participants, confidential participant numbers were transferred to pseudonyms which were used when the data was transcribed. Any specific identifying information in the transcriptions, such as other individual's names or locations, was also given pseudonyms or omitted in the transcribed transcripts. After transcribing the interviews, the first phase of analysis was completed using the NVivo 10 computer software package (QSR International, 2013). This program was developed to integrate coding with qualitative data. NVivo allows researchers to manage, track, and discover patterns in large amounts of qualitative data. Analysis continued with the coding of data, organization of coded data into concepts and themes, selecting main categories with related subcategories, and searching for indicators of attachment styles, operational stressors, organizational stressors, and general themes.

Patterns began to emerge from the data after several interviews had taken place. The researcher began to notice information redundancy and patterns of data saturation around the twentieth interview. Data saturation in qualitative research is the concept that a researcher may stop collecting new data from additional participants after no new concepts are being introduced with additional data collection (Mason, 2010). After the twenty-fourth interview, the researcher believed that data saturation had been complete. However, three additional couples (six individual participants), had already been recruited for participation in phase II. To assure that additional valuable data was not being missed, the researcher continued the interview process for a total of thirty interviews, positively insuring data saturation.

During analysis, initial coding began with auto coding, a feature of NVivo10, which allows for the researcher to quickly categorize the data according to each question asked. Among other uses, auto coding can be used to code responses to a question asked when the question is standardized throughout the source and identified by the use of stylized headings in the text (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). This feature allowed the researcher to easily see all of the participants' responses to a particular question and created what is referred to as a "parent node" for each question. Sub-coding was then used to categorize how each participant responded to each particular question. Sub-coding allows a researcher to code responses with more detail and build upon the initial coding (Saldaña, 2013). A sub-code is referred to as a "child node" in the NVivo software. NVivo coding was utilized during the process of sub-coding to help identify themes both within the questions and themes developing from the interview process as a whole. NVivo coding refers to codes which are taken directly from the participants'

responses. NVivo codes are important in showing whether the researcher has understood what is significant to the participants (Saldaña, 2013).

Analytic memos were kept by the researcher throughout the coding process to help sort through thoughts about the participants, their responses, and connections between codes and connections with phase I of the study, including support of attachment theory. Axial coding was used for the second cycle of coding in phase II. The goal of axial coding was to regroup and sort existing codes and re-label them into conceptual categories (Saldaña, 2013). The coding process for phase II resulted in codes from the auto-coding being examined against and merged (when appropriate) with the sub-coding and NVivo coding that had been developed when transcribing the interviews and researcher notes. All the codes were then analyzed and compared to establish relationships among the codes and to develop themes.

This chapter has discussed the methodology for both phases of this mixed-methods study including samples/procedures, measures, and analytic approaches for phase I in addition to the study design, participant demographics, and analytic approach for phase II. Chapter four will discuss the findings from phase I of the study, and chapter five will discuss the findings from phase II of the study.

## Chapter Four

### Phase I Findings

This chapter presents findings that emerged from analysis conducted on phase I of this study. Phase I consisted of a quantitative survey conducted with tactical police officers attending the 2011 Kentucky Tactical Officers Association (KTOA) Conference. In phase I, the principal focus was exploring the relationship between operational stressors, organizational stressors and attachment in romantic relationships as measured through the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Op), Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Org) and the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale-Short Form (ECR-S). Based on the theoretical assumptions of attachment theory, this study examined two research questions and the corresponding hypotheses:

Research Question 1: How is attachment style (e.g., anxiety about abandonment versus comfort with intimacy) correlated with organizational stress while controlling for demographic characteristics?

H1: The anxiety dimension of insecure attachment is correlated with organizational stress. Specifically, anxiously attached individuals will report higher levels of organizational stress than those individuals not within the anxiety dimension of insecure attachment, even when controlling for demographics.

H2: The avoidance dimension of insecure attachment is correlated with organizational stress. Specifically, avoidantly-attached individuals will report higher levels of organizational stress than those individuals not within the avoidance dimension of insecure attachment, even when controlling for demographics.

Research Question 2: How is attachment style (e.g., anxiety about abandonment versus comfort with intimacy) correlated with operational stress while controlling for demographic characteristics?

H3: The anxiety dimension of insecure attachment is correlated with operational stress. Specifically, anxiously attached individuals will report higher levels of operational stress than those individuals not within the anxiety dimension of insecure attachment, even when controlling for demographic characteristics.

H4: The avoidance dimension of insecure attachment is correlated with operational stress. Specifically, avoidantly-attached individuals will report higher levels of operational stress than those individuals not within the avoidance dimension of insecure attachment, even when controlling for demographic characteristics.

Findings from phase I will be discussed in detail in the following sections and will include descriptive summary analysis on variables, summaries of both operational and organizational stress rankings, and summaries of anxiety and avoidance subscales. In addition, discussions of ANOVAs, correlations and regression analysis that were used to examine the connection between organizational and operational stress and relationship factors, as well as cross tabs analysis used to further explore the connection between work and romantic relationships among tactical officers will be examined before concluding this chapter.

### **Descriptive Summary Analysis**

Table 4.1 reports the sample characteristics of those tactical officers (n=74) who completed the survey given during the 2011 KTOA conference. These sample

characteristics include the average number of years served as a tactical officer, service in the military, current rank, and average age. The number of years participants reported serving as a tactical officer ranged from 1-25 years, with the average number of years as a tactical officer being 6.59 years. The majority of respondents (69%) reported not having served in the military and held the rank of officer within their respective department (58%). The age of participants ranged from 26-57 years old, with average age of the respondents being 36.69 years.

**Table 4.1. Sample Characteristics of Tactical Officers (n=74)**

	<b>% (n) or Mean (S.D.)</b>
<b>Number of Years as a Tactical Officer</b>	6.59 years (4.83)
<b>Service in the Military</b>	
Yes	31%
No	69%
<b>Current Rank</b>	
Officer	58%
Detective	10%
Sergeant	15%
Lieutenant or Above	16%
Other	1%
<b>Average Age</b>	36.69 years (6.39)

Table 4.2 provides more detail on who actually responded to the survey in terms of their relationship and family status. The vast majority of respondents (97%) were currently in a monogamous relationship. The findings show that the majority of respondents were currently married (83%) and had been married an average 1.19 times, with a range of 0-4 marriages. Participants ranged from 0-29 in the number of years in their current relationship with the average number of years in a relationship for participants being 11.28 years. Finally, children were reported for the majority of



participants (90%). Participants reported the number of children ranging from 0-5, with the average number of children per officer being 1.92.

<b>Table 4.2. Marital and Family Characteristics of Tactical Officers (n=74)</b>	
	<b>% (n) or Mean (S.D.)</b>
<b>Is Participant in a Monogamous Relationship?</b>	
Yes	97%
No	3% (n=2)
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Never Married	4%
Married	83%
Divorced/Separated	12%
Number of Times Married	1.19 times (.612)
<b>Number of Years in Current Relationship</b>	11.28 years (6.03)
<b>Does Respondent Have Children?</b>	
Yes	90%
No	10%
<b>Number of Children</b>	1.92 children (1.13)

### **Organizational and Operational Stress Rankings**

Table 4.3 summarizes the survey questions that measured organizational stress among tactical officers using the PSQ-Org. This questionnaire consisted of 20 items from which participants were asked to circle how much stress each item caused them within the past six months. The Likert scale for each item ranged from 1 (no stress at all) to 7 (a lot of stress). Responses (n=74) were averaged and ranked from highest (4.50) to lowest (2.50) mean score. The top organizational stressor was reported as "bureaucratic red tape" (M=4.50). The remaining stressors reported that rounded out the top five included "staff shortages" (M=4.42), "inconsistent leadership style" (M=4.36), "the feeling that different rules apply to different people (e.g., favoritism)" (M=4.20), and

"unequal sharing of work responsibilities" (M=3.80). The lowest ranked stressor reported by participants was "if you are sick or injured your co-workers seem to look down on you" (M=2.50). Responses for this scale could range anywhere from 20-140, with 140 representing the highest level of organizational stress. Among tactical officers in this study, the average level of organizational stress fell somewhere in the middle (M=70.29, S.D.=22.69). Internal coefficient alphas were calculated for this study to gauge reliability of the measurements. In most research, Cronbach's alpha of .70 or higher is considered acceptable reliability, but in some research (Murphy & Davidshofer, 2004), it is suggested that Cronbach's alpha of .60 or higher is also acceptable, particularly in exploratory research (Peterson, 1994). The organizational stress instrument in this study meets these criteria with  $\alpha=.92$ .

**Table 4.3. Organizational Stressors Among Tactical Officers (n=74) in Rank Order**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	
1. Bureaucratic red tape	4.50	1.77	
2. Staff shortages	4.42	1.91	
3. Inconsistent leadership style	4.36	2.01	
4. The feeling that different rules apply to different people (e.g., favoritism)	4.20	1.64	
5. Unequal sharing of work responsibilities	3.80	1.89	
6. Feeling like you always have to prove yourself to the organization	3.72	1.84	
7. Dealing with the court system	3.65	1.85	
8. Leaders over-emphasize the negatives (e.g., supervisor evaluations, public complaints)	3.65	1.86	
9. Excessive administrative duties	3.58	1.82	
10. Constant changes in policy/legislation	3.55	1.89	
11. Lack of resources	3.55	1.85	
12. Dealing with co-workers	3.38	1.41	
13. Dealing with supervisors	3.32	1.74	
14. The need to be accountable for doing your job	3.31	1.74	
15. Internal investigations	3.15	1.97	
16. Inadequate equipment	3.09	1.68	
17. Too much computer work	2.96	1.60	
18. Lack of training on new equipment	2.91	1.62	
19. Perceived pressure to volunteer free time	2.69	1.79	
20. If you are sick or injured your co-workers seem to look down on you	2.50	1.79	
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha<sup>a</sup></b>
	70.29	22.69	.92

<sup>a</sup> Cronbach's Alpha, a measure of reliability and internal consistency, coefficients > .6 indicate consistency and reliability across index items.

Table 4.4 summarizes the survey questions that measured operational stress among tactical officers using the PSQ-Op. This questionnaire consisted of 20 items where participants were asked to circle how much stress each item caused them within the past six months. The Likert scale for each item ranged from 1 (no stress at all) to 7 (a lot of stress). Responses were averaged and ranked from highest (4.23) to lowest (2.35) mean score. Those individuals who did not complete all items in this scale were not included (n=73). The top operational stressor was reported as "not enough time available to spend with friends and family" (M=4.23). The remaining stressors reported that rounded out the top five included "finding time to stay in good physical condition" (M=4.04), "feeling like you are always on the job" (M=3.77), "negative comments from the public" (M=3.76), and "eating healthy at work" (M=3.62). The lowest ranked stressor reported by participants was "working alone at night" (M=2.35). Responses for this scale could range anywhere from 20-140, with 140 representing the highest level of operational stress. Among tactical officers in this study, the average level of organizational stress fell somewhere in the middle (M=65.24, SD=21.06). Internal coefficient alphas were calculated for the operational stress scale and demonstrated strong internal reliability ( $\alpha=.92$ ).

**Table 4.4. Operational Stressors among Tactical Officers (n=74) in Rank Order**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	
1. Not enough time available to spend with friends and family	4.23	1.76	
2. Finding time to stay in good physical condition	4.04	1.61	
3. Feeling like you are always on the job	3.77	1.88	
4. Negative comments from the public	3.76	1.85	
5. Eating healthy at work	3.62	1.60	
6. Fatigue (e.g., shift work, over-time)	3.57	1.58	
7. Occupation-related health issues (e.g., back pain)	3.46	1.77	
8. Shift work	3.36	1.76	
9. Lack of understanding from family and friends about your work	3.34	1.74	
10. Upholding a "higher image" in public	3.32	1.81	
11. Paperwork	3.23	1.57	
12. Work related activities on days off (e.g., court, community events)	3.22	1.59	
13. Limitations to your social life (e.g., who your friends are, where you socialize)	3.20	1.70	
14. Friends/family feel the effects of the stigma associated with your job	3.20	1.74	
15. Managing your social life outside work	3.01	1.63	
16. Traumatic events (e.g., MVA, domestics, death, injury)	2.62	1.32	
17. Over-time demands	2.55	1.46	
18. Making friends outside the job	2.55	1.68	
19. Risk of being injured on the job	2.47	1.30	
20. Working alone at night	2.35	1.36	
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S. D.</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha<sup>a</sup></b>
	65.24	21.06	.92

<sup>a</sup> Cronbach's Alpha, a measure of reliability and internal consistency, coefficients > .6 indicate consistency and reliability across index items.

### **Anxiety and Avoidance Subscales**

Table 4.5 summarizes the anxiety subscale from the ECR-S. Participants using the ECR-S were asked to circle how much they agree with each of the 12 questions pertaining to attachment in their current romantic relationship. The 7 point Likert scale for this questionnaire ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The anxiety subscale contained six questions from the ECR-S (12 total) which were rank ordered according to the mean. These six questions were compiled into an anxiety subscale index where responses could range anywhere from 6-42, with 42 representing the highest level of anxiety. Among tactical officers in this study, the average level of anxiety fell somewhere in the low middle ( $M=18.08$ ,  $S.D.=6.1$ ). The highest ranked items on the anxiety subscale were reported as "I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner" ( $M=4.11$ ) followed by "I get frustrated if my partner is not available when I need them" ( $M=3.44$ ). The lowest ranked item in the anxiety subscale was reported as "my desire to be very close sometimes scares people away" ( $M=2.15$ ). Cronbach's alpha for the anxiety subscale in this study was acceptable ( $\alpha=.6$ )

**Table 4.5. Anxiety Subscale for the Experiences in Close Relationship Scale-Short Form (ECR-S) in Rank Order (n=72), and Anxiety Subscale Index**

	Mean	S. D.
1. I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner	4.11	1.72
2. I get frustrated if my partner is not available when I need them	3.44	1.82
3. I do not often worry about being abandoned (R) <sup>a</sup>	3.24	2.22
4. I find that my partner doesn't want to get as close as I would like	2.60	1.70
5. I worry that my partner won't care about me as much as I care about them	2.54	1.46
6. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away	2.15	1.22
	Mean	S. D.
		Cronbach's Alpha <sup>c</sup>
Anxiety Index <sup>b</sup> (n=72)	18.08	6.1
		.6

<sup>a</sup> This item was reverse coded.

<sup>b</sup> Anxiety Index based on six ranked dimensions of anxiety from the ECR-S.

<sup>c</sup> Cronbach's Alpha, a measure of reliability and internal consistency, coefficients > .6 indicate consistency and reliability across index items.

Table 4.6 summarizes the avoidance subscale from the ECR-S. Participants using the ECR-S were asked to circle how much they agree with each of the 12 questions pertaining to attachment in their current romantic relationship. The 7 point Likert scale for this questionnaire ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The avoidance subscale contained six questions from the ECR-S (12 total) which were rank ordered according to the mean. These six questions were compiled into an avoidance subscale index where responses could range anywhere from 6-42, with 42 representing the highest level of avoidance. Among tactical officers in this study the average level of avoidance fell in the low end (M=15.05, S.D.=6.2). The highest ranked items on the

avoidance subscale were "I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back" (M=2.79) followed by "I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance" (M=2.75). The lowest ranked item on the avoidance subscale was reported as "I am nervous when my partner gets too close to me" (M=2.17). The avoidance subscale in this study had moderately strong internal reliability according to the Cronbach alpha coefficient ( $\alpha=.8$ ).

**Table 4.6. Avoidance Subscale for the Experiences in Close Relationship Scale-Short Form (ECR-S) in Rank Order (n=72), and Avoidance Subscale Index**

	Mean	S. D.
1. I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back	2.79	1.71
2. I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance (R) <sup>a</sup>	2.75	1.57
3. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner (R) <sup>b</sup>	2.69	1.38
4. I try to avoid getting too close to my partner	2.33	1.42
5. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need (R) <sup>c</sup>	2.32	1.25
6. I am nervous when my partner gets too close to me	2.17	1.28
	Mean	S. D.
Avoidance Index <sup>d</sup> (n=72)	15.05	6.2
		Cronbach's Alpha <sup>e</sup>
		.8

<sup>a,b,c</sup> These items were reverse coded.

<sup>d</sup> Avoidance Index based on six ranked dimensions of avoidance from the ECR-S.

<sup>e</sup> Cronbach's Alpha, a measure of reliability and internal consistency, coefficient > .6 indicate consistency and reliability across index items.

### Factors Explaining Organizational Stress

Table 4.7 explores the relationship between current rank and attachment types (anxiety and avoidance) on organizational stress through a different set of analyses.



Table 4.7 provides the results from cross tab analyses where anxiety and avoidance measures and organizational stress were collapsed into low, moderate and high categories. These rankings were coded according to terciles in the frequencies. It would be expected that those tactical officers who ranked high on anxiety and avoidance in their relationships would rank high on organizational stress. Although there appears to be some support for this, with 50% of tactical officers who experience high anxiety also experiencing high organizational stress, this relationship is not significant. The same can be said for the 40% of tactical officers who experience high avoidance also experiencing high organizational stress, this relationship is also not significant. However, crosstab analyses does show that those officers with the rank of lieutenant or above as experiencing the highest levels of organizational stress (67%), with a significance of .038 ( $p < .05$ ).

**Table 4.7. Factors Explaining Organizational Stress (n=72)**

	Organizational Stress		
	Low	Moderate	High
<b>Anxiety</b>			
Low	52%	24%	18%
Moderate	28%	40%	32%
High	20%	36%	50%
	$\chi^2=8.56, df=4, sig=.073$		
<b>Avoidance</b>			
Low	47%	20%	20%
Moderate	25%	40%	40%
High	28%	40%	40%
	$\chi^2=5.94, df=4, sig=.204$		
<b>Rank</b>			
Officer	44%	30%	26%
Detective	14%	57%	29%
Sergeant	9%	55%	36%
Lieutenant or Above	25%	8%	67%
	$\chi^2=16.33, df=8, sig=.038^*$		

\*p< .05

### Factors Explaining Operational Stress

Table 4.8 also explores the relationship between current rank and attachment types on operational stress. Specifically, Table 4.8 provides the results from cross tab analyses where anxiety and avoidance measures as well as operational stress were collapsed into low, moderate and high categories. These rankings were coded according to terciles in the frequencies. It would be expected that those tactical officers who ranked high on anxiety and avoidance in their relationships would rank high on operational stress. However, there is no support for this as only 41% of tactical officers who experience high anxiety also reported experiencing high operational stress and 30% of tactical officers who experience high avoidance also reported experiencing high

operational stress. However, crosstab analyses does show those officers with the rank of lieutenant or above as experiencing the highest levels operational stress (67%), with a significance of .007 ( $p < .05$ ).

**Table 4.8. Factors Explaining Operational Stress (n=72)**

<b>Anxiety</b>	<b>Operational Stress</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>High</b>
Low	52%	25%	23%
Moderate	28%	25%	36%
High	20%	50%	41%
$\chi^2=7.50, df=4, sig=.112$			
<b>Avoidance</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>High</b>
Low	41%	26%	30%
Moderate	28%	21%	40%
High	31%	53%	30%
$\chi^2=3.89, df=4, sig=.422$			
<b>Rank</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>High</b>
Officer	43%	41%	17%
Detective	0%	29%	71%
Sergeant	27%	18%	55%
Lieutenant or Above	25%	8%	67%
$\chi^2=20.95, df=8, sig=.007^*$			

\*  $p < .05$

### **Bivariate Correlations Associated with Organizational and Operational Stress**

Table 4.9 discusses bivariate correlations associated with organizational and operational stress among tactical police officers. These correlations start to address the research questions (RQ 1 and RQ 2) examining the relationships between anxiety and avoidance attachment styles and organizational or operational stress. The variable of current rank was recoded to "Rank Above an Officer" where officer=0 and 1=detective, sergeant, lieutenant or above and other to allow for inclusion in multivariate analysis.

Direct bivariate correlations show some support for the hypotheses in so far as anxiety and avoidant attachment is significantly and positively correlated ( $p < .05$ ) with organizational stress. But, these correlations are relatively weak (.262, .280). While attachment style was a significant positive correlate of operational stress, findings suggest that this correlation is also relatively weak ( $r = .261$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Findings from this analysis confirm the relationship between rank above an officer and operational stress as significant ( $r = .348$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Correlations also show that rank above an officer plays a factor in explaining organizational stress ( $r = .293$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

**Table 4.9. Bivariate Correlates Associated With Organizational and Operational Stress Among Tactical Police Officers, (n=74)**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1</b>	1	.692**	.262*	.280*	.148	.293*	.016	-.074	-.075	-.065	-.143	-.140	.001
<b>2</b>		1	.261*	.197	-.005	.348**	.043	-.108	-.027	-.003	-.121	-.096	-.109
<b>3</b>			1	.258*	.113	.011	-.005	-.052	-.086	.089	.012	.003	.043
<b>4</b>				1	.042	.078	-.100	.023	-.021	-.163	.056	-.072	-.087
<b>5</b>					1	-.156	-.174	.010	.031	-.144	-.082	-.004	.005
<b>6</b>						1	.374**	.103	.051	.051	-.006	-.085	.115
<b>7</b>							1	.110	.313**	.237*	.011	.092	.603**
<b>8</b>								1	.161	-.255*	.184	.045	.172
<b>9</b>									1	-.059	.177	.297*	.428**
<b>10</b>										1	.416**	.286*	.264*
<b>11</b>											1	.552**	.108
<b>12</b>												1	.165
<b>13</b>													1

<sup>a</sup> Note: 1= Organizational Stress, 2= Operational Stress, 3=Anxiety Index, 4= Avoidance Index, 5= Service in the Military (Military Service), 6= Rank Above an Officer, 7= Number of Years as a Tactical Officer (Tactical Years), 8= Marital Status, 9= Number of Times Married (Times Married), 10= Number of Years in Current Relationship (Relationship Years), 11= Does Respondent Have Children (Children), 12= Number of Children (Child Number), and 13= Age.

\*p< .05, \*\*p< .01, \*\*\*p< .001

## **Linear Regression Examining Factors Associated with Organizational and Operational Stress**

Table 4.10 explores those factors that were found to be significant in bivariate analysis including anxiety, avoidance and rank above an officer. Linear regression was conducted to look at the factors associated with organizational stress and operational stress among tactical officer participants. Model 1 used organizational stress as the dependent variable with anxiety, avoidance, and rank above an officer serving as the independent variables. Model 2 used operational stress as the dependent variable with anxiety, avoidance, and rank above an officer again serving as the independent variables. Model 1 summarizes the effects of anxiety and avoidance attachment types on organizational stress, while controlling for rank above an officer. This model displays that neither anxiety nor avoidance attachment types have a significant relationship with organizational stress. However, there is a significant positive relationship between rank above an officer and organizational stress ( $\beta=.259$ ,  $p<.05$ ) with those above the rank of officer reporting significantly greater organizational stress when compared to officers.

Model 2 summarizes the effects of anxiety and avoidance attachment types on operational stress, net of the effects of rank above an officer. This model displays that anxiety is positively correlated with operational stress ( $\beta=.230$ ,  $p<.05$ ), but there is no significant relationship between the avoidance attachment type and operational stress. Similar to Model 1, in Model 2, there is a significant positive relationship between rank above an officer and operational stress ( $\beta=.337$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Being above the rank of an officer is the only factor found to be significantly and positively associated with both operational and organizational stress in both multivariate models.

**Table 4.10. Linear Regression, Factors Associated With Organizational Stress and Operational Stress Among Tactical Officers, (n=72)**

	<b>Model 1 (SD)</b>	<b>Model 2 (SD)</b>
Anxiety	.206 (.418)	.230* (.393)
Avoidance	.207 (.409)	.113 (.384)
Rank Above an Officer	.259* (4.970)	.337** (4.686)
<i>Adjusted R Square</i>	.148	.163
<i>df</i>	71	70

\*p< .05, \*\*p< .01, \*\*\*p< .001

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has presented findings from phase I of the study, a quantitative survey given to tactical officers attending the 2011 KTOA conference. The discussion included descriptive summary analysis on variables, summaries of both operational and organizational stress rankings, and summaries of anxiety and avoidance subscales. In addition, discussions of ANOVAs and correlations and regression analysis were used to examine the connection between relationship factors and organizational and operational stress. Cross tabs analysis was also used to further explore the connection between work and romantic relationships among tactical officers.

Phase I provided greater insight into tactical officers, their stressors, and romantic attachment. Most importantly, phase I indicated that rank matters for tactical police officers when examining operational and organizational stressors. In addition, the ranking of stressors by the participants during phase I, particularly the operational stressors, raised additional questions as to the differences between tactical officers and patrol officers. In keeping with the sequential explanatory design used in this study, the

findings from phase I influenced the development of phase II, the qualitative interviews. Using the quantitative data and results in the development of phase II will allow for the qualitative data and its analysis to help refine and explain those findings, both statistically important and unimportant, found during phase I through the exploration of the participants' views during phase II. Specifically, demographic characteristics such as marriage and children, as well as the relationship between rank above an officer and operational and organizational stress were taken into consideration when developing the interview schedules. These variables can only be explored superficially through survey methods and need to be explored qualitatively in order to flesh out the individual circumstances and responses to stress in work and romantic relationships. For example, surveys could include the following questions: Who are tactical officers able to turn to for support in dealing with stress? Has tactical work affected the officer's romantic relationship? Where do individual tactical officers feel their greatest sources of stress are coming from (i.e., work or home)? Do tactical officers have specific coping mechanisms for dealing with stress?

