

Female Officers as Victims of Police-Perpetrated Domestic Violence

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Introduction

Advocates, police, and other professionals can be stymied when working with a victim whose batterer is a police officer. The situation is even more baffling when the victim is also in law enforcement. Such situations require understanding why the standard remedies we rely on may not be useful with this population of victims. The purpose of this article is to increase advocates' knowledge of how the expectations and values of the female officer's profession and workplace culture influence her behavior and decisions regarding her abusive relationship. We will discuss some of the ways the police culture can contribute to the isolation of its female members and condition them to tolerate and even accept men's disrespect, negative attitudes, and potentially, domestic abuse. We will look at some of the ways that the police culture serves to mirror and reinforce the dynamics of the abusive relationship. Though the same can be said of many other male-dominated workplace cultures, what makes victims in the police profession particularly vulnerable is that they must rely on the integrity of their own colleagues and supervisors to provide the intervention and protection of the law.

Because so few female officers seek formal assistance, most advocates and professionals, including police supervisors, have little exposure to the problem and few resources to draw from. There has not been much research on officer-involved domestic violence. There are no officially sanctioned statistics. In 2003, the International Association of Chiefs of Police recognized the rate of officer-involved domestic violence to be at least as common as that of the general population.¹ Current domestic violence statistics estimate 30% of women in the general population will experience domestic violence; research on police families reports the incidence to be as high as 40%.² This means that at current staffing levels, 27,000 to 36,000 female officers may be domestic violence victims.³

Formal and Informal Cultures of Policing

As in any organization, there exists both a formal and informal culture in every police agency, and a tension exists between the two. The formal culture is that of rules and regulations, the informal that of group norms and daily interactions. The informal culture exerts tremendous peer pressure upon officers to conform to prescribed standards and proscribed actions.^{4 5}

Formally, many police agencies actively recruit female officers, but the profession remains an overwhelmingly male-dominated one. The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that females number only 11.3% of local full-time sworn officers, 12.9% of sheriffs and 16.1% of Federal officers.⁶ The informal (peer) culture does not fully welcome female officers, but requires them to assimilate into the male culture.^{7 8} Women officers report that they resent being under constant surveillance and scrutiny by male officers.⁹ They say they have to repeatedly prove themselves and are monitored more closely than are male officers.¹⁰ Male officers tend to exaggerate mistakes a woman recruit makes and use them as proof that females are incompetent to do the job, generalizing one recruit's mistakes to all women officers.¹¹

Men's opposition to women in their ranks stems from their perceived threat to the definitions of the work, occupational culture, social status, and self-image as "men's men."^{12 13} Male officers trust that *male* officers will maintain the solidarity of the brotherhood, including the code of silence, but do not trust women to do the same. They fear that women will not be loyal to the group when such loyalty requires betrayal of their own values and conscience. Their fear may be well-founded, as female officers report experiencing and witnessing intense ambivalence regarding adherence to the code, especially in the face of police misconduct, harassment, discrimination and brutality.¹⁴

Society gives police officers the authority to enforce the law and maintain social order. Research shows that women and men possess and exercise different styles of policing and that female officers rely more on communication and less on the use of force than male officers.¹⁵ Female officers excel in de-escalating violent and volatile situations, but many of their male co-workers view this as a weakness, rather than a strength; they do not consider this the behavior of a "real cop." A female officer thus faces a conundrum: she can "act like a man" and achieve control through aggression and fighting, or "act like a woman" and achieve control without using threats or violence. She finds that within the culture she cannot act as *both* an officer and as a woman.¹⁶

In addition to the requirement to act like a man, there is the requirement to "think like a man" in order to be respected by male colleagues. Society gives police officers tremendous discretionary power, allowing them a great deal of latitude in assessing or defining a situation within the boundaries of policy and protocol. Because male and female officers are likely to perceive and define situations differently, they may make different decisions and take different actions when responding to a situation. A decision whether or not to enforce the law in a particular situation (for example, arresting a perpetrator of domestic violence) may be laden with social and political implications and consequences which are contrary to men's way of doing business. Male colleagues or supervisors may judge female officers of being biased toward women, too sensitive, too lenient—in short, of acting and thinking like a woman instead of a cop. Male resistance to women on the police force is more than gender—at its core it is the belief that only men are entitled to social control and law enforcement. Women do not belong in a profession whose mission is to enforce social order.¹⁷