Responses to these types of questions can provide insight into aspects of specific attachment styles (e.g., whether or not an individual can turn to his/her partner for support is an aspect indicative of specific attachment styles). Tactical officers were also asked their current rank during recruitment for participation in qualitative interviews and again during the interviews in order to further explore the relationship between stress and rank, specifically for those participants serving at a rank above an officer. Finally, phase II also allowed for in depth questioning of the romantic partners of tactical officers regarding specific causes of stress in their lives and romantic relationships. By



incorporating the romantic partners' insights into phase II, a greater understanding of the factors indicating attachment styles between tactical officers and their romantic partners can be understood. The findings from phase II, the qualitative interviews, will be discussed in the following chapter.

## Chapter Five

### Phase II Findings

This section presents findings that emerged from analysis conducted during phase II of the study. Phase II consisted of qualitative in-depth interviews conducted with 15 tactical police officers serving in the Commonwealth of Kentucky and 15 romantic partners of tactical police officers between the dates of June 2013 and December 2013. In phase II, the principal focus was exploring the relationship between tactical police officers and their romantic partners through qualitative measures that allowed the participants to share their own thoughts and experiences. The qualitative interview questions conducted with tactical officers (TO) in phase II examined the following aspects: experiences of being a tactical police officer in a romantic partner relationship, coping with and separating tactical police work from home life, what could be done to assist officers in balancing their roles as a tactical police officer and romantic partner, and what would be helpful for other tactical police officers in a relationship to know. The interview questions conducted with romantic partners (RP) examined the following: experiences of being a romantic partner to a tactical police officer, coping with aspects of tactical police work, what could be done to assist romantic partners in their role as romantic partner to a tactical police officer, and what would be helpful for other romantic partners of tactical police officers to know in their relationships.

Attachment theory was used as a guiding framework for this study in addition to utilizing elements loosely derived from grounded theory and symbolic interactionist approaches for the qualitative analysis completed in phase II. Findings from phase II will be discussed in detail including reflections and considerations, the coding process,

analysis of the interview questions including discovery and discussion of key themes, and general relationship status and participant advice. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of participant-directed topics for support services.

### **Reflections and Considerations**

Over the course of the thirty interviews, a great deal of time was spent building a rapport with the participants before beginning each interview, especially RP participants. During the interview process, I came across several romantic partner participants who, when beginning the interview process, were visibly uncomfortable, had body language that showed signs of being guarded, showed harsh facial expressions, and/or were openly skeptical of the researcher's intentions for the study. I took time to discuss personal experiences and credentials in order to "break the ice" with each participant before beginning the interviews. Upon learning my educational background and personal background as a married romantic partner to a tactical officer, most participants, particularly those who were guarded before beginning the interview process, seemed to relax in both their body language and facial expressions. In one instance, upon learning that I was a romantic partner to a tactical officer, a RP participant Amber breathed a sigh of relief and said "I was worried that this was all some ploy for you to meet my husband alone."

Another RP participant Rachel admitted her distrust of others, particularly women at the beginning of her interview, "I don't really trust people that much because I've had people talk about me." Rachel was a rather challenging participant to warm up. Her initial demeanor was stiff and formal, and her greeting was not friendly. When first sitting down with her to interview, her voice was tense, and she seemed uncomfortable

with my presence. Surprisingly, as the interview progressed and she discovered that I was also in a long-term romantic relationship with a tactical officer, she became more at ease with me, very informative and passionate with her responses. However, woven throughout her interview were examples of negative perceptions and mistrust of individuals outside policing, particularly women. Because of Rachel's almost ten year marital relationship with her husband, coupled with having a job in a criminal justice-related field, she saw herself as both a "veteran" romantic partner to a tactical officer and somewhat of an unofficial "leader" of the other romantic partners to her husband's tactical team. Despite her negativity, it was apparent during her interview that she was passionate about both her husband's work as a tactical officer and her role as a romantic partner supporting him.

Rapport was built with TO participants before each interview as well. During the course of the interview, a few of the TO participants showed signs of being guarded through stiff body language including rigid sitting posture, feet flat on the floor, arms crossed or hands left in the lap and not used to emphasize responses and/or emotion during responses, and minimal facial expressions. Some TO respondents began their interviews with minimal initial responses to questions, including "yes, ma'am", "no, ma'am", "not really, no," and had to be probed with follow up questions to elaborate. Only one interview conducted with a TO, Ben, was considered rather difficult in encouraging a participant to open up about his private life. While Ben answered each question asked of him, probes were needed regularly to encourage him to expand in even the smallest way. For example, when asked if he thought his work as a tactical officer had affected his relationship with his romantic partner in any way, he responded "I don't,

no." When probed to ask if he and his romantic partner ever had any disagreements or arguments related to his work, he responded, "Not really, no. No." In contrast, when asked later if work (his or his romantic partner's) had affected their social life, he responded, "Yeah, yeah." I followed up by asking if he could give me any examples and he said "Well, it just --it has dictated who we hang out with and things like that." When probed further, if he was referring to limits on his social group, he responded with "Yeah." The remainder of the interview with Ben continued in a similar pattern despite my best efforts to ask follow up questions or probes to clarify short responses or inconsistencies with his previous responses.

In her ethnographic work spanning over 20 years with the Los Angeles Police Department, Joan C. Barker (1999) found that while the role of police officer is a public entity, the individuals who fill these roles often seek out as much anonymity and privacy in their personal lives as possible. Barker continued by noting that trust is the most vital factor in interviewing police officers because they are suspicious of anyone writing about police. Given the natural tendency for police officers to be overly private, and considering the nature and training that police officers receive to answer questions with the media or in court as directly and as briefly as possible, it was an unexpected, yet refreshing, finding that only one TO interview was considered rather difficult in garnering additional information about the lived experiences of being a tactical officer.

In a report to the U.S. Department of Justice, Delprino (2002) cited that law enforcement officers often feel unwilling or uncomfortable discussing topics related to law enforcement with researchers outside of law enforcement. In designing this study, I felt that tactical officers and their romantic partners would be more willing to participate

in the study and answer openly and truthfully with a researcher whose educational background and personal involvement (i.e., in a relationship with a tactical police officer) were similar to their own. Due to these social roles, I was also able to more easily understand the terminology and jargon used by the participants, thus allowing me to more accurately capture the participants' lived experiences.

In addition, it is not possible for a qualitative researcher to be completely objective during her research. However, my role as a romantic partner to a tactical officer and educational background in criminal justice and law enforcement brought a set of experiences and knowledge to the study that could not have been gained through any other means. My experiences and knowledge helped to forge mutual rapport, trust, and respect between myself and the participants, thus leading to richer and deeper insight into the design of the qualitative instrument and analysis of the data. Additional indications of participant acceptance and trust were demonstrated as the majority of interviews were conducted in the participants' homes, per their requests. This was an initial, but not sole indicator, of the participants' trust of the researcher. The analysis that follows is believed to honor the participants' lived experiences by accurately depicting their thoughts, beliefs and opinions on the subject matter, in their own voices, and in a manner that will cultivate further understanding of the issues.

### **The Coding Process**

The coding process for phase II began with the transcription of both the audio recordings from each interview as well as additional field notes taken during and after each interview. Each transcription was closely read through to find themes and subthemes. A list of nodes/coding categories for the data was created using NVivo 10

software (QSR, 2013). Participant responses were cut and pasted into these nodes according to the themes that emerged during the readings. After the data were organized into coding categories, or nodes as they are called in NVivo, another reading of the data was conducted to explore subthemes within each node. NVivo allows each theme and subtheme created to have an identifying code. Some participant responses fit into more than one coding category; therefore, these responses had multiple codes. After the initial coding, the data was examined again to look for similarities within the list of codes which resulted in codes being merged until a final list was created for exploration and further understanding of the data. The final list of codes included both the refined coding for the question set and the list of codes developed from the overall interview process. The codes from both the question set and the overall interview process were then analyzed and compared using the transcribed data to establish relationships among the codes. The analytic process concluded with the discovery of four general themes and relating subthemes prevalent throughout the data.

The analysis for phase II employed a comparative approach of looking at the lived experiences of tactical officers by examining both the tactical officer and his romantic partner. By interviewing both tactical officers and their romantic partners, I was able to allow for both gender and romantic partner-based comparisons which provided the opportunity to examine similarities and differences across these groups. Thus, I was able to gain a better understanding of the role tactical policing has on both the work and personal lives of the group. In addition, because all of the tactical officer participants were male, and all of the romantic partner participants were female, responses based on groups (i.e., TO vs. RP) allow for a better understanding of gender-based trends within

the subgroup of tactical policing. The following sections are organized by the themes and relating subthemes that emerged during the data analysis: (1) communication, (2) isolation, (3) job-related stress, and (4) tactical team as family and trust. Direct quotes from the participants have been used to explore and support these findings using the participants' own words to describe their experiences. Before concluding the findings chapter, the participants' views on successful relationships and advice will be discussed.

### **Theme 1: Communication**

The first theme discovered during analysis was communication. Communication is a vital component for any relationship, romantic or not. The presence or absence, as well as the quality of communication, affect a romantic couple's ability to work through conflict, daily life and maintain their relationship. As discussed earlier, police officers are trained to control emotions and often control information on a "need to know basis." Thus, it was important to examine how these types of work-related issues regarding communication may or may not play out within a romantic relationship and affect romantic attachment. During the interviews, a series of questions was asked that tapped into issues of communication between romantic couples. These questions, coupled with findings throughout the interview data, yielded four subthemes: (1) communication as a main component of a successful relationship, (2) difficulties in communicating, (3) working on better communication, and (4) romantic partners who work in related fields are better able to communicate.

#### **Communication as a Main Component of a Successful Relationship**

Throughout the interview process, questions were asked pertaining to how respondents interacted with their romantic partner, what was important to the success of



their romantic relationship, and what advice participants would offer to other similar couples. The majority of RP respondents believed that communication was the main component of their own successful relationships. In addition, RP participants discussed communication, specifically the need to keep open lines of communication between couples, as the most prevalent piece of advice they would give to other couples. Tracy remarked, "I think communication is essential. You have to be able to talk to each other about anything. You have to be open and honest. You can't hide anything from your spouse." Laura echoed with her response, "Well, communication is always important, I think that's for any marriage – cop, non-cop." While half of the TO respondents agreed that communication was important, others didn't place as much of an emphasis on communication as the main component of a successful relationship. Those TO respondents who did discuss the importance of communication in their romantic relationships were very direct. For example, Alex said, "That both are interested in one another and... they're communicating well." Henry, who is on his second marriage, discussed how communication came to be the main component of a successful relationship for him:

I've learned from my relationships, you have to have a completely, 100 percent open line of communication. That's about anything. You need to be a good listener, and when your wife wants to talk, you have to talk. You have to discuss things with her.

The remaining TO respondents who cited the importance of communication were also quite vocal with their responses. Specifically, when asked about advice they would give to other couples, Zach noted the importance of communication as it related to his tactical police training:

You know, communicate, you have to communicate and listen. And heck, if it's SWAT cops, that's their job anyway, think, communicate, and listen. They should already know how to do that and they need to do that in a relationship too.

Zach's thoughts on a tactical officer being "trained" to communicate and therefore should know how to transfer that training to his personal life raised some interesting questions. As discussed earlier, police officers are trained to guard information. So, are romantic partners exceptions to what police consider "outsiders" from whom information is kept? Why do other TO participants in this study face difficulties in communicating within their romantic relationships if they have received training in communication and listening? Does the training the officers receive in the general academy to guard information outweigh the training they receive as tactical officers? What impedes other TOs from not being able to transfer that type of training on communication to their personal lives?

Interview questions, particularly follow-up questions and probes, helped to address some of the questions regarding why some participants were at ease communicating with their romantic partners and others were not and will be discussed throughout the themes in this chapter. Participants were probed during the interviews to gain examples of how they experienced open communication in their relationships. RP respondents were the majority when discussing open communication. During Heather's interview, she was asked if there were any subjects that she was not able to discuss with her romantic partner, and she had this response:

Well, I mean, he's my best friend – I mean, that's basically what it boils down to – and I'm his best friend, so it's nice to know that, you know, if you have a bad day or if something major happens, you have that person to go to.

Other RP respondents like Hailey described how open communication about both the "good" and "bad" in her relationship with her partner has helped her: "I mean, he'll listen to anything. Like I said, sometimes, I don't like the answer, but ...If you want people to tell you the truth, you're not always gonna like the answer, but sometimes it's what you need." Of the few TO respondents who cited open communication in their relationship, those that did discussed how anything, including most work-related topics, could be discussed. In support of Hailey's assertion that she and her husband have open communication, her husband Charlie said, "Yeah, I tell her everything, pretty much. I mean if somebody tells me something, she knows about it later, unless it's one of those need-to-know things. Yeah, I complain to her about training and stuff like that." While communication was a vital component to the success of a romantic relationship for some participants, others discussed the difficulties they have in their relationships with communicating.

### **Difficulties in Communicating**

During the interview process, participants made it known that romantic relationships with tactical officers often present challenges. One of those challenges involved communicating. Some participants would openly cite the difficulties they were having with their romantic partners in terms of communication. Other times these difficulties were seen during the course of the interviews with specific couples by the way they contrasted in answers to the same questions. When reviewing the data, it became apparent that TO participants, almost unanimously, indicated that communicating about tactical police work or police work in general with their romantic partner was "off limits". Instead, work-related topics were reserved for discussion with other officers,

particularly other tactical officers. Responses were mixed between the TO's choice not to share police/tactical related topics at all and the TO's perception that his romantic partner was not open to communicating about police/tactical-related subjects. Todd's response indicated that a lack of trust from his romantic partner prevented him from discussing work-related topics with her: "Just like guys on the team, they do stuff that I know she – I wouldn't say wouldn't approve of...so if...they're out doing something, she automatically would assume that I'm doing something." Ryan chooses to withhold information from his romantic partner in an effort to protect her from the hardships of policing and tactical work: "...you don't need to saddle her with – I don't know – just some of the graphic details and how bad and all this stuff is...You don't wanna give all the details and quite honestly from a confidentiality standpoint, you probably shouldn't." Confidentiality issues again touch on the training officers receive to guard information, thus illustrating that within some work-related domains (i.e., confidentiality), romantic partners are still considered "outsiders."

Other TO respondents felt a sense of taboo from their romantic partners in regards to communicating about police/tactical work. For example, Alan described the resistance he feels from his romantic partner:

Well, even just the day to day stuff; even whether it be SWAT stuff or work stuff, it's definitely hard to talk to her about it 'cause it doesn't hold the same meaning, or – I don't know – she just gets tired of hearing it.

When interviewing Alan's romantic partner, Nicole, I found that his feelings of resistance were accurate based on her responses regarding communication:

It doesn't really seem to matter who we're with; the conversation always comes back to work – always. I tell him that all the time. I'm like, "Jesus, we're out.

We're trying to have fun. We're trying to relax. Quit talking about work. I live with it. I don't wanna hear about it."

After these comments, she realized her uncompassionate view of his work and followed up by saying, "But – and I know that that's in large part because he just really loves what he does, and he finds it very exciting, and he wants to talk about it. I just have a hard time getting excited about it."

As mentioned earlier, during the interview process, I saw other examples of the difficulties of communication in relationships when interviewing particular couples. For example, when I asked participants about subjects that they were not able to discuss with their romantic partner, I got some contrasting responses from couples. In one instance, when asked if there was anything that Henry was not able to discuss with his romantic partner, he said "I'm like an open book to her." When probed further about this freedom of discussion in his relationship, he cited incidents from his work life that were extremely stressful and difficult to process:

My previous relationships...they [the incidents] were unable to be spoken about. With her, I can talk about anything, and I think that's reciprocated between her and I, because she knows if she wants to know anything, she can ask me, and there's no repercussions, you know?

When I sought to reaffirm his response of having an open line of communication with his romantic partner, he responded, "I think you have to be, Natalie. Especially in this kind of job; you have to be." In contrast, when responding to this same question, his partner, Amber said, "He's not an open person. So it took a long time for him to open up to me about things. He doesn't talk to me about work really..." She continued to paint a picture of a romantic partner that was in stark contrast to how her partner viewed himself:

I used to ask him, “How was your day?” And he’d be like, “How do you think my day was? What do you think? I’m around criminals all day, how do you think?” He’s gotten to where – maybe because I don’t ask and I don’t push he comes home and will tell me, “I had this guy today,” or, “I had this issue today.” I would say about non-stressful things we’re pretty open and he’s – I told you he’s pretty negative....We talk about lots of other things. But stressful things I kind of walk on egg shells.

These examples of difficulties in communicating, particularly for the TO participants, relate back to Zach’s earlier comments regarding the training tactical officers receive.

Are the officers unwilling or unable to transfer those communication skills to their personal lives? While some participants were openly struggling with communication issues in their romantic relationships, others were able to make the necessary transitions in their relationships towards better communication as discussed in the next section.

### **Working on Better Communication**

While still citing the importance of communication in their relationships, some respondents were open with the transitions that had occurred with their romantic partner and how communication had evolved in their relationships. Some participants discussed the process, or event(s), that lead them towards more open lines of communication within their romantic relationships. Significant life changes such as marriage, the birth of a child, TO participants becoming police officers and/or joining a tactical team, and difficult or tragic work-related incidents were some of the reasons given by participants as both challenges in communication and catalysts towards seeking better communication in their romantic relationships. Amber discussed the journey her second marriage had taken over the years in regards to communication:

We talk very openly about the kids, about the exes. It took a long time to get to that point because for a long time, he kept all that – he was like, “These aren’t

your issues, I don't want to burden you with this stuff." And it took a long time for me to say, "Your life is my life. You have to."

Michael, who had already cited the importance of communication earlier in his interview, went on to discuss the rough transition his relationship had taken as his romantic partner has adjusted to the demands of his job:

...it was really tough for her at first; to even accept the fact that I was a police officer. If I wasn't home at 9:59 p.m. or 10:00 p.m., then she thought I had been shot,...She couldn't understand that sometimes I couldn't answer the phone. That really...that was a lot for her to overcome...

Michael discussed how talking about his work-related issues was not something that he and his romantic partner could do in the beginning of their relationship, and it took his involvement in a shooting during a tactical call to break through the barriers related to communicating in his romantic relationship. The days and months after "the shooting," Michael was put under intense scrutiny by his department and his community before being cleared of any wrongdoing. During this time, he and his romantic partner found themselves having more conversations about his work and led his romantic partner to seek out other police/tactical romantic partners for additional support, a fact he believes was the main component in her adjustment to the demands of his job.

Rachel discussed how the pressures from a previous assignment her romantic partner held as an undercover officer affected their ability to communicate in the past. As mentioned earlier, the studies by Finn and Tomz (1997), along with Arter (2008), found that the work-related stress, particularly operational stressors (i.e., the dangers inherent in police work), were higher for those officers working "undercover" assignments. The requirements of this assignment including the level of secrecy and the vast departure from "typical" police duties (e.g., not wearing a uniform, not driving a marked police

vehicle, differences in physical appearances including the allowance of unkempt and/or long hair and facial hair) was difficult for Rachel as she was asked not to share with others her husband's role as an undercover officer. The added inability for Rachel's husband to discuss with her his work day, including where he had gone or what he had done bothered her greatly. She felt that their personal and home life suffered significantly when he was working as an undercover officer. Once her husband left that position and went back to "typical" police duties, she commented on how their personal and home life vastly improved including communication:

A couple years ago, I would've said that [communication] was a little bit different. But now that we've worked through all of the issues that came about with the undercover work...I feel like there's really nothing that we cannot discuss with each other.

Other couples, as was the case for Alan and Nicole, a couple mentioned during the previous section on difficulties in communicating, sought outside help in dealing with the communication problems they faced within their romantic relationship. During her interview, Nicole also mentioned that they were trying to work on their difficulties in communicating: "We're in marriage counseling...we see the same person for solo counseling and couples, so we kind of do what we need to do. But we've been doing that for years." Nicole highlights the ongoing struggles that she and her husband have faced "for years" while working towards better communication. Interestingly, Nicole's discussion of counseling as an aid towards better communication was only one of two participants to disclose that they used counseling services to aid in personal issues they were facing. While some participants cited the need for and/or importance of counseling being available to tactical officers and romantic partners, only two RP participants directly mentioned involvement in counseling for themselves and/or their romantic



partner. Only one participant, Nicole, was willing to discuss her involvement in counseling. This fact may be related to the somewhat negative stigma associated with those in law enforcement who seek help from “outsiders.” This could also be from a lack of counseling services available to officers and their families. One participant, Ashley, discussed her desire to see counseling made available to aid in communication issues she feels she and her husband occasionally have: “I think it would be great if the department had a family counselor of some sort.” Additional discussion of counseling will be covered in a later subtheme discussion what police departments could do to help tactical couples. The final subtheme of communication will discuss how romantic partners who work in related fields are better able to communicate.

### **Romantic Partners Working in Related Fields Are Better Able to Communicate**

During the analysis process it became clear that almost half the RP participants worked in a field related to criminal justice. Both TO and RP participants cited this as a factor that allowed for better communication between the couple because the RP had a greater understanding of the demands police and/or tactical officers face. The fields related to criminal justice included medical work, which, as reported by the participants themselves, provided a greater understanding of the demands of shift work and the demographic variability of individuals who are often served by those in both the medical and law enforcement fields. Other criminal justice- related fields reported by participants included work within a law enforcement agency and work through the judicial/court system. Both TO and RP participants cited that the reciprocity felt by having similar occupations lead to better communication between the couple.

Kate explained the appreciation she felt from her and her husband having similar occupations,

It also helps that with us both working [in similar occupations] that he knows the background that I don't have to explain every little thing to him. I can go just go off with whatever's stressing me out, and he knows.

Tracy discussed the comfort she feels from the similarities she and her husband have in their occupations:

We both have stressful jobs. I deal with a lot of abused kids, and a lot of even domestic violence situations, and things like that, so it's good to come home and vent. And he does the same thing about all his work. So, it's really nice to have somebody that understands the kind of work that you do and he can sympathize with you.

Paige felt that her job in an emergency room opened her up to both committing to a long term relationship with a police officer (i.e., marriage) and being able to communicate with him about their work: "... the emergency room has helped a lot for me to see the kind of stuff that he deals with on a daily basis 'cause prior to this, I had no idea." Paige commented that her husband told her working in a public setting (i.e., similar to policing) where she would often see the worst in people would eventually harden her and make her cynical. As Paige described her experiences in the emergency room and how they did indeed change her, she felt that this process of going from "very optimistic" and "very willing to help, help, help people" to becoming "a little cold" towards people helped her to understand her husband better, "I've definitely changed my view on people and how they can change and...I think that part has helped me a little bit to understand his attitude toward things at times."

During the interviews, there were TO respondents who also cited that their partners' occupation was closely related to their own, which they felt made communicating much easier. For example, Zach said,

With her background and her understanding...she still sees and deals with the same kind of people that I do. So, she has a more open mind and understands what I'm saying. That makes it a lot easier. It's her knowing what I'm talking about and living in my same world that makes things a lot easier.

Perhaps Zach's earlier comments regarding communication skills and tactical training transferring to an officer's personal life were also a reflection of the ease he has communicating with his wife because she works in a related field. Eric also agreed that romantic partners working in related fields aids in communication. He felt that because he and his romantic partner worked in similar fields, they were able to support and encourage one another more through their commonalities, thus leading to better communication in their romantic relationship: "She knows everything, I tell her everything. I guess because we're [in similar fields], but even if we weren't, I'd still tell her everything." He went as far as to cite her understanding of the demands that trying out for and participating on a tactical team would bring to their relationship as the primary reason for him becoming a tactical officer:

...she basically said if you're going to do this you need to put everything into it, and I'll support you 100 percent if you're going to do it...she really gave me a lot of motivation to step up and really, really train hard for it, and get ready for it, and to not look back. I really accredit a lot to...of my success getting there on her because of her support.

Alex also felt that communicating with his romantic partner was easier because she serves and interacts with similar individuals. While she may not understand "the itty bitty nuts and bolts of how things work or get done" in his occupation, he felt that her

exposure to "a lot of the same characters at work... the heavy medicated population" gave them "a lot of common ground."

While the vast majority of RP participants who reported working in a criminal justice- related field indicated better communication with their partners, there was at least one exception. When asked if Ashley could turn to her husband for support during times of stress, she discussed how her husband views his job within criminal justice as more demanding than hers, "I feel that he believes that he is way more stressed out than I could ever be and that my problems are just on the bottom of the totem pole." Ashley continued by saying that she and her husband have had arguments about this and that he feels she doesn't "have to work as hard" as he does. Ashley's description over the communication problems she and her husband sometimes have may be a contributing factor to her desire to see counseling services made available through her husband's department, as was mentioned in a previous section. Ashley's experiences were confirmed during her husband Peter's interview. When asked if he could turn to her for support in times of stress, he responded,

She tries as much as she can...she knows how to be supportive of that and what I have to deal with, but honestly, unless you're involved with it every day, you don't really know what the officer or whatever goes through.

The remainder of Peter's interview showed the occasional disconnect the he and his wife were having in communication despite her work in a criminal justice-related field. While he felt there wasn't anything he and his wife couldn't discuss, his desire to put the day's work out of his mind prohibited many discussions regarding his work. Specifically, Peter indicated that "It's not wanting to have to go back over it" that primarily caused him to refrain from discussing work-related issues with his wife.

The ability and willingness to communicate, or not communicate, with a romantic partner is an aspect indicative of specific attachment styles. As discussed earlier in the studies by Hazan & Shaver (1987), Mikulincer and Nachson (1991) and Simpson et al. (1992), adults who are in secure relationships will have high levels of trust, support and intimacy, and will have a sensitive and appropriate sharing of feelings and ideas. While adults characterized as having avoidant attachment styles tend to deny attachment needs, are reluctant to trust others, avoid closeness with others, and are often over-involved with activities such as work (Brennan & Shaver, 1995; Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1990). In addition, adults categorized with anxious/ambivalent attachment styles fall in love easily, fear abandonment, experience emotional ups and downs, display “needy but angry” patterns of behavior, tend to be obsessively jealous and overly dependent on and/or merge completely with their partners (Brennan & Shaver, 1995; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Mikulincer & Erev, 1991).

While communication is not the deciding factor of attachment styles in any individual, it does point towards individual characteristics that indicate specific attachment styles, particularly in terms of conflict and the activation of attachment bonds between a couple. Conflicts issues that are central to attachment (e.g., availability and proximity of a partner) are different than those issues that are less central to attachment (e.g., finances) (Kobak & Duemmler, 1994; Simpson, Rholes & Phillips, 1996). Stronger attachment bonds can be formed when a conflict central to attachment evokes a threat but can be resolved successfully. However, determining whether a conflict evokes attachment is a difficult task, particularly in respect to individual attachment styles (Kobak & Duemmler, 1994; Simpson & Rholes, 1994; Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips,

1996). For example, individuals with anxious attachment styles may already perceive attachment concerns that are generally less central as a threat to the attachment bond, thus evoking attachment concerns for those individuals.

In relation to the participants in this study, particularly the TO participants, denying a romantic partner information about entire facets of one's life (e.g., work), even if only with the intentions to protect the partner from harmful or confidential information, raises questions in regard to conflict and attachment bonds between a couple. This is evident from the RP (i.e., female) participants who, with almost unanimous agreement, felt that communication was vital to the success of any romantic relationship, including their own. This raises additional questions with respect to the gender differences regarding the importance of communication in a romantic relationship. Why is communication not of as much importance for the TO (i.e., male) participants? This is particularly exhibited if the training for a tactical officer entails communication, as Zach commented in his response regarding communication, which he felt should be easily transferred to an officer's personal life. Yet, how does this relate to the knowledge that police recruits are taught to control information and master an essential component of law enforcement called "command presence" (Barker, 1999)?

Command presence equates to control, and an officer who has mastered command presence can cope with the unpredictable nature of his or her job. Perhaps internal struggles occur when other forms of training outweigh the communication skills TO respondents have learned, and thus, they find communication not as vital a component in their personal lives. Or, perhaps, differences in gender help to explain the variation between participants. Gender differences in communication indicate that men view

conversation as a means towards a tangible end such as obtaining power or dominance (Maltz & Borker, 1982; Wood, 1996; Mason, 1994). This coupled with the nature and training of police work to guard information and assert control may help to explain why the tactical officers in this study put less value on communication with a romantic partner than the women in this study. Furthermore, gendered differences in communication indicate that for women the process of communication itself is valued as well as for the relationships it can create (Chodorow, 1989; Hartmann, 1991; Statham, 1987; Surrey, 1983), thus helping to support why the women in this study valued communication more than the men.

This section has discussed the first theme of communication including the four subthemes, (1) communication as a main component of a successful relationship, (2) difficulties in communicating, (3) working on better communication, and (4) romantic partners working in related fields are able to communicate better. The next section will discuss the second theme, isolation, found during the analysis of phase II.

## **Theme 2: Isolation**

The second theme, isolation, was found overwhelmingly throughout the entire data analysis process. Examples relating to, or directly identifying isolation were discussed almost universally by both TO and RP participants during the interviews. While fleshing out this theme, three subthemes emerged including: (1) isolation from socializing outside police circles, (2) romantic partner feels isolated, and (3) tactical officer feels isolated from department. Shift work and the departure from what is considered "normal" working hours is just one of the facets of police work that lends itself towards social isolation. Police work also involves rotating days off, working

holidays, and sometimes regularly rotating shifts depending upon a particular police department's policies. Ryan confirmed this during his interview by saying, "Home always doesn't come first to police officers. If that was true, no police officer in America would work Christmas day." The addition of tactical team requirements further compounded social isolation issues for TO and RP participants. Most participants discussed the stress, inconvenience and isolation felt from being on call for their tactical team around-the-clock.

When beginning their career, police officers go through a socialization process that is extensive and encompass every aspect of these officers' lives, including their romantic relationships (Barker 1999; Volti 2012). In addition, the work of Manning (1977) suggested that the uncertainty inherent within policing, coupled with the need to control information leads to police teamwork which in turn creates collective ties and mutual dependency. Officers are taught to assess any and all situations for their potential to become dangerous. In addition, officers learn the physical, psychological, legal, economic, and social dangers they will face once they begin their careers. It is the training on the social dangers police officers face that teaches recruits that the best, and sometimes the only, defense in a dangerous world is having someone else who understands it: another police officer (Barker, 1999, pg.71). Recruits are taught that non-police contacts are potentially dangerous and that police officers are not afforded the same errors in judgment that other citizens are allowed. Guilt by association and the mere appearance of wrongdoing can compromise an officer's career (Barker, 1999). The skills learned during the academy, especially those regarding social dangers, are not easily shut off during an officer's private life. Membership on a tactical team requires



further, and even more extensive socialization, which again affects the tactical officer's personal life. Additional socialization issues for tactical officers will be discussed in the next section.

A particularly unique and sad example of the isolation felt by one particular couple was discovered during Ellen's interview. She discussed how she and her husband had been going through the process of adopting a child and eventually abandoned the process because of the isolation they felt from the adoption agency and its idea of what makes for a better prospective adoptive family. Ellen explained this situation:

...we made this little book, one of those mixed books that you put all the pictures in... We gave it to the home study worker and she looked through it and she was like this is good...she was like just when you all write your letters or whatever don't mention you're the police...she'd already told us not to put that in our book because the perception of being police [by individuals putting their child up for adoption]. So it made me think maybe I'm not wanting to be an adoptive parent, but that was one of the things that I felt discriminated against.

It seems that, at least in Ellen's family's case, serving as a police officer was a negative attribute to be hidden from individuals putting their children up for adoption. This type of situation only strengthens the feelings of "us vs. them" taught to recruits in the police academy. The exception in this case, however, is that the social danger was in being a police officer in general, rather than specific actions done by an individual who happens to be a police officer.

During the interview process, several participants discussed how specific requirements of the tactical team caused feelings of isolation. For example, during Alan's interview, he was honest about the disconnect between policing and healthy romantic relationships, particularly tactical policing:

...you have to be there, be involved in each other's lives, which is something that's very difficult to do as an officer, let alone doing the SWAT thing, too, 'cause you can't do it. You don't get to put them first. And that's shitty, but I think that's how it ends up being.

When I probed Alan further about how the addition of tactical duties makes his personal life difficult he continued:

I mean as far as the tactical officers' thing, I mean you really gotta think about it, 'cause it's a huge commitment. It is. I mean it sucks your time up, and it changes stuff. Every other month, you're limited in just what you can do. You can't just go and get a drink somewhere; you can't go and take your family 'cause you're on call. You hear that text, that pager all the time, and it's difficult for the family 'cause they're not coming first.

The disconnect that Alan describes was echoed in other participants' stories regarding isolation and will be discussed further in the following subthemes. The following sections will discuss the isolation subthemes discovered and will expand upon the theme of isolation with more specific examples as described by the participants.

### **Isolation from Socializing Outside Police Circles**

During the interview process, both TO and RP participants discussed, either directly or indirectly, the isolation they felt from socializing outside police circles. Examples given by participants for this type of isolation cited how the participants felt they could not, or did not want to, socialize with individuals not related to law enforcement in some way. Given the nature of police academy training, it is not surprising that TO participants vocalized this type of social isolation. However, what was interesting was that half of the RP participants also felt that they were isolated from socializing with people outside of policing. Whether this feeling was an extension of support for their husbands' preferences, based on their own experiences, or a combination of both was not always easily seen. Participants cited this isolation as self-imposed and

occurring with the onset of police work for some participants and for others slowly with the progression of years with a law enforcement agency. During the interview process, all participants were asked if they felt their work, or their partners' work, had affected their social lives. Nearly all participants universally felt that the TOs' work had affected their ability to socialize, particularly with those outside policing. Both TO and RP participants primarily cited the public misconceptions (i.e., from those individuals outside policing) about police officers as the reason why they have chosen to isolate themselves from individuals outside of policing.

Alan described how years of witnessing the worst in people had hardened him towards others even off duty: "...because this gig changes you. I mean it changes you and changes you. I mean when you look at people, you hate everybody – equal opportunity, though. I hate everybody the same. But you look at everything different; you just do." Alan's cynicism towards those outside policing and the subsequent withdrawals from socializing with anyone outside policing are typical during the advanced phases of an officer's career. Research (Barker, 1999; Peak, Gaines & Glensor, 2004) focusing on patterns during a law enforcement career found that officers go through different phases that highlight the stressors faced during those time periods. During the second phase of their career, which is typically after a minimum of five years on the street, officers begin to see the average person as naïve and uninformed about the reality of the world. The inability for officers to reconcile the realities of police work and how they feel the world should be leads officers to become emotionally detached and bitter about their job and the citizens they serve during this phase. Years of failed attempts to socialize with those outside policing, often because the views of non-police

are vastly incongruent with those inside law enforcement, lead to social withdrawal, mistrust, and, in Alan's case, open animosity towards citizens (Barker, 1999; Peak, Gaines & Glensor, 2004). During Rachel's interview, she discussed several experiences she has had as a romantic partner to a police/tactical officer and the public misconceptions and discrimination she feels is often received by those in relationships with police officers:

... he brought up that he had somebody on his department asking what would you do – would you be excited if your daughter came home and said she was marrying a cop? And he was like, “No, I don't want her to marry a cop. I want her to marry a baker or somebody that people like. Don't marry a cop because people don't like them.”

While studying the LAPD, Barker (1999) found the effects of social isolation were common for police families. The inability of those outside law enforcement to see officers as individuals creates a division between police and non-police. This only strengthens the belief for officers that life is safer and less complicated when police socialize with those who have a connection to law enforcement. Even something as simple as where to eat out can be a challenge and isolate officers and their families from others. Heather gave an example of trying to go out to eat with her husband, "...but if we go out to dinner, he'll see the bartender, ‘Oh, I had to deal with him the other night; let's go in here and wait, instead of waiting at the bar.’” Perhaps the most poignant example of the difficulties and disconnect a TO respondent felt between his "world" and that of everyday citizens when trying to socialize with individuals outside policing was described by Mark:

We gave it a shot, but it's just hard making that first connection with people that are not in the family, not in the law enforcement family because they want to hear did you get in a high speed pursuit or did you get a pursuit or did you – did you

tase somebody this week. They want to ask those stupid questions because that's what they perceive and that's what they see law enforcement being about. And you can't unload on somebody like that and say no, I collected bloody clothes from a 14-year-old rape victim. You can't talk to them about that because I tried once and just got the blank look of I didn't want to know that, I didn't want to hear that. So socially, it is very difficult, and it's definitely changed a lot of the abilities to connect with people who are not in the community, for me personally.

Other respondents felt that individuals outside of policing wouldn't understand the daily ins and outs of being a police officer. Examples included everything from not understanding the "lingo" used by police officers to the fact that most people only have brief, and usually stressful, interactions with police officers during their lives (e.g., car accidents). Ryan described his thoughts on why police officers isolate themselves from those not related to policing: "...comes back to a cop perception that may or may not be totally true. As police officers, we don't feel like they'll understand some things... We don't feel that they'll understand if they don't have some prior knowledge of it." Dustin agreed that tactical officers, and police officers in general, tend to socialize with other officers: "Now all the cops just generally migrate to themselves and their significant others just because that's out of habit and, you know, who we trust and like-minded people." Eric went as far as to describe the warnings he had received when first becoming a police officer about the social isolation that would follow:

...now we tend to just hang out with police and police families and police functions. There's not a lot of civilian friends left in our lives. What's funny is we got told about that coming in as new guys and stuff like that we just want to let you know, and it was just like whatever. But yeah it really does turn into that...

As mentioned earlier, it is common for officers going through a police academy, and also during their field training officer programs (FTO) on the street, to form strong bonds with other officers and to be taught, both formally or informally, that the best defense against the dangers of the world that come with being a police officer is having

someone else who understands it (i.e., another police officer) (Barker, 1999; Gilmartin, 2002; Peak, Gaines & Glensor, 2004). The police academy itself can be seen as a form of social isolation or "total institution" where the recruits are cut off from the outside world, stripped of their individuality, and taught a new value system of "us vs. them" (Volit, 2012, p. 142). Once out of the academy and on the street, Charlie learned that his occupation as a police officer had eliminated some of his pre-law enforcement friends who either grew tired of his inability to meet up in the evenings, choose social activities which are either illegal, or when done in excess, are not condoned behaviors for police officers, "I had people that I knew and was friends with that their life as 32-year-old adults still consists of drinking, getting high, and doing whatever. And obviously, I can't be around that – I don't really wanna be around it anymore..." The added dimension of shift work for police officers further serves to isolate these individuals from socializing with others outside policing. The deviation from "normal" working hours serves as both a strengthening bond between the officers and a catalyst for further social isolation from those outside policing (Volti, 2012, p. 142).

Connections between the isolation officers and their families feel can be made with military families, particularly because the demographic make-up of military personnel is similar in nature to policing. In a study of the demographics of military families, Clever and Segal (2013) found that the majority of military personnel in 2011 were male, white or Caucasian, held a high school diploma or GED, were married and had dependent children living in the home. In addition, the authors note characteristics in their study on military families similar to those of police officers today. These characteristics include risk of injury or death, separations from families, long and

unpredictable hours, pressure to conform to high standards of behavior, and a male-oriented culture (Clever & Segal, 2013). Feelings of isolation, whether due to geographic location or views that civilians don't understand military lifestyle, are similar to the descriptions of isolation described by the police families in this study and will be expanded upon later in this chapter. This section discussed the social isolation tactical officers, and, in a few instances, some romantic partners, reported experiencing. The next section expands upon social isolation and will discuss the subtheme of isolation where the romantic partners feel as if they are bearing the brunt of the social isolation.

### **Romantic Partner Feels Isolated**

In addition to the social isolation described by both TO and RP respondents, half of the RP respondents described the isolation they feel as a result of being a romantic partner to a tactical officer. During the interviews, all participants were asked about the source of greatest stress in their lives. Interestingly, after personal issues such as finding time to balance their responsibilities relating to family, children, home and/or money, tactical call-outs were the highest-ranked stressor for RP participants. RP participants indicated that these personal issues of balancing the responsibilities of family, children, the home, and/or money were further compounded when the tactical officer had to leave abruptly for a tactical call-out (e.g., finding last minute child care or rearranging schedules to accommodate the absence of the tactical officer). Perhaps even more interesting is that while the majority of RP participants cited tactical call-outs as one of the greatest sources of stress in their lives, no TO participants directly indicated tactical call-outs as one of the greatest sources of stress in their lives, indicating perhaps another gendered difference between the participants.

Throughout the interviews, RP participants indicated the "inconvenience" tactical policing caused them because of the unpredictable nature of tactical call-outs, the probability that call-outs would occur during social activities and/or family time, or that social activities were limited in geographical area and/or activity. Some RPs even went as far as to say that on some occasions simply not making plans to socialize at all was easiest. These examples of inconvenience were the same regardless of the RP participant's occupation, even if it was in a criminal justice-related field and she supposedly had a better understanding of the demands of police/tactical life. This indicated that the women in this study, all of whom held employment in some form, were linked to the traditional roles of primary care giver and coordinator of family schedules (e.g., childcare, extracurricular activities, social events).

While all participants in the study indicated that they equally "split" or "shared" the household duties such as cleaning, yard work, or cooking, it was plainly obvious that the remaining family duties relating to childcare and social planning fell to the female in the relationship. Perhaps this was a safeguard in assuring that childcare would always be taken care of given the unpredictable nature of tactical work (e.g., call-outs), or simply a reflection of traditional gender roles. Regardless, the romantic partner participants felt more stress because they often had to arrange for child care and make social plans either not knowing what their husband's schedule would be or knowing that his schedule could change at any moment (e.g., call-out) and would therefore affect the couple and/or family's plans. These limitations on planning for, or even being able to attend social functions, occur because TO participants are on call around-the-clock. Several participants indicated that before being able to attend a social event, the tactical officers



had to seek permission or give notice to the commander of their team that they would be leaving their jurisdictional area and/or would be participating in an activity that would prevent them from immediately responding to a call-out (e.g., social drinking). Even then, there was no guarantee that permission could be given to the officer to participate in a given social activity as the needs of the tactical team (e.g., other officers have already requested leave) may not allow for it.

During Rachel's interview, she described how her husband's job and schedule isolated her from others: "But I think because of what he does and the schedule that he's always been on, you don't want to go to a cookout, and he's at work and it's just you. I mean that's not really exciting." What Rachel described is a common occurrence for families of police officers when people outside of law enforcement, unaware of the social constraints caused by shift work, overtime, etc., often take offense to the absence of the officer at social gatherings (Barker, 1999). When I probed Rachel further as to why going to social event by herself was not "really exciting," she discussed how oftentimes, events such as weddings, where the majority of individuals attending are not typically related to her or are familiar with the law enforcement lifestyle, become judgmental towards her. Rachel continued by saying,

So, you have to weigh the pros and cons, but I think the biggest thing is just the way society views police officers, especially tactical officers. They look at them as mean people who are going to go in and bust the door down for no reason. Well, you don't call SWAT out unless there's a reason. That's the absolutely last call. They don't really want to use SWAT, so they don't get called out very often.

As discussed in the opening of this chapter, Rachel was very passionate and vocal about both her husband's work as a tactical officer and her role as a romantic partner supporting him. Her personality and the stories told during her interview all had a tone of

negativity and mistrust woven throughout them. Rachel felt the reasons for her isolation came from aspects external to her and continued her discussion of social isolation with descriptions of negative interactions in her past that have led her to avoid most social situations outside of policing:

...there's three different ways that they look at you when they find out that you're married to a cop. One it's like oh, that's so cool and they just want to be your friend because that's the cool lifestyle or whatever. And then you have the ones that are almost judgmental of you and it's like well, I got pulled over by a cop the other day and he wasn't very nice to me, so apparently, they're all the same way... And then there's the ones who automatically, when you say you're married to a cop, it's like they're done, which those are the ones I'm perfectly fine with you not wanting to be a part of our lives because if you have that type of issue, then there's a reason, and I don't want you around me, and I don't want you around my kids.

The experiences described by Rachel are not uncommon for romantic partners of police officers. While her example is rather negative and pessimistic, after years of trying to socialize with those outside of policing, romantic partners of police officers often begin to tire of always having to explain why their partner is yet again absent from a social activity and in some instances reassure people that the romantic relationship is still intact. These explanations are not needed when socializing within the law enforcement group and bring a level of comfort and ease to the families and romantic partners of police officers (Barker, 1999; Gilmartin, 2002).

In addition to the public misconceptions of what it's like to be in a relationship with a tactical officer, other RP participants discussed the isolation they felt because individuals, particularly women, who were not in relationships with police/tactical officers don't understand the demands and stressors of being in a relationship with a tactical officer. This is again an extension of the difficulties discussed earlier that

romantic partners and families of police officers face when trying to socialize with individuals outside law enforcement. Not having to explain the policing lifestyle, reassure others that romantic relationships are still intact and having someone that understands what it's like to be in a relationship with a police officer brought a level of comfort and ease to romantic partners of police officers. The romantic partner participants in this study indicated a tighter knit group of romantic partners found within the tactical community that understands the additional constraints and stressors that come with their romantic partner serving on a tactical team. Paige described how being a relative to a tactical officer still didn't give individuals the same understanding that only comes from being a romantic partner of a tactical officer. She indicated that family members of tactical officers didn't truly understand "what it's like" because they didn't see and feel the day-to-day pressures of being in a relationship with a tactical officer. She described an interaction with family members when her husband was suddenly called out to a tactical situation during a family event:

And my mom was worried too and his mom and them and his aunts and all of them were worried, but sometimes I feel like they don't really understand. That's their family and it's not...It's like you watch it, but you don't really – can't really relate...they don't really have to live it all the time.

Paige continued her thoughts by discussing the importance of having other women, particularly fellow romantic partners of other tactical officers, to turn to: "...it's a very tight knit family and that's about the only thing I kind of like about it because you get to talk to other women who actually know what you're going through." Rebecca felt similarly that having other women who are in relationships with a police/tactical officer helps to ease the social isolation she feels. She discussed the difficulties faced when her husband's shift changes or he has to leave abruptly for a tactical call-out: "And to know

that you're not alone...that really just makes it easier...But knowing that someone else feels like it's horrible... it's nice to have the people there to just be in life together with. It makes it a lot easier."

In contrast to the examples given earlier, several RP participants openly discussed how they had chosen a different type of isolation. These women had chosen to isolate themselves almost entirely from their romantic partners' job and duties. For example, Nicole discussed how she has distanced herself from her husband's job, despite his repeated attempts to include her:

He wants me to ride along. I don't really want to...I know what he does, and I think I deal with it pretty well. But I don't wanna have it in my face, and I don't wanna worry, and if I'm out there riding along, it's there, and I have to think about it, and I have to be reminded of the danger he's in. He doesn't like that, though. He's been begging me to do that for years.

Paige also gave examples of isolating herself from her husband's job. She was a unique case in that she was a newlywed and was still trying to acclimate herself to her role as a romantic partner of a tactical officer. She described feelings of social isolation that were mentioned in the previous section, but also described her efforts to avoid constant reminders of the dangers her husband could possibly face and his requests for her to be more involved in his work life:

He has mentioned me doing a ride along. I have absolutely no interest at all in doing a ride along... I don't wanna know. That just – that would drive me insane... 'cause I know that his personality is different when he has a uniform on than when he's home with me and...I just have absolutely no interest in being a part of and that's just for my own sanity...

On the other hand, Rebecca was thankful for the opportunity to participate in ride alongs with her husband and to see firsthand the challenges he faces. However, she still chose to

portray his work life to herself and to others who ask about how she "survives nights alone" while he is out working by saying,

I'm like I pretend like he sits in his car all night and eats doughnuts. And I like to live in that happy place when he's at work that he just doesn't actually ever pull his gun out on anybody, he doesn't ever bang in a door, he doesn't – he just sits in his car and looks at his computer, whatever.

While isolating oneself from a romantic partner's work is not a commonly recognized occurrence in previous literature surrounding law enforcement, there are examples of shift work, rotating days off and incompatible schedules coupled with the presence of children leading to extreme levels of frustration and irritability for the romantic partners of police officers. Keeping children quiet while the night shift officer sleeps during the day and caring for children with little to no help on the days the officer works his normal 10-12 hour shifts can lead to additional stress in the romantic relationship (Kirschman, 2007). The addition of tactical duties, responsibilities, and requirements seems to further exaggerate the typical police-related stress issues in a romantic relationship, particularly for the participants who have children present in the home. Rebecca's husband, Mark, confirmed her tendency to avoid thinking about or dealing with his work-related issues during his interview:

Rebecca doesn't really want to be involved that much in my work life. She's done a couple ride alongs but it's not something that she's wanting to go out and do every weekend...She likes to – not necessarily put it out of her mind that I'm out working, but she doesn't want to dwell on it, and she doesn't want to know everything.

What these RP participants are describing are examples of situations and behaviors that support denial and self-imposed isolation as self-coping mechanisms to deal with the stressors of being in a relationship with a tactical officer. Connections

between military wives and tactical wives can be made given the similar demographic characteristics and lifestyles discussed earlier. In other studies (Joesph, 2014; Runge, Waller, MacKenzie & McGuire, 2014; Verdeli et. al., 2012), spouses of military service members reported similar feelings of isolation, feelings of lack of control over their lives, loneliness, concerns over the spouses safety, stress from unpredictability in their spouses schedule, stress from challenges to traditional gender roles when spouses must balance employment with childcare and household responsibilities, stress from assuming primary responsibility over childcare when the husband is absent, and efforts to seek social support from other military wives. In addition, renegotiation and redefinition of roles within the family, including gendered roles regarding childcare and household management, are constantly taking place as the husband must be gone for extended trainings, deployment, or extended hour work days (Verdeli et. al., 2011). This leads to feelings of isolation and loneliness for the spouses and often continues even after the separation has ended. During these transition periods when the military service member is once again present, spouses can have feelings of loss over the independence they had formed while the military service member was absent and must go through a self-adjustment period to resume co-parenting roles (Verdeli et. al., 2011).