One way the men seek to maintain control of the workplace is by trivializing the females and sexualizing the environment through their language, behavior, and attitudes. The men require a female officer to act and think like a man, but they also require that she look like a woman. The hyper-masculine culture fosters the image of the ideal woman with emphasis on her appearance—her size, weight, shape, hair, clothes and makeup should all be in keeping with the latest feminine style. The female officer knows that by accentuating her feminine appearance she simultaneously compromises or undermines her professional image. She has to try to balance these disparate roles, that of a police officer, a female officer, and a woman.

Many new female recruits are taken off-guard by the sexually charged atmosphere of the workplace, and there may be a shortage of female officers willing or able to help her navigate the waters. A new officer may not realize the extent to which she is likely to be the target of speculation, innuendo, gossip and sexual advances. She finds herself in a Catch-22: if she consistently rejects the men's sexual advances, they may label her a bitch or a lesbian; if she is receptive of their advances, they may label her a slut. A female officer may seek a monogamous relationship with a male officer as a way to stave off other predatory officers and/or break through her social isolation. Some female

officers have felt pressured into having sex with male officers to dispel perceptions or rumors that they are lesbians.

Survival on the police force requires a female officer to “go along to get along,” which often means having to deny, minimize, excuse and tolerate controlling and offensive behaviors from her male supervisors and peers. This behavior typically includes the denigration of female officers through sexist language, “teasing,” gender-related stereotypes, criticism, intimidation, and humiliation.¹⁸

Survival in a hostile work environment of both overt and subtle sexual harassment and discrimination requires female officers to develop coping techniques and strategies. If a female officer confronts the offenders and names the abusive behavior for what it is, they will probably deny that they meant any insult or harm, and accuse her of being too sensitive. If she reports the behavior to a supervisor, the supervisor may reiterate the male officers’ assessment of the situation and may label her a troublemaker. As a result of their reception of her complaint, she learns to overlook, minimize, deny and joke about what is actually offensive and demoralizing to her.¹⁹

Workplace Desensitization Hinders Identification of Intimate Abusive Behavior²⁰

The workplace dynamics that require her to tolerate men’s abusive behavior make her especially vulnerable to verbal, emotional, sexual and psychological abuse in her intimate relationship. The hierarchical structure of the police profession requires unquestioning obedience and submission to authority—typically male authority—and requires female officers to remain conscious of their “place” in the organization. Insubordination is a serious offense, one that is sure to prompt swift and certain discipline. In an abusive relationship, the officer’s abuser demands unquestioning obedience and submission to his authority. He is likely to remind her that though she may wield the professional authority of a police officer on the job, she has no such status in their relationship. If she refuses to submit to his control, he feels justified in punishing her accordingly.

The abuser works to keep her in a state of constant anxiety, ensuring that she is too emotionally upset and distracted to function effectively at work. He can sabotage her job performance by chipping away at her self-confidence, wearing her down emotionally and physically with arguments, interrogation and manipulation. He might deprive her of sleep, force her to call in sick or report late for duty. He might damage or hide her uniform or equipment. And, if his abuse includes physical force, he can inflict injuries that don’t show but which impede her performance. He can also intentionally inflict visible injuries that prevent her from going to work, thus threatening her career.

As he destroys her confidence and self-esteem, her job performance may decline. She may become hyperaware of how others behave around her. Fellow officers may react differently to her, causing her to act differently, to withdraw, or to be argumentative. She may begin self-medicating her injuries and stress in order to function at work and maintain her façade that everything is fine. Her success at concealing the effects of the abuse may work against her later when supervisors and colleagues saw no signs of her suffering and the abuser denies the abuse. This can lead to accusations that she is lying when she finally reports the abuse.