The coping mechanisms described by the romantic partners in this study may indicate a relationship to those described in the military studies. Specifically, in a study by Joseph and Afifi (2010), protective buffering and the changing dynamic in spousal relationships of military couples were examined. Protective buffering is a term first described by Hagedoorn, Kuijer, Buunk, DeJong and Wobbes (2000) that represents when a stressor is relevant to both individuals in a relationship, but one individual

chooses to deal with the stressor independently. Joseph and Afifi (2010) found that the more danger the wives felt their military husbands to be in the more they practiced protective buffering. Interestingly though, overall, the more supportive wives felt their military husbands to be, the less they practiced protective buffering (Joseph & Afifi, 2010).

This raises interesting questions in regards to this study. Do romantic partners in this study practice a form of protective buffering? Are the participants who use this form of self-imposed isolation, as discussed earlier, using it as a way to buffer the emotional effects they wish to avoid? How does this type of avoidance affect the attachment between the couple, particularly in terms of conflict and communication? Continued discussion of isolation by romantic partners and their relation to romantic relationships, gender roles, and attachment will be examined further in the next chapter. The next section will discuss the final subtheme of isolation and how tactical officers feel isolated from their departments.

### **Tactical Officer Feels Isolated from Department**

The final subtheme of isolation is a unique finding and focuses on how some TO participants felt isolated from their department for being on a tactical team. In contrast to the numerous studies depicting the closeness, "brotherhood," or "thin blue line" felt amongst police officers in general, this study depicts a slightly different picture felt between officers on specialized units and higher ranking officials and officers not on specialized units. While contradictions between higher ranking and lower ranking employees can be seen in most any occupation, the difficulties depicted by the tactical officers in this study are unique because membership on a tactical team is not a

considered a promotion, but rather more like participation in an extracurricular activity in which a "try out" demonstrating the needed skills and abilities are required. Tactical teams are a mix of officers from different ranks within their department, and some teams do not even require a certain amount of years "on the street" before they can try out for the team. Examples given by TO respondents of this type of isolation included experiences of open animosity and/or dislike towards tactical officers by the parent police department as a whole and also how higher ranking police officials and/or non-tactical officers display animosity and/or dislike towards members of the tactical team. For example, Charlie discussed how his department has displayed open animosity towards tactical officers:

We catch a lot of grief from your actual parent unit or whatever. Everybody gives you a lot of shit because "you're doing SWAT stuff, and SWAT stuff's not real work,"... We have training two days a month, and now it's slack element so we get an extra day [off], and any school that comes along, I jump on it, and why not? I'm always catching grief 'cause that's not work...they think it's all a scam... They don't even like us – I mean we get shit on a lot...

Peter felt that although his department sanctioned the creation of the tactical team, their feelings towards the team were still negative, "The department itself probably really doesn't care about the team. We get a lot of flak from the brass unless they need something." Michael described how the disconnect felt between his team and his department stemmed from simpler causes, "There's a lot of inner... I don't want to say hatred, but I don't even know if jealousy is the right word, but... we get labeled by the rest of the agency as the golden boys or the favorites." Henry agreed that simple jealousy was the root of the strife between his tactical team and their department:

I can't imagine being a team commander of a team like this, especially with a department that doesn't support you. We're their necessary evil and, sadly



enough, we've had one of our majors tell us that... but I think it's a lot of jealousy. Everybody wants to be, but everybody can't be, you know? Or they don't want to put in the time and work.

Additional discussion about the disconnect between the tactical officers and their departments will be touched on in later sections. However, this type of isolation poses interesting questions about the “us” vs. “them” mentality found in policing. What are the degrees of separation between specialized units within police departments? Do specialized units work against the military model within policing where rank typically demands more respect and is valued more than a particular assignment or membership on a team (e.g., where lower ranking officers are members of a tactical team and garner more respect than a higher ranking officer not on a tactical team)? While there has been some literature addressing the added stress officers face when working in specialized units, such as undercover work (Finn & Tomz, 1997; Arter, 2008), there has been no literature examining the distinctions, and possible strains, between specialized units, specifically tactical police units and general policing. Or, is the disconnect between tactical officers and non-tactical officers, as the participants indicated themselves, simple jealousy from other officers unwilling or unable to meet the standards for membership on a tactical team? This will be discussed further in the next theme of job-related stress.

This section has discussed the general theme of isolation and its three subthemes, (1) isolation from socializing outside police circles, (2) romantic partner feels isolated, and (3) tactical officer feels isolated from department discovered during the analysis of phase II. Discussion of the remaining general themes will continue in the following sections.

### **Theme 3: Job-Related Stress**

The third theme found during the analysis of phase II was stress relating to tactical related duties. Job-related stress is present in any occupation, and policing is no exception. This theme, however, focuses on the job-related stressors unique to those police officers also serving as tactical officers. Two subthemes emerged during the data analysis process of this theme including (1) department not supportive of romantic relationships and (2) more stress with tactical duties. While the discovery of this theme is not surprising given the discussions in earlier sections about the added responsibilities tactical policing brings, but how these added responsibilities played out in the everyday lives of TO respondents was interesting.

#### **Department Not Supportive of Romantic Relationships**

During the interviews, all participants were asked if they felt their parent police departments, or their romantic partners' departments, were supportive of the relationships between tactical officers and their romantic partners. Half of the participants responded no. When probing further about the presence, or lack of support, from departments, responses from participants varied on where they felt the responsibility truly lied in providing that support, with the department or with the tactical team. This became even more apparent when those participants who had earlier indicated that they felt that their departments, or partners' departments, were supportive of the relationships went on to describe that the support really came from the encouragement and inclusion of the tactical team leader(s) and not necessarily the departments themselves. Nicole described the importance of having support for tactical officers and their romantic partners, yet the difficulty in finding support:

...other than the relationships that I've created, and that other ladies have taken it upon themselves to include me in their circles, the department itself hasn't done anything for us to encourage or foster or prepare us or anything like that. It's just been kind of baptism by fire – figure it out, which we have, you know.

Similarities and connections can again be drawn between the descriptions from this study and military family studies. Runge and colleagues (2014) conducted a study on Australian military spouses focusing on military life, perspectives, health, and well-being. The most frequent response on their open-ended survey indicated that military spouses felt there was inadequate support from the military organization. Specifically, lack of contact from the agency during a spouse's deployment, poor quality support for families who did not have small children in the home, lack of support when medical or mental issues were faced by the military member, and lack of support when transitioning from service member to veteran were primarily cited by participants (Runge et. al., 2014). It seems as though inclusive and genuine organizational support for members of any organization, but particularly those in which spouses often feel isolated (e.g., military, policing) is vital in promoting healthy romantic relationships.

TO respondents agreed that while occasionally they may get an email about an optional relationship seminar for officers in general, there was no direct help for dealing with the stress of tactical policing and romantic relationships. Henry described his frustrations about the lack of support for tactical officers and their relationships: "As a department, we get the occasional e-mail for the marriage enrichment seminars and things like that, but those come out departmental-wide. There has never been anything for my department specifically for SWAT team and their spouses, no." Charlie mentioned how his local Fraternal Order of Police chapter has tried to fill in the holes his department has missed in providing support for officers in dealing with the stress of their

job and romantic relationships, but even that support has been lacking, "I mean our FOP lodge tries to do stuff that's kind of couples-oriented as well as family-oriented, but as far as specifically tactical officers, no." It's not surprising that given the lack of support from police departments for their tactical officers on how to deal with job-related stress in their romantic relationships that TO respondents in this study overwhelmingly felt that the duties required by their tactical team caused far more stress than normal police duties.

The responses by the participants indicating both animosity between parent departments and tactical teams, as well as a lack of support from parent departments for tactical officers, indicates a lack of understanding about the additional demands and pressures that tactical officers face. Departments are not able to utilize research, partly because little to no research has been conducted on tactical officers, in order to better address the needs of this particular subgroup. Information about general counseling services or mental health are not widely publicized within police departments. Often, officers feel the stigma associated with seeking help from "outsiders" coupled with the stigma of weakness associated with seeking help in general for one's own problems (Shallcross, 2013). If you recall from earlier discussions, rookie officers are taught in the academy and early on in their careers to handle situations, violent or otherwise, with complete control and authority. Relinquishing that control and authority to enter counseling or seek help in general is not an easy task. This, coupled with the male-dominated culture of policing, and the evidence that men seek counseling far less than women, prevent officers from participating in what little support offerings that are provided by their departments, let alone seeking support from "outsiders" (Shallcross, 2013). Shallcross (2013) suggests that independent counselors and counseling services

should approach departments and offer their services for in-house trainings. This results in both the goal of services being provided to those who need it, and also building rapport and trust with officers in order to get past the barrier of being an “outsider.”

Additionally, preventative services and services targeted at resiliency (i.e., the stimuli of danger cannot be removed from policing and thus learning to bounce back is key) should be offered to make it seem less like seeking help for problems and more as learning helpful tools for future use (Shallcross, 2013).

### **More Stress From Tactical Duties**

During the interviews, TO participants cited several stressors that tactical duties bring including, but not limited to, the following: added danger during call-outs, the high stress situations that warrant call-outs, higher physical and character standards for tactical team membership, being on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and the unpredictable timing of call-outs. It is important to reiterate that membership on a tactical team is voluntary, and sometimes highly competitive for these TO participants. With the exception of one TO respondent whose full time job was serving on a tactical unit, the remaining TO respondents had normal police duties and served on their tactical teams part-time. Serving on a tactical team does bring additional benefits and opportunities for tactical officers depending on their particular department and policies. These benefits can include differential pay (not always offered and/or available in all departments), increased opportunities for specialized and/or additional training not offered to the general police population, small breaks from the less than desirable tasks related to normal police duties (e.g., paperwork or court appearances), and, in some departments where the relationship between the tactical team and "management" is

positive, aid for officers seeking promotions. In addition, nearly half of the participants, equally distributed between tactical officers and romantic partners, also indicated that serving on a tactical team brought them a sense of pride. However, balancing multiple roles in any job can be stressful, and with the additional training requirements, time requirements, and inherent danger in tactical policing, a new set of stressors has been introduced for the participants in this study.

When TO participants were asked if there were any differences in the stressors of serving on a tactical team and their normal police duties, they responded that the most basic and frequently described added stressors that came with tactical policing were the added physical demands. Interestingly, despite TO participants citing the physical demands of tactical policing as stressors, two thirds of the TO participants cited exercise as one of the ways they use to cope with the stressful parts of their lives. Todd, the only TO participant serving on a full time tactical team, described the physical requirements and demands placed on him by his tactical team:

...there's different stressors because there's more expected of you...on the PT side of it, and we take the physical four times a year, whereas a low trooper takes something that – well, you could pass it right now dressed in your regular clothes...it's not so much stressful if you stay in shape, but if you don't stay in shape, it's no good...so that's a different stress.

While physical fitness is emphasized in the testing process, training academy, and through annual or semi-annual physicals, normal police duties do not require the same level of physical fitness as tactical policing. The physical testing process for tactical officers varies among agencies. Suggested examples and standards by local and national organizations such as the National Tactical Officers Association, the FBI Critical Incident Response Group, or larger established metropolitan tactical teams (e.g., LAPD) have

been used or developed to aid tactical teams in developing physical standards for their teams. The physical testing for tactical officers often include successfully timed completion of pursuit rescue climbs, assault dashes, and obstacle courses while wearing full tactical gear and equipment (NTOA, 2015; Smith, 2006; Turck, 2008). Mark echoed Todd's earlier thoughts on the difference in levels of performance between non-tactical and tactical officers:

With the team... You're evaluated constantly with shooting, with your tactics, with your fitness, everything is evaluated and it is very competitive. It's a very different type of stress. With performance in patrol isn't evaluated on that level... as long as you're doing the right thing and doing your best and doing your job. On the team your best very well may not be good enough.

Other TO respondents felt that the stress that comes from hypervigilance and/or mental preparedness was far greater with tactical duties than normal police duties. Hypervigilance in policing has been defined by Dr. Kevin Gilmartin (2002) in his work with law enforcement as a manner of viewing the world from a biologically driven threat-based perspective where a police officer sees everyday events as unfolding into potentially hazardous situations which threaten officer safety. For some officers, hypervigilance only takes place while on duty; for others, it is difficult to "turn off" and can last even while off duty causing further biological fatigue. This can be true for tactical officers who are on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and must quickly respond to dangerous situations. When asked about job-related stress, Drew discussed how hypervigilance can affect tactical officers more:

Just not knowing what you're going into. I mean you can be as prepared as you want going into a house... You can have all the background you want on them, but what's going to be behind that door? You don't know. So, that's a huge difference.

A team leader, Ryan, also discussed hypervigilance in relation to tactical officers during his interview. His acknowledgement of hypervigilance is important because recognizing the hypervigilance cycle is an important step in managing the potentially negative effect on both the physical health and socially isolating aspects for police officers:

As far as the getting out there and the stress of, “Hey, this is really dangerous and somebody’s shooting at me,” these guys go into training mode and they’re conditioned to handle that. Usually the stress from that comes after the fact. So now do they get up on a hypervigilance cycle? Absolutely.

Greg was more descriptive about the physical and mental changes he feels (i.e., hypervigilance) as an officer dealing with his daily duties when his tactical team is suddenly called out:

You’re just sitting there doing your work, typing notes, and then all of a sudden you’ve got to switch gears and you get that rush that you usually get...you go in and assist on what could possibly be a dangerous situation...It’s something you just have to quickly flip the switch and then just go deal with...

During the interview process, it became apparent that the type of hypervigilance the TO respondents were describing was similar, yet different, from the type of hypervigilance felt by non-tactical officers. This unique form of hypervigilance felt by tactical officers has not been the focus in previous literature and presents unknown challenges in determining the effects on tactical officers in this study. Dustin described the differences in hypervigilance he sees and feels between tactical and non-tactical police work:

...being an officer in general can be very stressful and just the situations that you run into. But when the patrol officer runs into a situation that he can't handle or don't have the training to handle which is obviously a high risk situation they have to call somebody [SWAT]. And so it's more stressful because you're going to get the most hairy of situations that you're gonna have to you know as a team kind of solve the problem yourself.



While TO participants felt that the biggest difference in stressors for tactical work vs. normal police duties were the physical demands, they felt that the greatest overall source of stress in their work lives was the continual on-call status. While personal issues such as managing children, the home, or finances were also sources of overall stress for both TO and RP participants, the most cited job-related stressor by both TO and RP participants were issues related to the continual on-call status of tactical officers. Many of the personal issues mentioned by the participants were compounded by the continual on-call status. Specifically, and as discussed earlier, arranging child care, completing tasks around the house, planning trips, and managing finances were made even more difficult for RP participants by the unpredictability of tactical call-outs and the inability to prepare in advance for them. The added stress that being on-call around-the-clock brings for tactical officers feeds into the cycle of hypervigilance for them.

Two TO respondents interviewed in this study indicated that they served in leadership roles for their respective tactical teams. Both of these respondents discussed an even greater, somewhat heightened, sense of hypervigilance in response to the responsibility they feel towards the safety of all the members of their team. As a team leader, Ryan understands the hypervigilance cycle and its effect on tactical officers as mentioned earlier in this section. He has taken on a more parental role in his leadership in worrying about the health, both mental and physical, of the members of his team. While recognizing the increased hypervigilance officers on his team may face, he has made efforts to help relieve the members of his team in dealing with the added stressors from being on-call constantly:

But as a SWAT, you're on-call 24/7, 365 days a week, and when you get called, it's bad...something has upped the danger level. So I think that's probably one of the biggest stressors...but these guys deal with it well. At any time, they can call me and say, "Hey, I can't take call tonight. I need to go do something," and that is totally fine. We'll get somebody to cover it.

Zach also described an almost parental role as a leader on his team and his own increased hypervigilance by putting thoughts of his own personal safety and his own worries about the dangers his team might face in the background of his mind in order to focus more on the actual safety of his team:

...if something happened on an operation, and it was me, I'm not near as worried about it as if it's one of them. I don't want to be the one that has to make a phone call or something like that. And no matter how hard I try, that's been the hardest thing for me. I try to put that in the back of my mind and get it out, but I can't. So as opposed to finishing operations and everybody is like, "All right, that went good, everything went good," and high-fiving, it's more like, "All right, I'm glad it's done with. Everything's fine. Nobody got hurt.

Michael discussed during his interview how the possibility of a call-out is always in the back of his mind, "If you're just an officer, and you've just got to be worried about being at work on time, but obviously we're on 24/7 and call-out, so the phone can ring at 4:00 p.m. or 3:00 a.m. That is a stress." Despite the added stressors from tactical work and hypervigilance, when TO participants were asked about how they got involved in tactical policing, many of these same "stressors" were listed as reasons for joining their tactical team. Examples of the factors that TO participants indicated caused stress in their lives, but were also discussed as factors that attracted them to tactical policing included the following: the excitement that builds from unknown dangers, the opportunity to help citizens in extremely dangerous situations, the ability to handle high stress situations, and the high physical standards and specialized training that come with tactical policing. Prior military experience was also indicated as a reason for wanting to

join a tactical team for almost half of the participants, some who felt tactical work was "a natural transition" from military work and life.

During the interviews, the majority of TO participants specifically cited the enjoyment being a tactical officer brings them including the following: the challenges of tactical work, the high pressure situations and involvement in scenarios where tactical policing is needed, and the higher standards required of tactical officers. These were also given as primary reasons for joining a tactical team. Six of the TO respondents also cited prior military experience as an additional primary factor in deciding to join a tactical team. The higher standards required of tactical officers were described by participants in several ways throughout the interviews with an overarching theme of displaying the best in both professional and personal aspects of the tactical officer's life. Eric summed up what many TO participants described as their experiences of the higher standards set upon them and their team:

...we're always looked at to be good at everything, we should know everything, and we should always look good, and then of course there's the physical fitness aspect of it...we're being rated for everything all the time, being looked to by even sergeants and lieutenants and stuff for coming to you for advice on tactics and the way things are done...to know that you're going to be expected to perform at the highest level possible all the time.

Often membership on a tactical team requires a rigorous and competitive testing process depending on the size of the particular agency. Additional background checks of the officer's work history including citizen complaints, commendations and proficiency in both daily police duties and firearms are conducted on potential applicants in addition to the physical testing process. Recommendations are sought from the applicant's supervisors and sometimes co-workers to gauge the applicant's work and personal ethics.

Greg described what many TO participants alluded to regarding how tactical officers are expected to uphold high standards in their personal lives as well:

You just have to be careful when these type of groups [tactical officers] associate in places that it's – sometimes it's looked on, especially if alcohol is involved, you gotta be careful. We're held to higher standards. Anything that goes on is scrutinized more so than just your Average Joes hooking up.

These “higher standards” that separate tactical officers may be indicative of a rift or separation between police-specialized units and the general police population. Perhaps tactical teams work against elements of what has been termed the police ethos (Gaines, Kappeler & Vaughn, 2008) and the military style model within policing which places a great deal of emphasis on rank. Those values most important within the ethos of policing are autonomy, bravery, and the secrecy (Gaines, Kappeler & Vaughn, 2008). Are those who serve on a tactical team viewed as braver than non-tactical officers? Does the ability to gain membership on a tactical team supersede the importance of rank in some situations and thus lead to animosity between tactical officers and non-tactical officers? This may be particularly true of departments who allow rookie officers to try out for teams. This could lead to separations of bonds from fellow rookie officers as well as more veteran officers who typically “rank” on rookie officers within all realms of policing.

The job-related stressors described by the TO participants in this study represent unique stressors not thoroughly examined in previous literature. The increased physical demands, the pressure of being on-call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and the pressure of being held to what the participants called “higher standards” than non-tactical officers represent added stressors not seen in phase I of this study. What seems

most unique about these stressors is that the participants themselves indicated a push/pull mentality where they both enjoyed and, at the same time, struggled with the added demands and pressures of tactical policing. Is this push/pull inherent within policing itself where individuals have already chosen an occupation that puts them in danger? At what point does the enjoyment of a particular aspect of tactical policing change to stress for tactical officers? Are there other factors, both personal and/or work-related, that influence the difference between enjoyment and stress in tactical policing for TO participants? This section has covered the theme of job-related stress including the two subthemes, (1) department not supportive of romantic relationships and (2) more stress with tactical duties. Further discussions about tactical team dynamics and expectations outside of job-related stress will be discussed in the next section including the theme of family and trust within a tactical team.

#### **Theme 4: Tactical Team as Family and Trust**

The theme of team as family and the trust felt between team members was found predominantly with TO participants, but also mentioned by a few of the RP participants in regards to family support during phase II. Throughout the interviews, participants often described the tactical team as "family" or "like family" in both work and non-work related ways. Two thirds of the TO participants indicated that personal support and mutual trust were the primary ways in which their tactical team was "family" to them. TO respondents cited the closeness they feel with the other members of the team as the primary reason they can reach out to them for support. This support was described in addition to, or in place of, the support they received from their romantic partners. It is not surprising that TO participants indicated their tendencies to go to other officers for

support given the earlier discussion that officers are trained to use other officers for support because they are the only other people who truly understand “what it’s like” to be a police officer (Barker, 1999). Charlie discussed how the team takes notice of personal issues of other officers and will intervene if necessary to help: "There’s a guy who’s having some problems with his marriage right now. He just kept blowing us off, and finally we were like, ‘Nah – what’s going on?’ And so we tried to help him out." Ryan agreed that teammates support each other outside of tactical duties as well, "...if one of them is moving, the team will come in outside of work and help them move. They will – if there’s a birthday party for a kid, just things like that." Drew elaborated on how the tactical team has stronger, and different, bonds than non-tactical officers within his department:

It's more like the police department is your family, but then you've got an even tighter family on the team...if we had a personal problem, they would be the first to go to. It wouldn't be someone else. If there is a problem with the team, we keep it on the team. We don't go outside.

TO respondents were steadfast that a tactical team and the family they have created, is built upon trust both on and off duty. During the interviews, TO respondents were asked how they got involved in tactical policing, and, overwhelmingly, their responses indicated that the aspect of visible trust seen between the teammates by those outside the team was a predominant reason for joining their respective tactical teams. Furthermore, the decision to remain on the team and participate in dangerous call-outs was the feeling of trust amongst the team. Zach, a team leader, went as far as to cite trust as an underlying credential of team membership:

...they're held at a different standard, and that's what I expect of them... We've got to be able to have each other's backs...I've always told my guys on the team and

all my officers that if your wife can't trust you, your partner can't trust you. I've made some guys mad before by saying that, but that's just the way that I see it.

Eric agreed that a tactical officer's personal life reflects on his team and their ability to trust him: "...basically you're held to the highest standards of everything. So that includes personally you...can't be running around drinking, cheating, being a general scum bag now, and that's made very clear, very quickly..." The socialization process for tactical membership is similar yet extends beyond that established during the initial police training academy. Membership on a tactical team extends beyond the physical and operational standards that those outside a tactical team see and includes an additional "rite of passage" separate from what they may have experienced when becoming police officers. Similar to the socialization process seen in other occupations, the rite of passage often includes the stages of separation, transition, and incorporation from "normal" policing to tactical policing (Volti, 2012). Even if tactical officers pass the physical and operational testing process, they must often endure a "training" status during which they are accepted onto the team but must pass additional standards to gain full membership or "operational status" on their team. These additional standards can include examination of their ability to handle the additional physical demands, cohesion with other members on the team, time-related demands (e.g., continual on call status), and higher personal standards (e.g., moral, behavioral and social) that come with membership on a tactical team. Dustin elaborated on the issue of trust, its importance for membership on his team, and how it aids in both the efficiency and safety of officers during call-outs:

...knowing that the guy standing next to you has been vetted over and over again...not just the trust factor, but knowing how another guy you know is going to react because you've been in situations before. You don't want to go through a door in a really crappy situation when the guy next to you...could care less about

you... And most guys I would say...care just as much if not more about the guy next to them than they do about themselves.

Interestingly, and in contrast to the majority of respondents, three TO participants felt that trust was sometimes a problem on their team. Mark, a newer member of his tactical team, was disappointed in the lack of trust he had felt from particular members of his team:

...there are guys that are not that way, that are difficult to trust. It's been kind of hard because my assumption going on to the team was that everybody would be supportive and that everybody would be on the same page. So it's kind of a hard lesson to learn to realize that that wasn't necessarily the case.

Henry was almost comical in his affirmation about trusting other police officers or teammates,

Another old guy told me a long time ago, as soon as I was recruited, he said, "Two things I'm gonna tell you, the best advice I'm ever gonna give you—don't ever trust cops around your equipment or your woman."

Both Mark and Henry serve on larger metropolitan teams, are newer members of their teams (i.e., less than 3 years), and may not have had time to form the bonds of trust that come with time as described by the other TO participants. Other reasons for lack of trust could be that their particular tactical teams may be experiencing strife. Or, these individuals may have trust issues that relate to their own personalities and not the team dynamic, as may be the case with Henry who was discussed in an earlier section with respect to the difficulties in communication and trust he and his romantic partner were having. The third TO participant who mentioned trust issues on his team cited a recent turnover and recruitment of newer and younger team members as reasons for his lack of trust in particular teammates.



This section has covered the theme of tactical team as family and trust. The closeness and trust felt between teammates and its effect on both the tactical officer's personal and work life will be discussed further in the next chapter. The next section will cover a brief overview of participant discussions regarding successful relationships and advice from participants.

### **Elements of Successful Relationships**

During the interview process, both TO and RP participants were asked if they felt their own relationships were successful, what advice they had for other couples (i.e., tactical officers and romantic partners), and any recommendations they had for future support services geared towards tactical officers and romantic partners. These questions contributed to the themes discussed throughout this chapter in addition to giving more insight into romantic attachment for the participants. This section will discuss the importance of each of the themes related to “elements of successful relationships” and “advice from participants” based on the participants’ responses. In addition, this section will discuss how these themes have contributed to and relate to the themes discussed earlier in this chapter and how they have influenced specific recommendations for future support services that will be discussed in the next chapter.

Towards the end of each interview, all thirty participants were asked what characterizes a successful romantic relationship. Participant responses fell into three themes: communication, making time for one another, and trust. Respondents often cited more than one of the themes within their responses to what makes a romantic relationship successful. However, communication was by far the most frequent response from both TO and RP participants with over half of the TO respondents and almost all of the RP

participants listing communication as the main component of a successful romantic relationship. Interestingly, there were no direct indicators that those couples who had romantic partners working in a criminal justice-related field cited communication as the most important characteristic of a romantic relationship more than other couples. In this instance, an equal number of TO participants with romantic partners working in a criminal justice-related field and those not working in a criminal justice-related field cited communication as the primary characteristic of a successful relationship. The importance of communication and its subthemes was found throughout the data and was discussed earlier. Participants often discussed communication first before any other aspects were considered, particularly by RP participants. Charlie emphasized "being able to talk about anything," and Michael had only one component for a successful relationship, "Communication is consider number one." Despite the difficulties Nicole faced in communicating with her romantic partner that were discussed in an earlier section, she still felt that "good, open communication" was vital to a successful relationship. Ellen added that while she felt the sentiment was "so cliché," it was important to be able to "talk to each other," and putting communication at the forefront of her relationship had become "second nature" to her.

While both TO and RP participants cited the importance of communication, it was emphasized far more by RP participants. This could be a result of gendered differences in communication discussed earlier that indicate women value communication as a means to be closer to others (Mason, 1994). Or, it could be indicative of a characteristic RP participants feel is vital to successful romantic police relationships. In this study's earlier discussion regarding the theme of communication, Zach emphasized that tactical officers

are trained to communicate and should be able to transfer those skills to their personal lives. However, only half of the TO respondents placed emphasis on communication as the primary characteristic of a successful romantic relationship. Again, this could be a result of gendered differences in communication that indicate men tend to be self-assertive and view communication as a means towards a tangible end where they will offer solutions to problems in an effort to deter continued discussions of interpersonal problems (Maltz & Borker, 1982; Wood, 1996; Mason, 1994; Bas & Rubenfield, 2003). Or, this could be in support of the earlier discussion regarding the theme of job-related stress in which TO respondents indicated that they primarily turn to other officers, particularly other tactical officers, for support in addition to, or sometimes in place of, the support they receive from their romantic partners (e.g., rather than their romantic partner).

The two remaining themes, “making time for one another” and “trust,” were often interwoven within the discussion of communication in successful relationships. Susan described how communicating lends itself to making more time for one another as she and her romantic partner discuss the interests they share: "So communication is really important I think. It's important to be able to do things together that you like. You know, not just the interest of one." Zach discussed how he has learned over the course of his romantic relationship that trust and communication go hand-in-hand. He gave examples of past regrets and poor decisions early in his relationship that had taught him the importance of being able to talk about both the good and bad aspects of romantic relationships, "...because I do feel I regret it, but I think that you have to learn. And

communicating and talking with each other, letting each other know, and being able to trust each other are the biggest things."

After giving their definition of the characteristics that make for a successful romantic relationship, participants were then asked, based on their definition, if they would consider their own current romantic relationships successful. The vast majority of both TO and RP participants felt that their romantic relationships were successful. Given the fact that all the participants had to have been in a relationship with their romantic partner for at least one year to participate in this study, it was anticipated that the majority of participants would consider their romantic relationships as successful based on the length of the relationship alone. However, despite the fact that all the participants were in marital relationships and could have argued that this fact alone determined the success of their romantic relationships, one TO respondent and five RP participants cited their romantic relationships as "work[s] in progress." Emily elaborated, "It's a work in progress...we probably need to learn to depend on one another a little bit more...we're getting there. It's nothing I would worry about." As discussed in earlier sections, both Alan and Nicole openly discussed the difficulties in their romantic relationship, their efforts to resolve problems through counseling, and the importance of communication in the success of a relationship. They both indicated that their relationship was "a work in progress" with Nicole emphasizing that "It's a lot more successful today than it was five years ago, and we're getting better." It is important to note that these few participants did not define their romantic relationships as unsuccessful; rather, they discussed what wasn't working in their relationships and how they hoped to resolve it. Their openness about the state of their relationships was refreshing, unexpected, and attested to the honesty of the

participants to share the true and unfiltered view of their romantic lives. This was also reflected in the advice that participants in this study had for other tactical couples.

### **Advice from Participants**

At the end of each of the interviews, all thirty participants were asked if they had any advice they would give to other couples in their situation. Four themes emerged including family first, communication, foresight (know what you are getting into), and acceptance. Respondents often cited more than one of the themes within their response of what advice they would give to other couples. Roughly one third of participants advised others to “put family first,” with the majority of them being TO participants. Greg discussed his experiences of seeing others not put family first: “Again, I’ve seen more guys get caught up in the business of being a SWAT operator, and it’s all about them and everything else just kind of goes south—wife, kids, everything—it takes precedence.” Peter agreed that being a part of a specialized team should not come before family:

.....don’t put your job first. It’s important to you because if you’re doing something like that, any type of specialized unit, it’s obviously, if you’re doing that it’s something that’s important to you and dear to you and you want to make it a priority in your life. But, don’t put that ahead of her, or your family for that matter, because that will come back to get you in the long run.

Interestingly, putting "family first" was not mentioned directly by any of the participants during the earlier discussion of what makes for a successful romantic relationship.

Participants did mention making time for each other, which lends itself to spending time with family, but indicates more towards time spent between the romantic couple and not a family (i.e., children or extended family). All but two of the romantic couples had children present in the home and/or were expecting their first child at the time of the

interview. Therefore, the response of putting "family first," particularly by TO participants, may be a direct indicator of what is lacking in their own current personal and/or family lives. It may also be an indicator of the disconnect between the demands of tactical life discussed in earlier themes and the reality that while serving as a tactical officer, an individual may be unable to put his/her family first.

The importance of "communication" was again seen in the advice both TO and RP participants would give to other couples. This theme was evenly distributed between the TO and RP participants and echoed what was discussed in the previous section discussing successful relationships as well as the discussions of communication found in the earlier themes. Following the themes of family first and communication, acceptance and foresight (know what you're getting into) rounded out the remaining themes. These two themes were given equal importance by participants and were somewhat gendered mirror images of each other with RP participants indicating "acceptance" as advice they would give to other couples, and TO participants indicating "know what you're getting into" as advice they would give to other couples. RP participants indicated that "acceptance" related to how romantic partners must learn to live with and/or accept the demands of tactical work, duties and responsibilities as well as accept the potential effects that those duties and responsibilities will have on both the individuals and their personal and/or social lives. Emily spoke openly about learning "acceptance" over the years in relation to the possibilities of danger and death as it relates to her husband's tactical duties:

But I think just trusting that they know what they're doing, they're trained for all this, and accepting that if anything were to happen, there's a reason for it, and it's completely out of your control. There's nothing you can do

about it... it's not that I don't think that anything could happen; it's just part of the job, I knew what I was getting involved with him.

While danger and death were on the mind of many of the participants, other RP participants emphasized "acceptance" as learning to deal with the inconveniences and time away from family and loss of social opportunities that often come with tactical duties. Sarah put it simply, "It's the life we've chosen to live, and I can get mad and get bent out of shape, but it's not gonna do any good. He's still going to have to do it, and then you're just going to be upset about it."

TO participants responded in a similar manner as the RP participants but defined their advice as "knowing what you're getting into." When RP participants advised "acceptance," they were placing the responsibilities that come with that advice on their romantic partners and not the tactical officers. When TO participants advised "know what you're getting into," they too placed the responsibilities that come with this advice on the romantic partner and not the tactical officer. Thus, this theme reflected not only a gendered designation from participants, but a gendered solution as well. For example, Alex was open and passionate about his advice, which seemed more like a warning for other couples:

I would say probably the most important thing is...before they get into a relationship or if they're in a relationship, and then they have to try and decide whether or not they want to become involved in a tactical team—they need to gauge whether it's a compatible situation, whether or not they're somebody who is resilient, supportive, and understanding of what you want to do and why. So, I would say just be honest with yourself about your partner or potential partner and what the ramifications of you pursuing or being a tactical officer is. What that's going to mean, and require, and ask of both of you.

Other TO participants were more direct in their advice, as was the case for Ben "I would say that before getting into it [SWAT], you need to make sure they have an understanding

of what it is so that you're not explaining things after the fact." The remaining TO participants reiterated this advice by discussing the importance of how, before joining a tactical team, both tactical officers and romantic partners should understand the requirements, pressures, responsibilities and stress that membership on a tactical team can bring for both the officers and their families.

A final question regarding recommendations and advice from participants asked RP participants if they could think of anything that could be done to make their role as romantic partners to tactical police officers easier (by the department, your partner, society, etc...). This gender specific question was asked to aid in the development of recommendations for policies and procedures as well as more tailored support services for tactical officers and their families. Responses from the RP participants were grouped into five themes based on frequency with which they were discussed and included the following: notification, time management, moms' or wives' group, resources for families and department outreach services. Respondents often cited more than one of the themes within their responses of what they would like to see done to help make their lives easier.

RP's defined "notification" as simply being contacted, perhaps formally through their partners' departments (e.g., they receive the same or a similar message when a call-out is occurring), or even informally through other romantic partners or family members of other team members, about the status of tactical call-outs (i.e., when there is a call-out, if it is still in progress, once the call out is over). Only one RP participant, Paige, indicated that she is included in the same notification system her romantic partner receives when there is a tactical call-out and the relief she feels from being included in



the notification process: "So when they call his phone, they're calling mine, and I get that same message. So even if I don't answer, they leave it on the answering machine or the voicemail or whatever. So I do like that aspect." The anxiety of not knowing that their husbands are participating in call-outs and what may be going on during the call-outs were stressors indicated by the majority of the RP participants. Emily described her anxiety during call-outs even though she's learned to accept that her husband has a dangerous job. In the beginning of their relationship, she felt like she was "waiting on pins and needles" during every call-out and was always "hoping not to get the knock on the door from the higher ups that something's happened." Several RP participants indicated their husbands' forgetfulness and/or the urgency of the situations do not always allow for the tactical officers to contact their RPs when tactical call-outs are occurring, and the implementation of a notification system would resolve those issues.

RP participants also discussed "time management" as an issue they would like to see addressed. Time management is a catch-all term used to describe the issues RP participants discussed relating to balancing home and work life. Specifically, RP participants cited a need for commanders of tactical teams to take into account and/or respect the schedules of family members of tactical officers, particularly when it came to making childcare arrangements. As indicated in earlier themes, childcare arrangements typically fell into the gendered role of the mother/RP. Tracy discussed her frustration with her husband's tactical team not respecting her time when trying to arrange childcare, "...it's up until the last two days before. You don't know what time he's going to have to have training and we need a sitter...those things are a little stressful. Scheduling is usually my biggest headache." Some issues, such as the tactical officer being on-call

around-the-clock and the unpredictability of call-outs, were described as a scheduling problem RP participants were frustrated with, but understood could not be planned for in advance. However, the lack of advanced notice for scheduling team trainings was a factor that caused a great deal of stress for RP participants. Difficulties in arranging child care both when call-outs occurred and when there was a lack of advanced notice for when team trainings would be held was an issue raised repeatedly throughout the interviews by RP participants. This was compounded by the fact that all of the RP participants held at least part-time employment. Hailey indicated even having a resource for finding adequate childcare would be helpful, “Even if it’s as simple as just a resource list of day cares in the area that go past 6:00 p.m. or that are drop in child care, or even a phone list of babysitters that other families use...”

Additional “time management” issues included not being able to schedule events or trips (e.g., vacation), particularly those that would take place outside of the jurisdictional area of the particular tactical team, without the tactical officer first checking with and/or seeking permission from the commander of the tactical team (e.g., to see if there would still be enough remaining tactical team members available should there be a call-out during the time the particular tactical officer is seeking leave). Oftentimes the tactical officer had to "put in for time off" both with the commander of his normal duty shift and his tactical team commander. This coupled with regularly rotating shifts and rotating days off presented challenges to both tactical officers and their families when arranging child care, attending social events, attending a child's extracurricular activities, celebrating holidays or special occasions together, or even trying to find time when family members may be home at the same time to spend time together (e.g., meals).

The final three themes, “mom's or wives' group,” “resources for families,” and “department outreach services,” were similar in nature. RP's cited a desire to see more opportunities for them to socialize with other RP's who understand what they are going through and to have resources (e.g., info for those new to the area, list of potential child care service providers, list of self-help resources) or services provided by the department or team to aid RP's in meeting one another or voicing concerns they face because of the TO's work. Nicole suggested that it would have been beneficial for the tactical teams to coordinate opportunities for tactical families to meet, “...even if there were like a meet and greet, you know for like the new guys on the team, like hey, all the wives are gonna have a night—like that would've been a wonderful interaction.” Rebecca also indicated her desire to have someone to turn to for help “who understands” and felt that more opportunities to meet with fellow tactical wives would help with that: “...to have a group of the wives who would come and just kind of let you pick their brain for over dinner or something...would really help.”

What is interesting about all of the themes from this particular question is that none of the RP participants cited any recommendations that directly involved actions from their romantic partners. Despite having just talked about what makes their own romantic relationships successful and the advice they would give to other couples (e.g., direct communication with their romantic partners), RP participants did not incorporate any of their earlier thoughts into solutions that would make their own lives easier. This again reflects a gendered aspect within romantic relationships of tactical officers. As discussed in the previous section, TO participants felt romantic partners should “know what they're getting into” and RP participants agreed about learning “acceptance” in their

romantic relationships with tactical officers. It seems as if these women have “accepted” the gendered responsibility of providing and/or arranging childcare and scheduling social activities for the family. The section has focused on participant discussions regarding successful relationships and advice from participants. Specific examples of these participant recommendations as they relate to suggestions for future services to tactical officers and their families will be discussed in the final chapter.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed findings and analysis from phase II. Phase II consisted of qualitative, in-depth interviews conducted with 15 tactical police officers serving in the Commonwealth of Kentucky and 15 romantic partners of tactical police officers. In phase II, the principal focus was exploring the relationship between tactical police officers and their romantic partners through qualitative measures that allowed the participants to share their own thoughts and experiences. Attachment theory was used as a guiding framework for this study in addition to utilizing elements comprising the spirit of grounded theory and symbolic interactionist approaches for the qualitative analysis in phase II.

Findings from phase II were discussed in detail and included reflections and considerations, the coding process, analysis of the interview questions including discovery and discussion of key themes, general relationship status and participant advice themes, and a discussion of themes related to participant-directed topics for support services. Rich descriptions from participants allowed for examination of gendered issues and attachment that were not addressed during phase I of this study. A greater understanding of the types of job-related stressors present within tactical policing was

also discovered during this phase. Most importantly, romantic partners of tactical officers were given a voice in relation to the issues facing tactical officers today. Their stories and experiences provided insight into issues of gender regarding communication, childcare and social planning responsibilities, as well as provide examples of how tactical policing affects attachment for the couples. An examination of how phase II both built upon the findings from phase I and adds insight to phase I by confirming findings, or raising new questions for inquiry, will be discussed in the final chapter.

The next chapter will discuss the summary and conclusions based on both phases of the study, study limitations, and recommendations for future study. In addition, recommendations for more tailored support services for tactical officers and their romantic partners, using recommendations from the participants themselves, will be discussed in the final chapter.

## Chapter Six

### Conclusions, Study Limitations, and Recommendations for Further Research

#### Summary Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the factors, including operational stress, organizational stress, and attachment that influence the relationships between tactical officers and their romantic partners. This study utilized a mixed methods design, specifically an explanatory sequential design, which occurs in two distinct and interactive phases (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This study contributed to the literature in the following ways. Firstly, prior research had not examined romantic relationships with officers serving in tactical units. Secondly, what research that had been conducted on police stress and romantic relationships (Alexander & Walker, 1996; Borum & Philpot, 1993; Burke & Mikkelsen 2004; Gershon, 2000; Hageman, 1997; Maynard & Maynard, 1982; Maynard et al., 1980; Roberts & Levenson, 2001) focused on patrol officer romantic relationships and what caused these relationships to fail rather than why they succeeded. Thirdly, there are few, if any, programs or services available to tactical officers and their romantic partners about maintaining romantic relationships. Suggestions for more tailored support services to these officers and their families will be made based on the findings from this study.

As discussed earlier, this study utilized an explanatory sequential approach. Specific attention was paid to the ways in which the interview data reporting the views of tactical officers and their romantic partners about their romantic relationships and/or the success of their relationships helped to explain and/or expand upon the quantitative results about romantic attachment and stress reported by tactical officers during phase I.

Connections between the phases will be discussed as well as discussions about police subculture in relation to work-related stress, tactical officers and romantic attachment, unique stressors of tactical officers, better communication between couples who had a romantic partner working in a CRJ related field, secure relationships in terms of sacrifice and commitment, and the relationships between isolation and attachment. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of participant-based recommendations, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future study.

### **Connections between Phase I and Phase II**

During phase I, two research questions and four corresponding hypothesis were developed for examination:

Research Question 1: How is attachment style (e.g., anxiety about abandonment versus comfort with intimacy) correlated with organizational stress while controlling for demographic characteristics?

H1: The anxiety dimension of insecure attachment is correlated with organizational stress. Specifically, anxiously attached individuals will report higher levels of organizational stress than those individuals not within the anxiety dimension of insecure attachment, even when controlling for demographics.

H2: The avoidance dimension of insecure attachment is correlated with organizational stress. Specifically, avoidantly attached individuals will report higher levels of organizational stress than those individuals not within the avoidance dimension of insecure attachment, even when controlling for demographics.

Research Question 2: How is attachment style (e.g., anxiety about abandonment versus comfort with intimacy) correlated with operational stress while controlling for demographic characteristics?

H3: The anxiety dimension of insecure attachment is correlated with operational stress. Specifically, anxiously attached individuals will report higher levels of operational stress than those individuals not within the anxiety dimension of insecure attachment, even when controlling for demographic characteristics.

H4: The avoidance dimension of insecure attachment is correlated with operational stress. Specifically, avoidantly attached individuals will report higher levels of operational stress than those individuals not within the avoidance dimension of insecure attachment, even when controlling for demographic characteristics.

The analysis from the survey data in phase I gave us a better understanding of the demographic make-up of tactical officers serving in the Commonwealth of Kentucky in addition to their views on romantic attachment, operational, and organizational stress. While analysis of the data did not fully support either of the research questions or the corresponding hypotheses, it did yield an important finding that tactical officers serving at a rank above an officer had significantly higher rates of operational and organizational stress. In addition to the finding that rank matters for tactical officers, the findings from the PSQ-Op raised additional questions as to how and why tactical officers rank operational stressors in ways similar to or different from non-tactical officers. These important findings, coupled with the rankings from the PSQ-Or and the PSQ-Op and demographic data, served as a starting point for the development and implementation of



phase II of this study. Analysis of the ECR-S from phase I indicated that tactical officers participating in the study had average levels of anxiety in the low-middle end and average levels of avoidance in the low end. This finding indicated that tactical officers fell more into secure attachment types rather than insecure attachment types. However, the use of a modified scale of attachment (i.e., ECR-S), did not allow for use or examination of the full dimension of attachment. The focus of the ECR-S is on the two primary dimensions of insecure attachment—*anxiety and insecurity*—and thus the findings related only to the dimensions of insecure attachment.

The following sections will further detail the connections between the phases by highlighting commonalities found in both phases. These sections will discuss demographics, the finding and support that rank above officer equals more stress for tactical officers, the relationship between police culture and work-related stress, and unique stressors for tactical officers.

### **Demographics**

The majority of participants from phase I were married, had children present in their home, had not served in the military, and held the rank of officer. Demographics from participants during phase II were similar in that all participants were married; all but two couples had children present in the home or were expecting their first child; nearly half of the TO participants had prior military experience; and the ranks of TO participants were evenly distributed among lower, middle and upper ranks (e.g., patrol officer, sergeant, captain). In keeping with the desire to build upon the findings from phase I, four TO participants holding a rank above officer were recruited for participation in phase II.

## **Rank Above Officer Equals More Stress**

As discussed earlier, an important finding from phase I was that rank is salient for tactical officers and indicated that those tactical officers holding a rank above officer had significantly higher levels of operational and organizational stress. Analysis of the responses by all participants during phase II, but particularly the four TO participants who held a rank above officer, were examined for indicators as to why these officers reported higher levels of operational and organizational stress. Two of the four TO participants with ranks above an officer also held leadership responsibilities within their tactical team and provided a great deal of insight into the added operational and organizational stressors that come with both their rank and leadership roles. Participants' discussions and explanations of these stressors allowed for phase II to give deeper insight into this important finding from phase I. These participants described stressors relating to feelings of responsibility towards the safety of team members (particularly during call-outs), facilitating adequate training, aiding in team cohesion, serving as a buffer between team members and the department, completion of necessary bureaucratic work for the team (i.e., completing paperwork for the department and supporting organizations regarding training, budgets and reports), and helping to maintain the "higher standards" placed upon tactical team members. These stressors were discussed in addition to the typical organizational and operational stressors ranked by participants during phase I and discussed by all the TO participants during phase II. The academic literature (Bayley & Bittner, 1984; Britz, 1997; Brown, 1988; Chan, 1996; Ericson, 1982; Farkas & Manning, 1997; Fielding, 1988; Haarr, 1997; Herbert, 1998; Jermier et al., 1991; Manning, 1994a, 1994b; Paoline, 2001; Paoline, 2003; Paoline, Myers, & Worden, 2000; Reiner, 1985;

Reuss-Ianni, 1983; Swidler, 1986; Van Maanen and Barley, 1985; Wilson, 1968) suggests that the police subculture may be an additional reason behind why tactical officers holding a rank above officer have more operational and organizational stress.

### **Police Subculture and Work-Related Stress**

In his work, Manning (1994a; 1994b) argued that police culture was divided by rank within police organizations. Specifically, three primary segments made up the police culture consisting of lower participants (e.g., patrol officers and sergeants), middle managers (e.g., some sergeants and department brass [higher ups]), and top command (e.g., commanders, deputy chiefs, chiefs). Each of these levels of the organization had different concerns, norms, values and orientations which governed each culture (Farkas & Manning, 1997). Therefore, the culture worked to insulate the members based on the different issues which were unique to their particular rank. For example, lower participants' concerns often focus on local street crime reduction as emphasized by Reuss-Ianni's (1983) "street cop" who uses one's own experiences to make decisions and relies on strong in-group ties. Middle management culture often serves as a buffer between the street cop and upper management while promoting management themes. Finally, the top command focuses on managing in the internal workings of police organizations while being ever mindful of the organization's accountability to external audiences (Paoline, 2003). This research, particularly by Manning (1994a) indicates that the police culture is not static, but rather dynamic and changing based on the different concerns of officers at each level. Each level helps to manage the strains faced by the officers at a particular rank, and as individual officers move from one level to another, their cultural commitment changes (Paoline, 2003). The dynamic nature of the police

subculture may also help to explain why tactical officers holding a rank above officer experience more operational and organizational stress, particularly when their rank within their department is not reflected within their team (e.g., tactical teams have their own chain of command; rank within the department does not automatically determine higher rank within a tactical team). The changing nature of roles and requirements between “normal” duties and tactical duties may create an additional set of operational and organizational stressors for tactical officers holding a rank above officer.

Individual officer “style” also plays a role in understanding the police subculture. The “craft of policing,” as it has been called by those who have researched differences in officers (Bayley & Bittner, 1984; Ericson, 1982; Fielding, 1988; Wilson, 1968), focused on how officers learn through personal experiences. Because officers bring their own experiences, interpretations, learning, and handling of problems from their work environment, not all officers will see their occupational world through the same lens (Paoline, 2003). The stylistic differences in the ways individual officers cope with situations may or may not be in agreement with other members of the organization, thus leading to additional subcultures. Previous literature on “types” or “styles” of officers (Brown, 1988; Reiner, 1985; Van Maanen and Barley, 1985; Swidler, 1986; Worden, 1995) indicates that subcultures can be reflected through the particular styles that individual members develop when processing work-related information and can reflect competing perspectives on issues related to things such as the choice of appropriate techniques to use, the nature of their work or the correct standpoints regarding “outsiders” (Paoline, 2003). However, more recent literature surrounding variations in officers and police culture (Britz, 1997; Chan, 1996; Fielding, 1988; Haarr, 1997;

Herbert, 1998; Jermier et al., 1991; Manning, 1994a, 1994b; Paoline, 2001; Paoline, Myers, & Worden, 2000) indicates that as police organizations become more demographically heterogeneous (e.g., by adding more women, minorities, and college-educated individuals who bring new values, norms and attitudes) the probability that a single collective and traditional culture among police decreases (Paoline, 2003). Thus, today researchers are beginning to focus on the individual differences in today's officers and how they still share socialization experiences, cultural attitudes and values. Specifically, Paoline (2003) indicates a need to address the identification and conceptualization of subcultures among "street cops" (Reuss-Ianni, 1983) and "low participants" (Manning, 1994a; 1994b).