The female officer is under intense pressure to conceal any trouble in her personal life, especially domestic violence. Police agencies are heavily invested in projecting a positive image to

the community, and in promoting public trust. There are dire consequences for publicly disclosing information that is a potential embarrassment to the agency.²¹ Just as any problems that occur within the department are to be kept within the confines of the department, any problems that occur within an officer's personal life is to be kept within the confines of their personal lives.

The victim is aware of the strong cultural stigma against an officer being a victim, and that she cannot afford to be labeled a "battered woman." She is likely to be stunned by her own situation, as she may have believed that she, a police officer, could never be in such a vulnerable position. This vulnerability contradicts her self-image and undermines her self-confidence, both as a woman and a police officer.

If the victim is in a lesbian relationship, the victim faces another layer of barriers to seeking assistance. Most communities have few or any resources for lesbian victims of battering. Where they exist, the *abuser* may contact the advocacy organization and convince staff that *she* is the victim. Responding officers and others may label the situation mutual combat, assuming both parties have equal power in the relationship, as lesbians and as officers. If she is not already open with her coworkers and others, the threat to "out" the victim is a powerful control tactic. If the victim is married or has children, disclosing her sexual orientation may affect a divorce or custody action. Supervisors, colleagues, family and friends may reject the victim, or feel betrayed because she did not inform them of her lesbian relationship.²² There is also the risk that the department will find her guilty of "failure to keep her personal life unsullied" and that at the very least they will expect her to terminate her relationship with her abuser.

The victim may question, and anticipate that others will question, whether she is capable of protecting others if she cannot protect herself. In addition, she questions her judgment for allowing herself to be in such a position, and she suspects that colleagues and supervisors will also question her judgment. If her commanders determine that her personal life reflects on her ability to perform her duties, this determination will have a negative impact on future assignments and promotions. In light of all this, she may feel compelled to risk her personal safety rather than risk her reputation, her career, or the potential consequences of leaving the abuser. She feels intense pressure to hide her victimization, which increases her vulnerability to the abuser's continued manipulation, coercion and violence.

She may avoid identifying herself as a victim by holding herself responsible for the abuser's violence, convincing herself that she provoked it, deserved it, or gave him no choice. The stress of the job may provide at least a superficial excuse for his behavior. She feels ashamed and embarrassed because she believes she should know how to handle her "personal problem" without outside intervention, and she fears that fellow officers may see her as a traitor if she reports the abuse. She comes to realize that she is in a significantly different, more dangerous and more vulnerable situation than if she were a civilian woman. She realizes that of all victims of domestic violence, she may be the least likely to receive police protection.

Some of the seemingly obscure reasons that female officers resist reporting the abuse to authorities become glaringly obvious when we see them in the larger context, as do the reasons that the standard legal remedies may be of little use to this population of victims.

Abuser's Preemptive Strategies

If the abuser senses that his victim is going to tell someone about the abuse, he is likely to take preemptive action. For example, he may alert a supervisor that there is trouble at home and that he has concerns that his intimate partner might come forward with false allegations of abuse. He may state that she is the aggressor and that he is the victim. Initiating the report gives the abuser control over the situation and he has the advantage of telling his version of the story first. It also gives him the opportunity to discredit the victim by claiming or insinuating that she is mentally or emotionally unstable, jealous, or vindictive. He can state that though he regrets any unintentional impact on her reputation or career, she has forced him to protect *his* reputation and career. He may even go so far as to seek out the advice or legal services of local advocates, thereby effectively precluding the victim from accessing victim services.

The abuser may call 911 for assistance, knowing that his fellow officers will feel the pressure of the brotherhood to abide by the code of silence and cover up the incident. He may influence them not to write a report, or to write and submit an inaccurate report. The abuser may assure the responding officers that there is “no problem, just a little misunderstanding” and that he has “everything under control.” Another tactic might be to convince them that the alleged victim was actually the aggressor and that they have an obligation to arrest her. Fellow officers may be sympathetic to him because they, too, feel vulnerable to allegations of domestic violence that could potentially damage or destroy their careers.