This is where the typical tactical officer can be found, within the "street cops" and "lower participants," as evidenced through the demographic portion of phase I of this study. The research focusing on police cultures, particularly those examining the connections between rank and culture by Paoline (2003), Manning (1994a; 1994b), Farkas & Manning (1997) and Reuss-Ianni's (1983) help to draw connections between the participants in this study who served at a rank above officer. These officers may be struggling with not only the added bureaucracy that comes with "middle managers" who have to balance the roles of buffer between "top command" and "lower participants" as described by Manning (1994a; 1994b), but also changes in commitments to different cultures based on their particular role as described by Paoline (2003). Within a tactical team, there may be, and often are, more than one "middle manager". However, there is typically only one commander and 1-2 assistant commanders, who may or may not hold a "middle manager" rank within their department. A higher rank within the department

does not mean that a particular officer automatically holds a higher rank within the team, although officers who command teams are typically veterans of the team who have also moved up within the ranks of a department to “middle managers” and sometimes “top command” (though typically the demands of “top command” duties do not lend themselves towards the time commitments needed for tactical team membership or leadership).

The elements of police subculture discussed in relation to the two phases of this study are also supported through elements of symbolic interactionism. The differing roles that officers must take on within their department all require a careful balance between the performers and the audience and within the front stage and backstage interplay of police work. The middle managers must serve as the “mediator” or the go-between of the lower ranking officers (i.e., performers) and the top command (i.e., audience) while being careful not to be negatively labeled an “informer,” “shill,” or “spotter” in the eyes of those who rank below or above them (Goffman, 1959). Thus, the role of middle manager seems the most daunting and stressful of tasks for officers. The middle manager is where the first experiences of rank above an officer (e.g., sergeant) are attained and where more operational and organizational stress was reported by those in this study.

Finally, the existing literature suggests that for many officers as they age, the excitement and rewards that once came from working the streets as patrol officers begin to fade, and administrative positions that allow for more family time become more attractive (Stinchcomb, 2004). However, competition through the promotional process brings added organizational stress for officers as many officers hope to gain the more

desirable work schedules that often come with promotion (e.g., weekends or holidays off) (Stinchcomb, 2004). Any added benefits that come from administrative positions are not transferred to tactical team members as all team members are on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and must participate in mandated trainings regardless of the time or location (e.g., training times may be in complete contrast to their usual days off or shift schedule). In addition, veteran officers (i.e., officers with at least 5-7 years of experience) often lack the emotional support of their peers because they are often required to act as leaders, even if they do not hold a higher rank, and are looked to as leaders within their organization, particularly by younger officers (Crank, 2004). This inferred leadership means that veteran officers often have no one to emulate or transfer accountability to, which in-turn increases stress and decreases their support systems (Crank, 2004). Tactical officers may be veterans within their department, but not on their tactical team depending on when membership began for a particular officer. Furthermore, those officers with prior military experience bring to the tactical team more “veteran” knowledge about tactical practices, training and implementations, regardless of their “veteran” status on the department or team. This again serves to confuse and muddle the roles typically found within the police subculture for officers with prior military experience. As discussed earlier, the contrast between roles and “veteran” status on the department and on the tactical team can add to the operational and organizational stressors of tactical officers, particularly those serving at a rank above officer.

### **Unique Stressors for Tactical Officers**

In order to facilitate a better understanding of the possible differences in stressors for tactical officers, participants were asked a series of questions during phase II that

were designed to elicit responses that would shed more light on job-related stress. In particular, TO participants were asked directly about the stressors of serving on a tactical team and if there were any differences in the stressors of serving on a tactical team vs. working on patrol. Interestingly, the majority of TO participants felt that there was more job-related stress with their tactical duties than with their primary duties in their department. TO participants cited several factors that supported the added stress of tactical duties including, but not limited to, the following: added danger during call-outs, high stress situations that warrant call-outs, being on call around-the-clock, and the unpredictable timing of call-outs. It is important to reiterate that membership on a tactical team is voluntary and typically highly competitive for these TO participants. Participants also cited the "higher standards" tactical officers are often held to for team membership which comprise physical, moral, and intellectual (i.e., greater knowledge and understanding of practical and theoretical use of tactical applications) standards as additional stressors found within tactical duties.

Despite the above mentioned added stressors from tactical work, when TO participants were asked how they got involved in tactical policing, the majority of TO respondents specifically cited the enjoyment being a tactical officer brings them as the primary reason for becoming involved in tactical policing. These respondents indicated the challenges of tactical work, the high pressure situations and/or involvement in scenarios where tactical policing is needed, and the trust between team members as additional reasons for joining and remaining on a tactical team. While the remaining TO respondents also cited the enjoyment of being a tactical officer in their responses, their prior military experience was indicated as the primary factor in deciding to join a tactical



team rather than enjoyment. The awareness and acceptance of additional job-related stressors for tactical officers, in addition to their regular police duties, was not addressed during phase I. Some participants, both TO and RP, also indicated during phase II that membership on a tactical team brought about a sense of pride and accomplishment for themselves. However, no TO participant directly indicated that pride or accomplishment was a primary reason for joining a particular tactical team.

The academic literature suggests that there may be a direct link between individual officers' personalities and the specific duties they seek out within their department. Miller (2003; 2006) found that the overprotective and controlling styles often found within policing, particularly for those working as detectives and investigators, are reinforced by the natural inclination of the officers' personalities. Furthermore, individuals who like to pick apart details, enjoy data-gathering, question everything, and hold a healthy skepticism, will typically and naturally be attracted to an occupation like investigative police work (Henry, 2004; Sewell, 1993, 1994). It would be reasonable to believe that those officers drawn to tactical police work also demonstrate individual personality characteristics, including attributes of hypervigilance that benefit them in their work, but can hinder successful romantic attachment and/or communication with a romantic partner. Romantic relationships and attachments begin to suffer when officers are unable to shut down the hypervigilance cycle as described by Gilmartin (2002), particularly when personal and social activities begin to be treated with the same degree of questioning and authority as their work. This presents an interesting topic for future inquiry to understand the possible causes behind why tactical officers are drawn to these particular roles despite the added job-related stress.

During phase I, TO participants were asked to rank both operational and organizational stressors using the PSQ-Org and PSQ-Op. Existing literature does not indicate that these instruments had been used with tactical officers. Regarding organizational stressors, participants from phase I were extremely similar in rankings of these stressors by officers in a previous study (McCreary & Thompson, 2006), particularly of the top five (i.e., “bureaucratic red tape,” “staff shortages,” “inconsistent leadership styles,” “the feeling that different rules apply to different people,” and “unequal sharing of work responsibilities”). However, when comparing operational stressors from the responses of participants in phase I to this previous study (McCreary & Thompson, 2006), differences could be seen, particularly within the top five ranked stressors. “Fatigue” and “paperwork” were listed as two of the top operational stressors in McCreary & Thompson’s (2006) studies, but they were not listed within the top five for participants in phase I. Interestingly, “finding time to stay in good physical condition,” “feeling like you are always on the job,” “negative comments from the public,” and “eating healthy at work” were listed within the top five operational stressors for participants in phase I, but not within the top five ranked operational stressors for those participating in McCreary & Thompson’s (2006) studies.

Phase II allowed for deeper exploration of the differences in operational stressors ranked by tactical officers in this study. Discussions from themes and subthemes helped to explain the importance of these ranked items for TO participants. The increased physical demands of tactical team membership as discussed by TO participants during phase II helped to elaborate on the higher ranking of stressors such as “finding time to stay in good physical condition” and “eating healthy at work” found during phase I. The

themes and subthemes found in phase II that discussed the TO participants being on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, helped to explain the higher ranking of “feeling like you are always on the job” in phase I. Finally, the themes and subthemes found in phase II that discussed isolation, both social isolation and the isolation that TO participants described they felt from their department (e.g., participants indicated that their department described their tactical teams as “necessary evils” indicating the disconnect between the community policing emphasis valued by “upper management” who must justify to citizens the necessity of tactical teams and the more crime fighting approach values of tactical teams and members), helped to explain the higher ranking of “negative comments from the public” during phase I.

The interplay of Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical approach to symbolic interactionism and tactical officers can again be seen in this study as the participants reported examples of stress resulting from the struggle to balance their roles as both members of their collective department and their tactical team. Additionally, the differences in how tactical officers ranked and described operational stressors in comparison to non-tactical officers also lend themselves to Goffman’s (1959) approach. Goffman (1959) indicated that there are certain roles that mix both front and back stage. For example a “colleague” is an individual who is similar to the performer, but is not a member of the group. Tactical officers could view non-tactical officers as “colleagues” and vice versa. Another example from Goffman (1959) in relation to tactical police officers in this study is what he called a “service specialist.” A “service specialist” is someone who has specialized services that are required by the performers and are often invited by the performers to the back stage. Again, tactical officers could be viewed as

the “service specialists” as they have a specific skill set required by the department in certain situations, but are different from the non-tactical officer performers. These differing yet often overlapping roles between tactical officers and non-tactical officers, or when the tactical officer is carrying out normal duties versus tactical duties, were reported to cause stress by participants in this study.

This section has discussed the connections made between phase I and II. The following sections will discuss other important findings from both phases of the study in relation to police subculture and tactical officers, police subculture and romantic attachment, better communication between couples who had romantic partners working in a CRJ related field, the relationships between secure attachment sacrifice and commitment, the relationships between isolation and attachment, and participant-based recommendations.

### **Police Subculture and Tactical Officers**

To further understand the dynamic of tactical team participation, TO participants were asked during phase II if officers serving on tactical teams supported each other and in what ways. The majority of responses indicated that TO participants felt officers serving on tactical teams supported each other. The remaining responses from participants indicated that officers serving on tactical teams supported each other but elaborated by saying the support was greater than that of non-tactical officers. This demarcation between support expands upon the feeling of being ostracized and isolated from the overall department and/or non-tactical officers mentioned by the TO participants throughout phase II. Existing scholarship suggests that a lack of social support (e.g., department and non-tactical officers not supporting tactical officers) makes it more

difficult for officers to cope with occupational stress and has a direct influence on the levels of police stress (Anderson, 2002). Support for the findings from phase II regarding the ostracization of tactical officers comes from the work of Morash and colleagues (2006). This study found that certain variables could be seen as social stressors for police officers—such as being ridiculed, experiencing bias, and harassment from co-workers—were predictive of a general measure of strain. Furthermore, while there has been some literature addressing the added stress officers face when working in specialized units such as undercover work (Finn & Tomz, 1997; Arter, 2008), there has been no literature examining the distinctions and possible strains between specialized units, specifically tactical police units, and general policing. The cultural disconnect that the participants in phase II cited, particularly TO participants, is also supported by police subculture literature.

Manning's (1977) work cited that the inherent uncertainty of police work, combined with the need to control information, leads to police teamwork and, in turn, generates mutual dependency and collective ties. While other occupational groups create subcultures and world views, Skolnick (1966) argues not to the same extent as police. He argued that factors inherent to police work including danger, authority, and the need to appear efficient contribute to the tendency for police officers to have an "us vs. them" mentality towards society. This mentality, also known as "we vs. they" (Kappeler et. al., 1998), strengthens the bonds between police officers and leads to strong group loyalty, which serves as a protection from both occupational and organizational police environments (Paoline, 2003). In his work focusing on police culture, Paoline (2003) argued that in addition to the police peer group, management

(i.e., those leading a police department) has some effect on shaping police culture.

Paoline based his arguments off the work of Wilson (1968) who indicated that there are variations in organizational environments across police departments. For example, departments with a “legalistic” style focus on crime fighting and represent the typical organizational culture of police departments (Wilson, 1968; Jermier et. al., 1991).

“Watchman” or “service” style departments, however, represent a contrast as they focus less on crime fighting and have less administrative controls and pressures on officers (Paoline, 2003). Therefore, accounts of police culture must take into account differences that exist across police organizations and consider that the ways in which officers cope may not be the same from department to department (Paoline, 2003).

Additionally, existing literature suggests that the findings from this study support police subculture theories and the idea of police unity in a unique form: tactical police unity. No empirical studies have been conducted on the unique subculture of tactical policing, thus indicating a need for further research on this population to be conducted. Specifically, a focus on the relationships between a department’s “style” and the coping mechanisms of tactical officers should be considered. Furthermore, an examination of the symbolic interaction between tactical officers and non-tactical officers should be considered. As mentioned earlier, tactical officers must manage differing “roles” within the dramaturgical scheme of Goffman’s (1959) work. Examinations of the demarcations between front stage and backstage performers within tactical policing and how they can differ across teams and departments could shed more light on why participants in this study described feelings of isolation and being ostracized from their parent departments.

## **Police Subculture and Romantic Attachment**

During the analysis of phase II, particular attention was paid to how tactical officers described elements of romantic attachment to their partners. It was discussed that the training for and subsequent ability of tactical officers to successfully both suppress emotions and problem solve at work do not necessarily help them at home in their romantic relationships. The emotionally tough exterior needed for tactical work can lead to isolation at home and these types of behaviors can be indicators of avoidant attachment within a romantic relationship. This was especially true of TO participants who indicated that they do not discuss difficult or dangerous details from work with their romantic partner or any individual outside of law enforcement. However, after considering the theories of police subculture discussed earlier, these findings are less a reflection of insecure attachment and more a reflection of the tactical police subculture.

With the exception of two couples participating in phase II of the study, the difficulties in communicating described by the participants appear to stem from the police culture rather than insecure attachment styles. During the analysis of phase II, two couples were discussed in relation to the themes and subthemes of “difficulties in communicating” and the single example of a RP participant working in a CRJ-related field that did not aid a romantic couple in communicating. Existing scholarship continues to support the premise that the police subculture hinders romantic attachment more than individual attachment styles. Pleck (1995) researched three different types of masculine gender strain in a sample of males including discrepancy-strain, dysfunction-strain and trauma-strain. Trauma-strain results from experiences of the male socialization process. Specifically, individuals such as police officers, fire-fighters, and military members are

all in positions to experience significant levels of trauma-strain due to the requirements and values of these types of occupations that exhibit characteristics of traditionally masculine environments (Pleck, 1995). In further support of the masculine gender strain, Good, Dell and Mintz (1989) theorized that because men have been traditionally socialized to seek control and power and to be self-reliant and autonomous, they will not actively seek help, comfort, admit to vulnerable feelings, or show weakness as they may all be perceived as unmanly and inappropriate behavior. These characteristics are directly incongruent with the values acquired through their socialization process, are also reflected within the police socialization process, and help to draw conclusions between masculine gender strain and aspects of insecure attachment.

Research findings also suggests that officers who are assigned to specialized units such as SWAT, undercover work, or hostage negotiation are by their very nature on call at any time (Greenstone, 2005; Miller, 2005d, 2006; Strentz, 2006). This finding was confirmed through the analysis of phase II. The constant on-call nature found within this segment of the police subculture can hinder opportunities for officers to socialize and communicate with their families and often leaves families longing for stability and predictability as they try to adjust to the officer's unpredictable schedule (Miller, 2007). This again supports the notion that the police subculture hinders elements of romantic attachment more than individual attachment styles. These studies also lend support for the stressors described by tactical officers during phase II.

The findings from phase II in relation to work-related stressors also brought light to the important finding of RP participants who worked in a CRJ related field.

Specifically, participants in phase II reported that the ability to communicate within a



romantic relationship was aided by RP participants who worked in a CRJ-related field. Participants indicated that discussions relating to work-related stressors within tactical policing were easier because of the RP participants' familiar background and knowledge.

### **Better Communication Between Couples Who Had a Romantic Partner Working in a CRJ- Related Field**

As discussed earlier, the existing scholarship suggests that problems with communication, particularly the voluntary withholding of discussions related to aspects of police work by an officer with his or her spouse, is a major contributor to the dysfunction of police marriages and is typically one of the first indicators that the police family system has been affected (Stratton, 1975; Reese, 1982 Borum & Philpot, 1993; Dick, 2000; Miller, 2007). Burke and Mikkelsen (2004) examined the potential effects of dual officer couples in Norway on work-family conflict and spouse or partner concerns. Interestingly, police officers who reported having spouses also in policing reported the same levels of work-family conflict as other participants whose spouses did not work within policing, but significantly lower spouse or partner concerns. Participants from this study, both tactical officers and romantic partners, reported having an easier time communicating within their romantic relationships when the romantic partner reported working in a criminal justice-related field. And as with Burke and Mikkelsen's (2004) study, work-family conflict was reported (e.g., difficulties in planning social events, unpredictability of TO's work schedule) by all couples in phase II of the study, regardless of the romantic partner's occupation. While not every couple in phase II who had a romantic partner working within a criminal justice-related field (e.g., Peter and Ashley) reported being able to communicate more easily, for the remaining participants, there was an overwhelming response that the commonalities shared between the couples' work

lives eased communication within the romantic relationships for the couples. The shared experiences and challenges of the related professions allowed the participants, particularly the romantic partners, to appreciate the experiences of their spouses better. In addition, when considering symbolic interactionism, these shared experiences and challenges within the related professions allowed the participants to be privy to backstage knowledge. Perhaps, this lessened the need for tactical officer participants to give only a front stage performance to their romantic partners regarding work-related issues.

The commonalities shared between the couples who had a RP working in a CRJ-related field in this study also aided in elements relating to emotional detachment. Emotional detachment is a necessary skill needed within policing to deal with the daily stressors, but when carried over into their personal lives leads to stress within the marital relationships (Borum & Philpot, 1993; Dick, 2000; Miller, 2007). However, as discussed earlier in the literature review in the work of Roberts & Levenson (2001), the regulation of emotions is essential for law enforcement marriages to work as job stress was found to be more toxic to romantic relationships than job exhaustion. The presence of RP's working in a CRJ-related field appears to work as a protection or buffer within the romantic relationships against some of the emotional detachment that officers must utilize during work hours. The ability to communicate within a romantic relationship, and for individuals to feel they can turn to their romantic partners (i.e., secure base) in times of stress, are primary components of secure romantic attachment. Additional factors that aid in facilitating secure romantic attachments were found during phase II, including sacrifice and commitment.

## **Secure Relationships, Sacrifice and Commitment**

An individual's ability to utilize a romantic relationship as a secure base may depend on both the dynamics of the particular relationship and on the traits and/or characteristics that each individual brings to the relationship. Individuals will make decisions about proximity to romantic partners based both on past experiences and behaviors in addition to whether an attachment figure is or is not available. While both phase I and phase II attempt to better understand attachment in romantic relationships, both self-report measures and non-longitudinal qualitative data are limited in their inability to take into account the changing relational aspects of attachment behavior. It cannot be assumed that any individual will consistently fall into particular categories of attachment styles without regard to specific characteristics of the particular romantic relationship and the nature of the distress being experienced. However, the themes discovered in phase II, particularly "communication" and "isolation," show a strong support for attachment theory within phase II.

The existing literature suggests that the application of attachment theory to adult romantic relationships has evolved. Fraley and Shaver (2000) indicated that since the initial application of attachment theory to adult romantic relationships by Hazan and Shaver (1987) many studies have examined different facets, applications, and discovery of strengths and weaknesses of adult romantic relationships and attachment theory. Strengths of attachment theory approaches included the following: it places intimate relationships in an ethological framework (e.g., this type of approach broadens the nature of the questions asked about a particular phenomenon, thus making the answers more comprehensive (Hinde, 1982)); it draws attention to the variability in the ways people

behave in and experience relationships as well as focusing on normative aspects of the relational process; and the focus on individual differences within this theory has inspired studies that could not have been generated by alternative theories (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). The weaknesses of attachment theory approaches included: the implicit assumption that all romantic relationships are attachment relationships, thus failing to provide a means of separating attachment from nonattachment relationships; it failed to provide a clear explanation of the evolution and function of attachment in romantic relationships; and since 1987 certain aspects of the formation of romantic, or pair-pond, attachment theory has been challenged by several theoretical developments (Fraley & Shaver, 2000).

In support of the evolvement of adult romantic attachment, findings from phase II indicated that attachment was subject to both individual participant characteristics and was situation dependent for each participant. This is also supported by previous literature (Feeney 2004; Hazan, Gur-Yaish and Campa, 2004) indicating the difficulties of identifying attachment and stress in romantic relationships. Hazan, Gur-Yaish and Campa (2004) cited the challenge in identifying markers of adult attachment that are not confounded by relationship quality or general attachment style. Feeney (2004) also cited the difficulty in fully understanding how the attachment characteristics of men and women shape their responses to different real-life stressors. Individuals seek characteristics from their attachment figures that include accessibility, responsiveness to communications, and the ability to provide support when an attached individual seeks comfort. The attached individual often needs this contact when there is a perceived threat to the self, the attachment figure, or to their relationship. As a result, while attachment

theory is a useful framework for understanding adult romantic relationships, particularly when these relationships are under stress, definitive categorization of individuals into attachment styles cannot be easily made on these factors alone.

However, policing, particularly tactical policing, is considered a dangerous occupation, and the unpredictability of tactical call-outs and what could happen during those call-outs, could activate the attachment system in both the tactical officer and the romantic partner. The interview questions used in phase II were designed to elicit insight into the ways in which tactical policing may activate the attachment system and how that affected romantic attachment within a couple. Attachment theory suggests that stress can activate the attachment system in relationships. Studies have supported that the attachment system is activated under conditions of discomfort or stress, particularly during times of separation from loved ones (Ainsworth et. al., 1978). The attachment system is characterized by help seeking behaviors and a desire for proximity when individuals are separated. Thus, an individual's attachment style can shape his or her behaviors towards a romantic partner when presented with work-related stress and/or danger.

In order to further address attachment styles in phase II, participants were asked questions designed to bring about discussions involving elements of romantic attachment. During the interviews, participants were asked if they were able to turn to their partners for support. This question was designed to elicit insight into elements of the participants' attachment styles. Being able to turn to a romantic partner for support is indicative of elements found within secure attachment styles, and participants indicated either through direct answers or through discussions within their interviews that they could turn to their

partners for support in some form (i.e., some participants could turn to their partners more than others, as was the case with RP's who worked in a CRJ-related field). This particular question, and others focusing on elements of romantic attachment, led to the discovery of one of the prevailing themes discovered during phase II – “communication.”

The academic literature suggests that law enforcement stress often causes marital communication to suffer (Roberts & Levenson, 2001; Miller, 2007; Borum & Philpot, 1993; Waters & Ussery, 2007). Emotional exhaustion, a noted aspect of job burnout for police officers (Burke, 1993), makes it much harder for police officers to interact with their spouses (Roberts & Levenson, 2001). Unconscious reactions by officers, which are often to suppress the difficult details of a work day in order to keep from having to “re-live” them, can be destructive to marriages as the officers struggle to relax or talk to their spouses. Miller (2007) cites three primary reasons officers choose not to share their work lives with their families: “protection” refers to when officers seek to protect their families from the gory details of their work lives; “compartmentalization” refers to the desire officers may have to avoid reminiscing about their job at home and also to avoid tainting their home lives with work details; finally, “saturation” refers to when officers choose, after spending an entire shift doing typical and perhaps not even dramatic work, not to rehash their day once they have come home. The effects of police work-related stress can be felt at home and within marriages. Miller (2007) found that more than 75% of the spouses studied reported dealing with stress that was a direct result of the officers' work.

In support of the findings discussed above, Mikulincer & Florian (1998) found that, in stressful situations, individuals with secure attachment styles tend to appraise the situation as less threatening and engage partners in order to receive and provide comfort.

Additionally, they hold optimistic expectations about stress manageability and have a strong sense of self-efficacy. These findings indicate that a secure attachment style may serve as a safeguard against the effects of major stressors or perceived threats of stress. In addition, secure individuals are more likely to seek, give and receive support in a loving way from their romantic partners in the presence of stress or threats to the romantic relationships. This research supports the indicators of secure attachment in the participants from phase II who indicated the ability to communicate easily with their partners and those participants who worked in CRJ-related fields.

Interestingly, commitment plays an important role in determining the success of romantic attachment. Commitment fosters trust and security between partners and can be seen through behaviors such as making the relationship a priority, demonstrating a desire to be with a partner in the future and acting consistently with having a couple identity (Stanley et al., 2010). Behaviors that indicate dedication to a romantic partner, including sacrificial behavior, may play an important role in reducing anxiety about the loss of a partner because the behavior indicates dedication and commitment to the future of the romantic relationship (Stanley et al., 2006; Wieselquist et al., 1999). Using the framework of interdependence theory by Kelley & Thibaut (1978), Van Lange and colleagues (1997) investigated sacrifice in intimate relationships. Interdependence theory states that an individual's motivation undergoes a transformation from self-interest to the interest of the relationship with growing interdependence (Stanley et al., 2006). Van Lange and colleagues (1997) built upon this tenant by proposing that higher levels of commitment should be associated with a greater willingness to sacrifice. In support of their hypothesis, they found that the self-reported willingness to sacrifice was positively

associated with a stronger overall commitment, greater relationship satisfaction and healthier couple functioning in several samples of individuals in both marital and dating relationships (Van Lange et. al., 1997).