Some abusers go to court and ask the judge for an order of protection giving him possession of the house and temporary custody of the children. The judge may be sympathetic to his situation because the officer's livelihood is in jeopardy. Many judges believe that if a male police officer claims to be a victim of abuse it must be true; they feel it would be too humiliating and embarrassing for a male officer to claim to be a victim unless he had no other choice.

Understanding the Female Officer's Behavior and Response to the Abuse

In addition to the female officer's own struggle to understand what is happening to her, she bears the burden of having to explain the complexities of her situation to others. This includes her friends and family, co-workers, supervisors, internal affairs investigators, advocates, attorneys, psychological evaluators, prosecutors and judges. If there are divorce and custody issues involved, she may also need to educate child psychologists and custody evaluators, the children's attorney, and child protective services. She may have to educate them about the unique complexities and dynamics of domestic violence when both the perpetrator and the victim are police officers.

It is often difficult for supervisors and other people in the victim's life to understand the female officer's behavior and response to the abuse. People are likely to focus on what the victim *didn't do* rather than what she did do, and misinterpret her survival strategies as demonstration of passive, irrational and self-defeating behaviors. Many people, both inside and outside the profession of law enforcement, find it difficult to believe that a female police officer can be a victim of domestic violence. Because she has received the same training as the male officer, she can defend herself against an assault. Their argument is that because she is able to defend herself, she does not qualify as a victim. On the other hand, if she does not defend herself by fighting back, they question her ability to protect others in her official capacity.

Many people also believe that female officers enjoy the same personal and professional network, power, status and credibility that male officers enjoy, and are skeptical of the claim that male officers are routinely able to manipulate the police department and the courts against female officers. The more the other people in her life believe in the integrity of the police agency or the police profession, the more difficult it is for them to understand why the victim, a member of the police profession, was reluctant or refused to call upon her fellow officers for protection.

Why she doesn't tell friends and/or family

The officer may not be willing to put friends or family members at risk by telling them about the abuse. She may not want to tarnish their image of her, the abuser, or the police profession. She may fear that someone will confront the abuser and thereby put themselves at risk.

Why she doesn't fight back

Though the female officer is trained in defense tactics and has police authority, she knows better than to compete with her abuser on strength or skill. She knows that his ego demands that he maintains control and power over her and that if she resists him or fights back he will escalate his level of force. She fears that he may goad her into using defense tactics, perhaps even drawing her weapon, so that he can claim he was acting in self-defense. She becomes vulnerable to his making allegations that she initiated the violence. She may be afraid that the department will determine that the incident was one of "mutual combat" and hold her equally responsible and accountable.

Why she doesn't tell co-workers and/or supervisors

She may wish that she could talk to someone in the agency about what is happening to her, but she may not know where to turn. Female officers report that they receive subtle or blatant messages that supervisors expect them to keep their personal problems out of the workplace. Many supervisors let it be known that they will take disciplinary action which may be detrimental to both the victim's and the abuser's careers if they acquire knowledge of "domestic problems." She may place both herself and her abuser at risk of discipline if she reveals her abuse. A policy of zero tolerance for domestic violence can be a strong deterrent to reporting.

Department policies are likely to mandate that any officer must report knowledge of another officer's misconduct. The department may have an officer-involved domestic violence policy that emphasizes this mandate. The victim may not want to compromise a fellow officer's integrity by revealing her secret—if a fellow officer complies with the policy and reports, he or she betrays her trust; yet a fellow officer is at risk of discipline if the abuse comes to light and the department learns that the officer had knowledge. The victim may decide that it is worth protecting other officers through her own silence. Should they be questioned in an investigation, they can honestly deny having had any knowledge of the situation. It is also possible that she fears another female officer may violate her trust in order to gain an advantage over her; the marginalization of female officers sometimes results in female officers working against one another.

She may also fear that her confidant could confront her abuser in an attempt to protect her or to warn him. She risks retaliation from the abuser and from fellow officers who are sympathetic to him. Women testify that officers and supervisors punished them by ostracizing and shunning,

harassment, interfering with radio calls, changing assignments and shifts, transfers and failing to provide backup. Such retaliation takes a tremendous physical and emotional toll.