These findings indicate that sacrifice, specifically sacrificial behaviors that are helpful rather than harmful to self-interest, may be one of the more concrete ways in which partners can demonstrate their level of commitment to their relationship in their day-to-day lives (Stanley et. al., 2006). Stanley et. al. (2010) argue that changes in society over the last few decades have weakened the links between commitment and romantic attachment because romantic and sexual connections fuel emotional attachments but do not necessarily lead to development and establishment of commitment. In order for commitment to create security about romantic attachment, a couple must both clarify and mutually agree on the presence of commitment. This is often done through cultural signals such as marriage that signify commitment and exclusivity (Stanley, et. al., 2010). It is possible for individuals with insecure attachment styles to have stable marriages. However, those marriages are based more on insecurity than satisfaction (Davila & Bradbury, 2001). These studies, particularly those that focus on the role of commitment and marriage, support the findings from this study as the vast majority of participants from phase I were married, and all the participants from phase II were married.

In an effort to understand the role of commitment in marital relationships in which individuals display insecure attachment, Tran and Simpson (2009) studied the emotional and behavioral actions of married partners to threatening interpersonal situations. They found that higher levels of partners' commitment were associated with



more constructive responses by anxiously attached participants indicating that commitment and attachment styles interact in marital behavior (Stanley, et. al., 2010; Tran & Simpson, 2009). It can be inferred that those couples in phase II, particularly when the RP participants gave descriptions of sacrifice for the benefit of their spouses, indicate a stronger level of commitment, and thus a more secure romantic relationship. Examples of sacrifice given by RP participants in phase II included the loss of opportunities to socialize, the isolation from socializing with others outside policing, the inability to make concrete plans involving the TO and having to take on the particularly gendered roles of primary care giver and social planner. Similarities in experiences of isolation between RP participants in phase II and spouses of military members were drawn from previous literature (Joesph, 2014; Runge, Waller, MacKenzie & McGuire, 2014; Clever & Segal, 2013; Verdeli et. al., 2012) and were discussed in the previous chapter. Spouses of military service members reported similar feelings of isolation, feelings of lack of control over their lives, loneliness, concerns over their spouses' safety, stress from unpredictability in their spouses' schedules, stress from challenges to traditional gender roles when spouses must balance employment with childcare and household responsibilities, stress from assuming primary responsibility over childcare when the husband is absent, and efforts to seek social support from other military wives. The behavior and examples of sacrifice and commitment given by RP participants during phase II, particularly the isolation that occurs within their romantic relationship, is also seen in the previous literature focusing on military families.

## **Isolation and Attachment**

While the participants' discussions of isolation during phase II do not necessarily represent new findings in the literature, they do represent a unique look at the inner workings of the tactical police subculture which has not been previously studied. Three specific types of isolation were found during phase II and arranged as the subthemes: (1) isolation from socializing outside police circles, (2) romantic partner feels isolated, and (3) tactical officer feels isolated from department. The first subtheme was discussed by TO and RP participants alike. This process of social isolation is common within policing and is often fostered by both the police subculture and the dangerous working environment within policing. The additional dangers and pressures that tactical policing brings to officers have not been widely researched. However, research findings suggest that isolation, particularly social isolation, is an occupational phenomenon clearly identified within the sociology of occupations by Rudi Volti (2011). The departure from "normal" working hours (i.e., shift work) within policing also leads to social isolation for police officers. Volti (2011) indicates that this leaves other police officers as the primary source of social interaction. Furthermore, irregular work hours add to officer stress and limit the available time to spend with a spouse (Borum & Philpot, 1993).

Previous research findings also suggest that the consequences of unique stressors experienced by police lead to cynicism, suspicion and emotional detachment (i.e., isolation) from everyday life (Finn, 2000). Dunham and Alpert (1997) argued that police unity strengthens officer self-esteem and confidence which in turn allows the police to tolerate the isolation from society in addition to the hostility and public disapproval they receive. Elements of Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical symbolic interactionism can also

be considered when examining police stressors as they relate to isolation. For example, tactical/police work constitutes the front stage where officers must utilize acceptable symbols of interaction with the public, and the backstage is where officers can let their guard down and interact with one another based upon their true selves. The backstage provides the necessary support for officers to tolerate and/or accept the social isolation necessary to continue the front stage work within policing. Dramaturgical “loyalty,” “discipline,” and “circumspection” are all fostered within the backstage of policing and serve to both protect and isolate the officers from the public they serve (Goffman, 1959).

Isolation as it relates to attachment indicates that the behavioral and categorical traits necessary for police work, such as control, authority and lack of emotions, are the very same traits that conflict with those typically seen as beneficial to marriage and family life, such as cooperation, expressive emotions and relationship-oriented attitudes (Miller, 2007). Isolation is in contrast to the concept that increased amounts of marital interaction are essential to ensuring healthy marriages and protecting against divorce (Terling-Watt, 2001), and when romantic partners have secure attachment styles, successful relationships can ensue (Clinton & Sibcy, 2006).

It is logical then that those police families that seek stability and predictability suffer due to the hectic, and sometimes unpredictable, lifestyle of police officers (Miller, 2007). The bonds of unity formed in the police subculture can ostracize officers’ spouses (Miller, 2007). Intimacy between couples may begin to suffer as the officers’ departments become another member of the relationship (Borum & Philpot, 1993; Miller, 2007). Officers learn to depend on each other, particularly during stressful situations, and thus it can be tempting for the officer to want to spend more time with them outside of

work as well. Feelings of jealousy and resentment can form for the spouses and lead to a destructive cycle. Because the spouses become resentful, they may respond by alienating their officer spouses. This reaction doesn't encourage the officers to spend additional time at home with their spouses but rather spend more and more time with work friends (Miller, 2007). In an effort to provide guidance on how other police couples can address these issues, participants were asked at the end of phase II if they had any recommendations to give to other couples that would help with the issues they raised regarding isolation, communication, and ensuring successful romantic relationships.

### **Participant-Based Recommendations**

This study, phase II in particular, also examined if tactical officers and their romantic partners defined their relationships as successful and what factors contributed to that success. An additional goal of this study was to provide more guidance on offering tailored support services to these officers and their romantic partners in the future. Specifically, both TO and RP participants were asked if they felt their own relationship was successful, what advice they had for other couples (i.e., tactical officers and romantic partners), and any recommendations they had for future support services geared towards tactical officers and romantic partners. Previous studies have indicated that the most effective measures for stress management within policing included departmental policies addressing stress management and job satisfaction, seeking social support from others outside law enforcement, and departmental training on identifying and addressing stress (Anshel, 2000; Beehr et al., 1995; Patterson, 2003; Violanti & Aron, 1993). Future support services tailored towards tactical officers and their families could address these same issues while taking into consideration the unique stressors found within tactical

policing. This section will discuss, using the participants' own advice, recommendations for more tailored support services for other tactical officers and their romantic partners.

Upon reviewing and categorizing the responses from participants in phase II, this study recommends the following four suggestions for more tailored support services in the future. Firstly, tactical teams should have a policy in place for the notification of a TO's romantic partner pertaining call-outs. RP participants from phase II indicated stressors relating to several aspects of tactical call-outs, including not knowing when they were occurring, not knowing if their partners were safe and not knowing when their partners would return. The implementation of a notification policy would alleviate most, if not all, of the stressors indicated by the RP participants. Some departments will cite officer safety as a reason they will not notify individuals not directly involved in a call-out. Other departments may argue that they do not want to over step their bounds by implementing a policy that officers may not like (i.e., TO does not want RP notified of call-outs). Regardless of an individual tactical team's preference to formally notify, or not notify, romantic partners of call-outs, or an individual TO's preference to have an RP notified, a policy needs to be in place so that tactical officers will understand where the burden falls to keep their romantic partners involved in the notification of call-outs. This policy could have stipulations that a TO or RP who wishes to remain uninvolved may opt out of having his/her RP included in the notification system. If a tactical team chooses not to adopt a formal notification system for RP's, then RP's should consider an informal notification system among themselves. This type of system could include the use of a phone chain, text chain or private message group on a social network site to keep other RP's informed of information regarding call-outs.

Secondly, tactical teams should consider implementing a planned training schedule for TO's if this has not already been implemented. Based on the interview data, trainings for TO's usually occur on a semi-regular basis (i.e., weekly, bi-weekly), but the time of day and/or location for these trainings are often decided last minute. RP's and a few TO's have cited that while they understand the unpredictable nature of call-outs, the unpredictable training schedules that some tactical teams employ for TO's add to the stress of time management, particularly when children are present in the home. Of course, the burden then falls to individual TO's to keep their RP's updated on advanced scheduled trainings when they are assigned.

Thirdly, tactical teams should consider developing or incorporating regular family-oriented social gatherings, particularly for new members. During phase II, RP participants indicated events, particularly those that involved other RP's of tactical officers, such as small dinners with some members of the team or holiday parties with the entire team, were positive and rewarding experiences in getting to know other RP's and removing some of the feelings of isolation. Several RP's cited during their interviews that they didn't know other TO members of the team or other RP's of team members. These participants went on to say that they felt they would benefit from knowing other RPs so that they could possibly turn to them for advice on managing their romantic relationships with their own TO's and being able to put a face with a name when their romantic partner discusses fellow teammates. This was particularly true for new team members or new RP's to tactical officers who were unfamiliar with the demands of tactical life. A few RP's cited this very suggestion during the interviews by specifically saying how they have been comforted by and/or been able to turn to other RP's for

support and/or advice and have appreciated getting to know other TO team members. It seemed apparent during the interviews that some RP's were more outgoing and didn't mind seeking out other RP's on their own. However, many of the RP's discussed the desire for someone else, another RP or the tactical team, to facilitate the meeting of other RP's and/or the entire tactical team (e.g., a holiday party hosted by leaders of the tactical team for all members). As mentioned before, the burden then falls on the TO's to keep their RP's updated on any social events that are facilitated by the tactical team.

Finally, tactical teams should consider developing or incorporating family-oriented trainings for TO's and their RP's. Almost half of the participants discussed their desire to see their tactical team and/or department offer opportunities for family-oriented trainings. These types of trainings could range from formal to informal and could incorporate TO and RP together or separately. The participants in this study cited their desires to feel like they weren't alone in the struggles they face by being a TO or an RP in a romantic relationship. These trainings should incorporate strategies for managing the unique stressors of tactical life including, but not limited to, the following: being on call around-the-clock, the unpredictable nature of call-outs, balancing regular police duties and TO duties, the inherent danger in tactical work and time management in both professional and personal lives. Trainings could be interactive and provoke open discussions about personal experiences and recommendations for improvement or implementation in future support services. Or, these trainings could simply be informational, allowing individuals to come, listen, and gather information to take home and discuss or ponder. A combination of these types of trainings, offered at differing times to accommodate the shift schedules of TO's, could encourage individuals with different personalities to

participate at a level they find comfortable. A one-type-fits-all training is not encouraged, but rather the incorporation of varied trainings is vital in successfully reaching TO's and RP's with differing learning styles, comfort levels and stages of relationships (i.e., newly married, new TO, veteran TO, etc.). Finally, these trainings should be proactive, rather than reactive, to help TO's and RP's address the unique stressors of tactical policing before they negatively affect their romantic relationships. These trainings could also be incorporated within the social events discussed in the fourth suggestion to further aid in making the best use of the time and opportunities already being provided.

This section has discussed recommendations for support services geared towards tactical officers and romantic partners. By using the participants' own suggestions, additional recommendations for support services for tactical officers and their romantic partners were made. The final sections will cover the limitations of this study and recommendations for future studies.

### **Study Limitations**

Limitations for both phases of this study included limits from the IRB, the limited number of participants, the use of self-report measures in phase I, the choice of attachment measures, restricted geographic area, narrow gender and race representation, distinction between roles among tactical officers, and researcher bias (e.g., the exclusion of inter-rater reliability and member-checking during phase II). The protocol approved by the Institutional Review Board strictly prohibited the researcher from collecting data pertaining to education level and race as they felt it would make it too easy to identify participants based on these demographics alone given that the field of law enforcement is



primarily white males with at least a high school education. Had these particular demographics been included, they could have added an extra dimension to the analysis of this study. The limited number of participants in both phases limits the generalizability of this study. Extrapolating the research findings to all tactical police officers and their romantic partners is not recommended despite the support from pre-existing studies that support the findings in this study. The results from phase II are useful in exploring the experiences of tactical officers and romantic partners in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, but it is difficult to say the entire population shares the same experiences and opinions. In this study, tactical officers and their romantic partners were interviewed in order to explore their experiences and to gain a better understanding of tactical police officers, romantic attachment, and job-related stress. This study is still beneficial even without the application of the study to the entire population because it gives us a glimpse of these individuals and their experiences in an area where there has been a lack of empirical research conducted.

The use of self-report measures is a potential limitation of phase I. Although each of the measures used during phase I had proven reliability, the fact that all of the measures were in the self-report format may be a confounding factor. The fourth limitation entails the choice of attachment measures used during phase I, particularly the use of the ECR-S as the measurement of attachment in phase I. This instrument did not include measurements of secure attachment and only included the two dimensions of insecure attachment: anxiety and avoidance. Additionally, measures of relationship quality or satisfaction were not used during phase I. The use of additional measures during phase I would have lengthened the instrument significantly and may have deterred

subjects from participating fully, or at all, in phase I of the study. The next limitation involves the geographical makeup of the location of the participants. During phase I, only agencies that were able and/or willing to send tactical officers to the annual KTOA conference were included in the population of participants. In phase II, representation of the eastern half of Kentucky was poor and was represented by only one tactical officer who works for an agency which serves the entire state, which would limit applicability and generalizability to other tactical teams, including the few in the rural areas of eastern Kentucky. Tactical officers in rural areas may face different or additional issues within their romantic relationships not found in this study. The sixth limitation is related to the difficulty of recruiting female tactical officers due to the gendered nature of tactical teams. The next limitation related to the blurring of lines between normal police duties and tactical police duties for tactical officer participants. All law enforcement agencies in Kentucky, except a state agency which operates a full-time tactical team, operate tactical teams that utilize police officers on a part-time basis. This means that almost all the participants in this study function as police officers full-time and serve as tactical police officers part-time, thus blending the duties and responsibilities these officers take on in both roles.

The final limitation is researcher bias and was present in both data collection and data analysis. Creswell (2013) reminds us that the qualitative researcher must systematically reflect on and be sensitive to personal biography and how it may shape the study. Reflexivity, as defined by Creswell (2013) entails personal introspections and acknowledgement of biases, values, and interests as vital for a qualitative researcher. The background knowledge of the researcher and her relationship with a tactical officer being

known by the participants was a limitation because it may have influenced the willingness of individuals to participate in the study and the amount and detail of information the participants shared with the researcher. Researcher knowledge of policing, tactical policing, being a romantic partner to a tactical police officer and her bias about those areas may have guided the interpretation of the participant's responses in a manner that influenced the coding and analysis of the data. Creswell (2013) reminds us that because researchers must filter their data through their own personal lens, they cannot separate themselves from the personal interpretation brought to qualitative data analysis.

The researcher was conscious of her bias during the process, including the absence of inter-rater reliability (IRR) for the qualitative portion of the study. IRR is not always necessary in qualitative studies as researchers themselves bring the varied, yet valid, perspectives to identify the unique themes within their data. The researcher took a qualitative methods course and was trained in data coding and analysis. In addition, multiple iterations of coding of the qualitative data in this study were conducted to address the absence of outside IRR and to encourage thoroughness of data interrogation. Additionally, the absence of member-checking was present during phase II of this study and can be seen as a limitation. While member-checking can be perceived as a procedure to enhance participant involvement and study credibility, it is vaguely described in methodological textbooks and does not discuss how member-checking can impact participants (Hallett, 2012). Ethical problems and methodological usefulness of member-checks have been questioned, including the argument that member-checks provide another form of data that value the participants' perspectives over the researcher's.

Additionally, member-checking has the potential to create conflict between the researcher and the participant when disagreements arise over interpretation and can prioritize methodological concerns over the researcher-participant relationship. Validity during this study was ensured through other methods including reflexivity, thick and rich descriptions, the use of mixed-methods and receiving feedback on the qualitative instrument from a tactical officer (i.e., the researcher's husband). Even with these limitations relating to researcher bias, the bias of the researcher also helped to guide this study and facilitated the depth and richness of the data collected. All of these limitations should be considered and/or addressed in future related studies. Further discussion of recommendations for future investigation will be discussed in the following section.

### **Recommendations for Future Study**

Future studies should attempt to expand on our understanding of tactical police officers, romantic attachment, and job-related stress. Previous literature has not examined romantic relationships of officers serving in tactical units. The results of this study, particularly from phase I, that discussed the importance of rank in relation to work-related stress, the differences in how tactical officers rank operational stressors, and the discovery of stressors unique to tactical policing, all indicate that further research on these stressors and how they affect romantic attachment appears to be warranted. The findings from phase I indicated that rank matters for tactical officers in relation to work-related stressors and was expanded upon during phase II by the few participants holding a rank above an officer. This finding was significant and should be examined further in future studies.

Due to practical considerations and available materials, phase I was only able to include certain measurements. For example, phase I only included the TOs' perceptions of attachment styles. Future studies should include RP's. Also, due to practical considerations, assessment of past attachment behaviors in participants was not conducted. Future studies should attempt to better understand past patterns of attachment in participants in order to draw more conclusions about current attachment styles. The use of attachment measures that focus on the full dimension of attachment, including secure attachment, would be beneficial in yielding results that could be compared and contrasted along the full spectrum of attachment. Additional scales in future studies could also include the creation of measurements specific to tactical officers. This study discovered that tactical officers differ in how they rank operational stressors, and rather than using pre-designed scales made for patrol officers (i.e., PSQ-Org & PSQ-Op), future studies could incorporate scales that measure specific tactical officer stressors discussed by participants in this study. In addition, the use of scales that measure external and personal stressors, in addition to organizational and operational stressor scales, would help to further address the full realm of police stress for tactical officers.

Future studies should also attempt to determine what additional factors may influence the romantic attachment between tactical police officers and their romantic partners including but not limited to the following: further exploration of the isolation and/or the feelings of being ostracized tactical officers described coming from officers outside the tactical team and/or the department and the possible effect of the romantic partners' occupational stress on the romantic relationships. In addition, data from this study could be examined through the lens of the couples and their personal relationship

disconnections rather than examined at group levels (i.e., TO vs. RP). Examining the data through the sociology of emotions, emotional labor by the romantic partners, and the gendered nature of the romantic partners' work could also provide interesting findings for future research.

Furthermore, the results of this study indicated that both tactical officers and romantic partners were eager and willing to use support services tailored to their needs. If these types of services are implemented and deemed effective through evaluation or longitudinal studies that measure possible increases in job satisfaction and romantic attachment, future studies should be able to find additional factors that influence the romantic attachment between tactical police officers and their romantic partners. Finally, future studies could address many of the issues discussed here through the use of longitudinal studies. Longitudinal studies could trace the lives of tactical officers and their families over time to see what impact tactical policing has at interval times in their lives and identify key "turning points." Further exploration of important findings such as the relationship between rank and work-related stress could also be examined over the career course of tactical officers.

As a final thought regarding this study and its relation to future studies, we must consider the current environment of policing in our country today. Since the completion of the data collection for this study, several significant events have affected the world of law enforcement and our country. On July 17, 2014 a black man, Eric Garner, was arrested for allegedly selling loose cigarettes in Staten Island, NY. During the arrest, an unarmed Eric Garner began resisting and was subsequently put in a chokehold by a white NYPD officer, Daniel Pantaleo. During his arrest, Eric Garner cited difficulty breathing

and an ambulance was called. He was pronounced dead upon arriving at the hospital. It was determined by the New York City medical examiner's office that Eric Garner died partly as a result of the chokehold. Eric Garner's death and the subsequent decision by a grand jury on December 3, 2014, not to indict the officer involved in the case led to protests of police brutality, riots, and violence across the nation (Goodman & Baker, 2014).

Not long after the death of Eric Garner, on August 9, 2014, an unarmed black teenager Michael Brown was shot and killed by a white police officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, MO, a suburb of St. Louis. This event also led to protests of police brutality, racial discrimination claims, violence, and looting in Ferguson and across our nation. The violence occurring in the streets of Ferguson, MO brought about the use of tactical police officers and equipment to control the chaos that had erupted (Buchanan et al., 2014). The decisions and actions taken by the Ferguson police department to use tactical policing protocols and equipment (i.e., riot gear, armored vehicles, rifles, Acoustic Riot Control Devices or LRAD) brought a great deal of scrutiny to tactical policing in both Missouri and our nation. During the following months, the decision by the grand jury not to indict Darren Wilson set off another round of protests, violence, and looting which prompted further police action and the deployment of the Missouri National Guard. In early October of 2014, the Ferguson police department, unable to handle the enormity of the situation with either equipment or man power, turned over responsibility of policing the protests to the much larger county police department (Buchanan et al., 2014). Since the events of Ferguson, policing, particularly tactical policing, has become a political battleground both locally and nationally.

Even more recently, the April 12, 2015, arrest, in-custody injury, and later death of Freddie Gray in Baltimore, MA, prompted further protests, riots, and looting related to both the circumstances of the death of Freddie Gray and the use of general police tactics and tactical policing for crowd control (Fernandez, 2015; Almkhatar, Buchanan, Lai, Wallace & Yourish, 2015). Following these incidents, on May 18, 2015, President Obama announced a series of steps that would begin to address the use of tactical police and the "militarization" of our nation's law enforcement. These steps were designed to both create oversight and regulate the Department of Defense's 1033 program which gives police departments military grade equipment often used for tactical policing for which the Pentagon no longer has use (Peralta & Eads, 2015). While the vast majority of military equipment from the Pentagon would still be available to police agencies, the ban on certain types of equipment demonstrates an effort to repair the conflict between citizens and policing agencies while also curtailing the growing militarization of the police. Mandated training, documentation of the use of the equipment, and input from communities about the equipment are other requirements that police agencies must now meet to obtain military-style equipment through the 1033 program.

In addition, President Obama has suggested that law enforcement move towards a "softer" uniform in an effort to make citizens feel more "comfortable" with law enforcement presence. This is a hotly debated topic in the world of law enforcement, particularly tactical policing, as more "traditional" uniforms are not functional for tactical duty (i.e., tactical uniforms allow for the weight of equipment to be distributed across the body on vests rather than only on the waist/gun belt; tactical pants provide additional pockets for storing essential equipment such as med kits). These more formal types of



uniforms, with wool pants that can be tailored to create creases and "dress" like shoes that can be worn for a more "polished" look, are not the types of clothing that are practical for the physical demands of patrol officers and certainly not tactical officers (Yates, 2015).

Had the data collection for this study, particularly the interviews, been conducted after the events surrounding Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, and Obama's recent plans to regulate the equipment and uniforms of law enforcement, the results may have been vastly different. These events set off a serious debate about the applicability and use of tactical policing within American policing today. Sadly, the ambush killing of two NYPD officers in Brooklyn, NY, on December 20, 2014, by a man traveling from Baltimore who had made statements on social media vowing to kill police officers due to anger over both the Garner and Brown cases, only served to further fuel both fear and hypervigilance by police officers across this country (Mueller & Baker, 2014). These events exaggerate both the operational and organizational stressors already discussed by participants during phase II, particularly those stressors relating to hypervigilance, negative comments from the public, inconsistent leadership styles (e.g., changes in the DOD 1033 program will change how departments dictate the use of tactical teams based on available equipment) and general bureaucratic red tape. The fear and hypervigilance from these events can also be felt by those in relationships with police officers. Increased hypervigilance leads to increased isolation, an important finding particularly for RP participants during phase II. Increased limits in socialization opportunities for both TO's and their families may occur as the divide between "us and them" grows with society as well as the divide between subcultures of tactical police officers and non-tactical police

officers grow. Finally, events surrounding the killings of police officers will only serve to heighten and exaggerate the fears discussed by RP participants during phase II.

This mixed methods study aimed to obtain a better understanding of tactical officers within the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the factors involved in maintaining long-term relationships between those tactical police officers and their romantic partners. A voice was given to a group of individuals, both tactical officers and their romantic partners, which had not been previously done. It is the hope of this researcher that through the discovery of and focus on key aspects of tactical policing about which little was known, a door was opened to understanding more about the individuals who serve as tactical officers, the families of those tactical officers, and the subculture of tactical policing as a whole.

## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: Informed Consent for Tactical Police Officer Questionnaire**

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

#### **Tactical Police Officers, Romantic Attachment and Job-Related Stress:**

#### **A Mixed-Methods Study**

#### **WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?**

You are being invited to take part in this research study about tactical police officers. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are currently a tactical police officer in Kentucky. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about 125 people to do so.

#### **WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?**

The people in charge of this project are Natalie Fagan, PhD student in the department of Sociology at the University of Kentucky. She is being guided in this research by her faculty advisor, Dr. Carrie Oser in the department of Sociology at the University of Kentucky. There may be other people on the research team assisting at different times during the study, including the members of Ms. Fagan's doctoral committee.

#### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?**

By doing this study, we hope to learn more about the factors, including operational stress, organizational stress and attachment, that influence the relationships between tactical officers and their romantic partners. Survey data will be collected to better understand basic demographics, attachment levels and job-related stressors in tactical police officers serving in Kentucky.

#### **ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

You should not participate in this study if you are not a tactical police officer in Kentucky.

## **WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?**

You are being asked to participate in an anonymous survey available to tactical police officers in Kentucky. The study will take place at the 2011 Kentucky Tactical Officers Association (KTOA) conference held August 7-10, 2011 in Lexington, Kentucky at the Clarion Hotel on Newton Pike. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

## **WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?**

You will be asked to participate in an anonymous survey that will ask basic demographic questions including age, number of years as a tactical officer, rank in police department, military service, marital status, relationship status and number of children. In addition, you will be asked questions about levels of romantic attachment and questions about job-related stressors. Finally, you will have the opportunity, which is completely voluntary, to detach the final sheet of the survey where you can leave your contact information and your romantic partner's contact information for use in a future study. This contact information can be placed in an envelope marked "Contact Information for Future Study." Your completed survey can be placed in an envelope marked "Surveys."

## **WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?**

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life. However, thinking about your present romantic relationship along with past and present job-related stressors may make you feel uncomfortable. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You can stop answering questions or quit at any time. If some questions do upset you, we can tell you about some people who may be able to help you with these feelings including [www.allaboutcounseling.com](http://www.allaboutcounseling.com). This website serves as a source of information and discussion on issues such as careers, education, physical or emotional health and marriage and relationships. Contact information for counseling and treatment professionals in your area can also be obtained from this website.

## **WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

There is no guarantee that you will get any benefit from taking part in this study. Your willingness to take part, however, may, in the future, lead to more tailored support services for tactical officers and their families. In addition, this study will provide a greater general understanding of tactical officers in Kentucky and will allow for more in-depth research to be designed in the future.

**DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?**

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

**IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?**

If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

**WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?**

There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

**WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

You will not receive any rewards for taking part in this study.

**WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?**

This study is anonymous. That means that no one, not even members of the research team, will know that the information you give came from you. If you choose to leave your and/or your romantic partner's contact information for use in a future study, that information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us your and/or your romantic partner's contact information. For example, names will be kept separate from the rest of the study information, and these two things will be stored in different places under lock and key. When we write about the study, your and/or your romantic partner's name and contact information will not be included.

**CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?**

If you decide to take part in the survey, you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide not to take part in this survey.

**WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?**

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Natalie Fagan at 859-333-2013 or her faculty advisor, Dr. Carrie Oser at 859-257-6890. If you have any questions about your rights as volunteer in this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at 859-257-9428 or toll-free at 1-866-400-9428. We will give you a signed copy of this consent form to take with you.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of person taking part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person obtaining informed consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix B: Tactical Police Officer Questionnaire

### Tactical Police Officers, Romantic Attachment and Job-Related Stress Questionnaire

#### Demographic Information

Please answer the following questions by checking the appropriate box or filling in the blanks.

1. Age:  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How many years have you served as a tactical officer?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your current rank?
  - Officer
  - Detective
  - Sergeant
  - Lieutenant or above
4. Did/do you serve in the military?
  - Yes
  - No
5. What is your marital status?
  - Never Married
  - Married
  - Divorced/Separated
  - Widowed
6. What is the total # of times you have been married?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. How many years have you been in your current romantic relationship?  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Do you have children?

- Yes, how many: \_\_\_\_\_
- No

9. Are you currently in a monogamous romantic relationship?

- Yes
- No (if no, please skip the next section of questions titled "Experiences in Close Relationship Scale-Short Form ECR-S" and continue with the questions under "Organizational Police Stressors" and "Operational Police Stressors")



**Experiences in Close Relationship Scale-Short Form (ECR-S)**

The following statements concern how you generally feel in your relationship with your romantic partner. I am interested in how you feel in your current romantic relationship. After each item, please circle how much you agree or disagree with it using a 7-point scale (see below) that ranges from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree":

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

- 1. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 2. I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 3. I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 4. I find that my partner doesn't want to get as close as I would like 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 5. I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 6. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 7. I try to avoid getting too close to my partner 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 8. I do not often worry about being abandoned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 9. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 10. I get frustrated if my partner is not available when I need them 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 11. I am nervous when my partner gets too close to me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 12. I worry that my partner won't care about me as much as I care about them 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire**

Below is a list of items that describe different aspects of being a police officer. After each item, please circle how much stress it has caused you over the past 6 months, using a 7-point scale (see below) that ranges from "No Stress At All" to "A Lot of Stress":

No Stress At All			Moderate Stress			A Lot of Stress
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- 1. Dealing with co-workers 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 2. The feeling that different rules apply to different people (e.g., favoritism) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 3. Feeling like you always have to prove yourself to the organization 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 4. Excessive administrative duties 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 5. Constant changes in policy/legislation 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 6. Staff shortages 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 7. Bureaucratic red tape 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 8. Too much computer work 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 9. Lack of training on new equipment 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 10. Perceived pressure to volunteer free time 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 11. Dealing with supervisors 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 12. Inconsistent leadership style 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 13. Lack of resources 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 14. Unequal sharing of work responsibilities 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

No Stress At All			Moderate Stress			A Lot of Stress
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

15. If you are sick or injured your co-workers seem to look down on you 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
16. Leaders over-emphasize the negatives (e.g., supervisor evaluations, public complaints) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
17. Internal investigations 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18. Dealing with the court system 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
19. The need to be accountable for doing your job 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
20. Inadequate equipment 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**Operational Police Stress Questionnaire**

Below is a list of items that describe different aspects of being a police officer. After each item, please circle how much stress it has caused you over the past 6 months, using a 7-point scale (see below) that ranges from "No Stress At All" to "A Lot of Stress":

No Stress At All			Moderate Stress			A Lot of Stress
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- 1. Shift Work 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 2. Working alone at night 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 3. Over-time demands 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 4. Risk of being injured on the job 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 5. Work related activities on days off (e.g., court, community events) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 6. Traumatic events (e.g., MVA, domestics, death, injury) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 7. Managing your social life outside work 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 8. Not enough time available to spend with friends and family 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 9. Paperwork 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 10. Eating healthy at work 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 11. Finding time to stay in good physical condition 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 12. Fatigue (e.g., shift work, over-time) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 13. Occupation-related health issues (e.g., back pain) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 14. Lack of understanding from family and friends about your work 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 15. Making friends outside the job 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

No Stress At All			Moderate Stress			A Lot of Stress
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

16. Upholding a "higher image" in public 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
17. Negative comments from the public 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18. Limitations to your social life (e.g., who your friends are,  
where you socialize) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
19. Feeling like you are always on the job 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
20. Friends/family feel the effects of the stigma associated with  
your job 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**Contact Information for Future Study**

1. Are you interested in participating in an interview concerning your thoughts on tactical policing and romantic relationships?
  - Yes, please fill out your information below, detach this sheet from the survey, and return to the envelope marked "Contact Information for Future Study"
  - No

Please list your contact information below:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the best day and time to contact you? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the name of your Department/Unit?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Would your romantic partner be interested in participating in an interview concerning their thoughts on tactical policing and romantic relationships?
  - Yes, please fill out the information below
  - No

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the best day and time to contact your romantic partner? \_\_\_\_\_

**\*If you have filled out this form with you and/or your romantic partner's contact information, please detach this sheet and place it in the envelope marked "Contact Information for Future Study"\***

Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer for Survey



Are you a  
tactical police  
officer in KY?

IF SO ..... YOU ARE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN A SURVEY ABOUT TACTICAL POLICING. THIS RESEARCH PROJECT IS CONDUCTED BY NATALIE FAGAN, PHD STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY.

IF INTERESTED, PLEASE SEE NATALIE IN THE VENDOR AREA NEXT TO REGISTRATION.



**An Equal Opportunity Employer**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT NATALIE FAGAN ABOUT THE PROJECT: 859-333-2013**

**Appendix D: Script for Announcement of Research at Opening Ceremony of 2011  
KTOA Conference**

Thank you, Captain Richardson and members of the KTOA for allowing me to be present at this year's conference.

My name is Natalie Fagan and I am a PhD student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Kentucky. I am currently conducting a research study for my dissertation on tactical police officers. If you are a tactical officer in the state of Kentucky, I am asking for volunteers to complete a 10 minute anonymous survey on tactical policing. If you are interested in participating, I will have a booth set up with surveys in the vendor's area near registration. I will be here each day of the conference. Again, my name is Natalie Fagan. Please feel free to find me if you have any questions. Thank you.



## Appendix E: Interview Questions for Phase II

### *Tactical Officer (TO) Interview:*

Confidential Participant #: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex of TO: (Male/Female)

1. What is your current rank in your department?
2. Please tell me a little about how you became involved in tactical policing.
3. Do officers serving on tactical teams support each other?
  - a. Yes:
    - i. How?
    - ii. Can you give me some specific examples?
  - b. No:
    - i. Why do you think that is?
4. Can you give me any specific examples of officers serving on tactical teams not supporting each other? Are there any differences in the stressors of serving on a tactical team vs. working on patrol?
  - a. Yes:
    - i. Can you give me some examples of those differences?
  - b. No:
    - i. Then what are the greatest similarities between the two?
5. Where are the greatest sources of stress in your life coming from?
  - a. Don't have any stress:
    - i. How have you managed to avoid stress in your life?
6. Have you learned to cope with the stressful parts of your life?
  - a. Yes:
    - i. In what way(s)?
    - ii. Can you give me specific examples?
  - b. No:
    - i. Why do you think that is?
7. Do you use these same methods when dealing with the stressors of serving on a tactical team?
  - a. No:
    - i. Do you have other methods you use when dealing with the stressors of serving on a tactical team?
    - ii. What are they?
8. Please tell me a little about how you met your current romantic partner.
9. Are you able to turn to your romantic partner for support in times of stress?
  - a. Yes:
    - i. How?

- ii. Can you give me some specific examples?
  - b. No:
    - i. Why are you not able to turn to your romantic partner for support in times of stress?
    - ii. Are you able to turn to others for support and who are they?
- 10. What, if any, subjects from work or life are you are not able to discuss with your romantic partner?
  - a. Why are you not able to discuss this subject(s) with your romantic partner?
  - b. Does this limitation on subjects you can discuss with your romantic partner affect your relationship?
  - c. None:
    - i. How does this freedom of discussion affect your relationship?
- 11. Are there other people in your life that you can talk to about these subjects?
  - a. Yes:
    - i. Who are these people in your life?
    - ii. How often are you able to share with them these subjects?
  - b. No:
    - i. Do you prefer not to talk to others about subjects from work and/or life?
- 12. Do you think that your work as a tactical police officer has affected your relationship with your romantic partner in any way?
  - a. Yes:
    - i. In what ways?
    - ii. Can you give me some specific examples?
  - b. No:
    - i. Do you and your romantic partner ever have arguments related to your work?
    - ii. Can you give me some specific examples?
- 13. Is your department supportive of relationships between officers serving on a tactical team and their romantic partners?
  - a. Yes:
    - i. Can you give me specific examples of how they are supportive?
  - b. No:
    - i. How has your department not been supportive of these relationships?
    - ii. Can you give me specific examples?
- 14. If you have children, do you incorporate them in dealing with the stressors of home and life?
  - a. Yes:

- i. In what ways?
      - ii. Can you give me some specific examples?
    - b. No, they do not incorporate children:
      - i. Can you share with me why you chose not to incorporate your children in dealing with the stressors of home and life?
15. Do you think tactical police work has affected your relationship with your children?
- a. Yes:
    - i. In what ways?
    - ii. Can you give me some specific examples?
  - b. No:
    - i. Why do you think that is?
    - ii. Can you give me specific examples of how you have kept your work as a tactical police officer from affecting your relationship with your children?
16. Do you think your role as tactical police officer causes your children to worry about you more? Is there someone who does the majority of household jobs in your relationship and what are those "jobs"?
- a. Yes or No:
  - b. Is this a helpful arrangement for you and/or your family and in what ways?
17. Has work (yours or your romantic partner's) affected your social life, either personally or as a couple?
- a. Yes:
    - i. Can you give me specific examples?
  - b. No:
    - i. Why do you think that is?
    - ii. Can you give me specific examples of how you or your romantic partner have kept work from affecting your social life?
18. Do you feel that your romantic partner should be included in your work life in any way (e.g., involvement in Critical Incident Debriefings after a major incident, firearms training, ride alongs)?
- a. Yes:
    - i. Could you give me some specific examples of how your romantic partner could be included in your work life?
    - ii. Do you think this inclusion of your romantic partner in your work life would affect your relationship in any way?
      - 1. Could you give me specific examples?
  - b. No:

- i. Could you share with me why your romantic partner should not be included in your work life?
  - ii. Do you think this exclusion of your romantic partner in your work life would affect your relationship in any way?
    - 1. Could you give me specific examples?
- 19. How would you define a successful romantic relationship?
  - a. Based on your definition, would you consider your current romantic relationship as successful?
    - i. Why or why not?
- 20. Do you have any advice you would give to other couples in your situation?

*Romantic Partner (RP) Interview*

Confidential Participant #: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex of RP: (Male/Female)

1. Please tell me a little about what you do.
2. Where are the greatest sources of stress in your life coming from?
  - a. Don't have any stress:
    - i. How have you managed to avoid stress in your life?
3. Have you learned to cope with the stressful parts of your life?
  - a. Yes:
    - i. Can you give me specific examples of how you have learned to cope?
  - b. No:
    - i. Why do you think that is?
4. Please tell me a little about how you me your current romantic partner.
5. Are you able to turn to your romantic partner for support in times of stress?
  - a. Yes:
    - i. Can you give me some specific examples?
  - b. No:
    - i. Why are you not able to turn to your romantic partner for support in times of stress?
    - ii. Are you able to turn to others for support and who are they?
6. What, if any, subjects from work or life are you not able to discuss with your romantic partner?
  - a. Why are you not able to discuss this subject(s) with your romantic partner?
  - b. Does this limitation on subjects you can discuss with your romantic partner affect your relationship?
  - c. None:
    - i. How does this freedom of discussion affect your relationship?
7. Are there other people in your life that you can talk to about these subjects?
  - a. Yes:
    - i. Who are these people in your life?
    - ii. How often are you able to share with them these subjects?
  - b. No:
    - i. Do you prefer not to talk to others about subjects from work and/or life?
8. Do you think your romantic partner's tactical police work has affected your relationship in any way?

- a. Yes:
    - i. Can you give me some specific examples?
  - b. No:
    - i. Do you and your romantic partner ever have arguments related to his/her work as a tactical officer?
    - ii. Can you give me some specific examples?
9. If you have children, do you incorporate them in dealing with the stressors of home and life?
- a. Yes:
    - i. Can you give me some specific examples?
  - b. No, they do not incorporate children:
    - i. Can you share with me why you chose not to incorporate your children in dealing with the stressors of home and life?
10. Is there someone who does the majority of household jobs in your relationship and what are those "jobs"?
- a. Yes or No:
  - b. Is this a helpful arrangement for you and/or your family and in what ways?
11. Has work (yours or your romantic partner's) affected your social life, either personally or as a couple?
- a. Yes:
    - i. Can you give me specific examples?
  - b. No:
    - i. Why do you think that is?
    - ii. Can you give me specific examples of how you or your romantic partner have kept work from affecting your social life?
12. Is your romantic partner's department supportive of relationships between officers serving on a tactical team and their romantic partners?
- a. Yes:
    - i. Can you give me specific examples of how they are supportive?
  - b. No:
    - i. How has your romantic partner's department not been supportive of these relationships?
    - ii. Can you give me specific examples?
13. Do romantic partners of officers serving on tactical teams support each other?
- a. Yes:
    - i. Can you give me some specific examples of this support?
  - b. No:
    - i. Why do you think that is?

- ii. Can you give me any specific examples of romantic partners to tactical police officers not supporting each other?
- 14. Do you feel that you should be included in your romantic partner work life in any way (e.g., involvement in Critical Incident Debriefings after a major incident, firearms training, ride alongs)?
  - a. Yes:
    - i. Could you give me some specific examples of how you could be included in your romantic partner's work life?
    - ii. Do you think this inclusion in your romantic partner's work would affect your relationship in any way?
      - 1. Could you give me specific examples?
  - b. No:
    - i. Could you share with me why you should not be included in your romantic partner's work life?
    - ii. Do you think this exclusion from your romantic partner's work would affect your relationship in any way?
      - 1. Could you give me specific examples?
- 15. Do you think anything could be done to make your role as romantic partner to a tactical police officer easier (by the department, your partner, society, etc.)?
  - a. Yes:
    - i. Could you give me specific examples of what could be done?
  - b. No:
    - i. Why do you feel nothing could be done to make your role easier?
- 16. How would you define a successful romantic relationship?
  - a. Based on your definition, would you consider your current romantic relationship as successful?
    - i. Why or why not?
- 17. Do you have any advice you would give to other couples in your situation?

## **Appendix F: Phone Script for Recruitment of Participants in Phase II**

Hello, I am Natalie Fagan and I am a graduate student at the University of Kentucky. You may remember talking to me at the 2011 Kentucky Tactical Officers Conference. You or your romantic partner left your contact information after participating in a survey concerning tactical police officers, romantic attachment and job-related stress. I'm calling today to see if you were still interested in participating in a personal interview. Some things have changed and you will have an opportunity to receive an incentive for your participation in this portion of the study. Just to remind you, the purpose of this study is to examine the factors, including operational stress, organizational stress, and attachment, that influence the relationships between tactical officers and their romantic partners. This phase of the study involves answering questions in an interview with myself involving your experiences of being in a romantic relationship, coping with and separating tactical police work from home life, what could be done to assist both tactical officers and romantic partners in balancing their roles and what would be helpful for other couples in a similar relationship to know. All of your answers are kept highly confidential. You will be compensated for your participation in this study in the form of either a \$25 gift card to Amazon.com for romantic partner participants, or a \$25 donation to the Kentucky Law Enforcement Memorial Fund for tactical officer participants. All I need from you today is to complete a 5 minute screener to make sure you qualify for this study. The total time for your participation in the interview should be approximately 1 hour. That is just an overview of the project but I would be happy to explain this in much more detail at your interview. Could I set something up with you now?

Finally, do you know of any other individuals who might be interested in participating in this study? If yes, could you please pass along my contact information to them? Again, my name is Natalie Fagan and I can be reached by phone at (859) 333-2013 or by email at [natalie.fagan@uky.edu](mailto:natalie.fagan@uky.edu).



## Appendix G: Email Script for Recruitment of Participants for Phase II

Hello \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Natalie Fagan and I am a graduate student at the University of Kentucky. You may remember talking to me at the 2011 Kentucky Tactical Officers Conference. You or your romantic partner left your contact information after participating in a survey concerning tactical police officers, romantic attachment and job-related stress. I'm contacting you today to see if you were still interested in participating in a personal interview. Some things have changed and you will have an opportunity to receive an incentive for your participation in this portion of the study. Just to remind you, the purpose of this study is to examine the factors, including operational stress, organizational stress, and attachment, that influence the relationships between tactical officers and their romantic partners. This phase of the study involves answering questions in an interview with myself involving your experiences of being in a romantic relationship, coping with and separating tactical police work from home life, what could be done to assist both tactical officers and romantic partners in balancing their roles and what would be helpful for other couples in a similar relationship to know. All of your answers are kept highly confidential. You will be compensated for your participation in this study in the form of either a \$25 gift card to Amazon.com for romantic partner participants, or a \$25 donation to the Kentucky Law Enforcement Memorial Fund for tactical officer participants. All I need from you today is to complete a 5 minute screener to make sure you qualify for this study. The total time for your participation in the interview should be approximately 1 hour. That is just an overview of the project but I would be happy to explain this in much more detail at your interview. Could I call you to set something up? I can be contacted at this email address ([natalie.fagan@uky.edu](mailto:natalie.fagan@uky.edu)). Finally, do you know of anyone else who might be interested in participating in this study? If you do, could you please pass along my contact information to them? My contact information can be found below.

Sincerely,

Natalie Fagan  
University of Kentucky  
Department of Sociology  
Ph.D. Candidate  
[natalie.fagan@uky.edu](mailto:natalie.fagan@uky.edu)  
859-333-2013

## **Appendix H: 5 Minute Screener for Participation in Phase II**

### **5 Minute Screener for Participation in Phase II for Tactical Officers**

*“What I'd like to do today is to ask you a couple questions to see if you are eligible to be in the study. If you meet the requirements for the study, I formally invite you to be part of the study and we can set up a time to complete an interview. Do you have any questions?”*

If no, proceed to screener.

*“Please answer the following questions with a yes or no.*

- 1. Have you been an active member of a tactical team in the Commonwealth of Kentucky for at least 1 year?*
- 2. Have you been in your current monogamous romantic relationship for at least 1 year?”*

### **5 Minute Screener for Participation in Phase II for Romantic Partners of Tactical Officers**

*“What I'd like to do today is to ask you a couple questions to see if you are eligible to be in the study. If you meet the requirements for the study, I formally invite you to be part of the study and we can set up a time to complete an interview. Do you have any questions?”*

If no, proceed to screener.

*“Please answer the following questions with a yes or no.*

- 1. Are you in a romantic relationship with an active member who has served at least 1 year on a tactical team in the Commonwealth of Kentucky?*
- 2. Have you been in your current monogamous romantic relationship for at least 1 year?”*

## **Appendix I: Informed Consent for In-Depth Interviews**

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

### **Tactical Police Officers, Romantic Attachment and Job-Related Stress:**

#### **A Mixed-Methods Study**

#### **WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?**

You are being invited to take part in this research study about tactical policing, romantic relationships and job-related stress. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are currently a tactical police officer in Kentucky or the romantic partner of a tactical police officer in Kentucky. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about 30 people to do so in Kentucky.

#### **WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?**

The person in charge of this project is Natalie Fagan, PhD student in the department of Sociology at the University of Kentucky. She is being guided in this research by her faculty advisor, Dr. Carrie Oser in the department of Sociology at the University of Kentucky. There may be other people on the research team assisting at different times during the study, including the members of Ms. Fagan's doctoral committee.

#### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?**

By doing this study, we hope to learn more about the factors, including operational stress, organizational stress and attachment, that influence the relationships between tactical officers and their romantic partners. Qualitative interview data will be collected to better understand stress and attachment among tactical police officers and their romantic partners.

**ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

You should not participate in this study if you are not a tactical police officer in Kentucky or are not the romantic partner of a tactical police officer in Kentucky.

**WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?**

You are being asked to participate in a confidential interview at the private location of your choosing. Interviews will last approximately 1- 1 1/2 hours.

**WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?**

You will be asked to participate in a confidential interview to be conducted by Natalie Fagan. You will be asked questions regarding tactical policing, your romantic relationship, stressors present in your life, work, home and romantic relationship as well as questions regarding methods of dealing with stress in your life, work, home and romantic relationship. In addition, you will be asked for permission to audio record the interview to allow for the interview to be transcribed for data analysis purposes. You may choose not to be audio recorded and still participate in this interview.

**WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?**

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life. However, you may find that discussing your present romantic relationship, job-related stress and stress in your relationship to be uncomfortable. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You can stop answering questions or quit at any time. If some questions do upset you, we can tell you about some people who may be able to help you with these feelings including [www.allaboutcounseling.com](http://www.allaboutcounseling.com). This website serves as a source of information and discussion on issues such as careers, education, physical or emotional health and marriage and relationships. Contact information for counseling and treatment professionals in your area can also be obtained from this website.

**WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

There is no guarantee that you will get any benefit from taking part in this study. Your willingness to take part, however, may, in the future, lead to more tailored support services for tactical officers and their families. In addition, this study will provide a greater general understanding of tactical officers in Kentucky and will allow for more in-depth research to be designed in the future.

**DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?**

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

**IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?**

If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

**WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?**

There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

**WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

You will receive compensation in the form of a \$25 gift card to Amazon.com for romantic partner participants, or a \$25 donation made to the Kentucky Law Enforcement Memorial Foundation for each tactical officer participant for taking part in this study. This compensation will be provided regardless of your completion of the study.

**WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?**

This study is confidential. We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us your contact information for participation in the interview process. For example, you will be given a confidential participant number which will be kept separate from your name which will also be kept separate from the rest of the study information. These things will be stored in different places

under lock and key. When we write about the study, your name and contact information will not be included.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. We may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.

### **CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?**

If you decide to take part in the interview, you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide not to take part in this interview.

### **WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?**

There is a possibility that the data collected from you may be shared with other investigators in the future. If that is the case the data will not contain information that can identify you unless you give your consent or the UK Institutional Review Board (IRB) approves the research. The IRB is a committee that reviews ethical issues, according to federal, state and local regulations on research with human subjects, to make sure the study complies with these before approval of a research study is issued.

In addition, the University of Kentucky's Graduate School Dissertation Enhancement Award is providing financial support for this study.

**WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?**

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Natalie Fagan at 859-333-2013 or her faculty advisor, Dr. Carrie Oser at 859-257-6890. If you have any questions about your rights as volunteer in this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at 859-257-9428 or toll-free at 1-866-400-9428. We will give you a signed copy of this consent form to take with you.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of person taking part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person obtaining informed consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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