Her supervisors may not understand or give credence to the coercion and control dynamics of domestic violence. They may view each incident as isolated incidents rather than part of the larger pattern of abuse. They may categorize any physical confrontations as mutual combat if she fought back. Her commanders may believe that she is equally responsible for her domestic situation and that she should be able to handle her problems without involving the department.

Why she doesn't call the police

The female officer has a multitude of reasons for wanting to avoid calling the police to her residence. She knows that the responding officers would be in an extremely uncomfortable position that presents conflicts of loyalty among all parties. A policy and protocol on officer-involved domestic violence can considerably reduce the responding officers' power of discretion, but this has the potential to make things better *or worse* for the victim. A 911 call will trigger a police report, internal investigation and perhaps a criminal investigation, and there may be no turning back. The agency can require the victim to cooperate with the investigation into her personal life, which is potentially dangerous, embarrassing and humiliating. An investigation could lead to the discipline, or even termination, of one or both of them.

If a female officer reports being battered by a civilian perpetrator, the department may receive her complaint as a legitimate complaint of a crime against an officer. She may be fairly confident that her fellow officers would protect her. But, if she reports being battered by a male officer, they may not be as receptive to her complaint. The department and her fellow officers may respond to her as if *she* is the perpetrator instead of the victim and/or will suspect that she is lying. No matter what the outcome of her complaint, making a complaint has the potential to extensively damage her career, reputation and her relationships within the department.

Why she doesn't fully cooperate with the investigation

An investigation opens the door to the department's scrutiny of their private lives. The victim may be placed on leave and mandated for a psychological evaluation to determine whether she is fit for duty. Supervisors may question her reliability, physical, emotional, or mental competence to perform her duties.

The department can order, as a condition of continued employment, that she cooperate with the internal investigation. This means that she must answer any questions the investigator asks related to the abuse. She may be forced to reveal details that she prefers to remain private. Whatever she tells the investigator is not confidential; the accused officer will receive a copy of her statement. She must choose between her personal safety or following orders. She fears what the abuser will do to her if she cooperates with the investigation and what the department will do to her if she does not cooperate.

Many victims initially withhold certain information from investigators fearing the abuser's retaliation, disciplinary action, or personal embarrassment. If she or someone else later discloses the information she can be disciplined, even terminated, for not fully cooperating with the investigation.

Supervisors and fellow officers may presume that women commonly lie about domestic violence and accuse her of making false or exaggerated allegations. They may point out that if she concealed the abuse while it was going on, she was, in essence, lying. Supervisors may question the victim's credibility, blame her for "allowing" the abuse, and/or question why she did not report earlier than she did.

Why she doesn't get an order of protection

A female officer may question the benefit of getting an order of protection. She believes that the abuser feels that he is above the law and will not take an order of protection seriously. She may feel confident that he can prevent fellow officers from enforcing the order and from holding him accountable should he violate the order.

The victim may anticipate that the abuser will perceive her getting an order of protection as an act of aggression and a threat to his career. He may react to the threat defensively and use it as justification to take whatever action is necessary to protect his career—such as denying the abuse, saying she is crazy, blaming her for his use of violence, or saying that she is the predominant aggressor and he is the victim.

If the department is aware of the order of protection, they may reassign her, change her shift, or put her on administrative or medical leave pending the investigation. These actions may humiliate her, draw attention from other officers and supervisors, and create other hardships in her life.

Why she doesn't go to a local domestic violence agency

There are many reasons why a female officer may be reluctant to seek assistance from domestic violence advocates. If the police and advocates in the community have a good working relationship, she may not want to tarnish the reputation of the police or undermine the advocates' trust in the police. She may not want to undermine their confidence that the police are receptive to battered women's complaints and that they will protect victims.

Sadly, many female officers don't seek assistance from domestic violence advocates because they don't trust them. They fear that the advocates' allegiance to or fear of the police officers they work with will prove to be stronger than their ability or willingness to assist her. She knows that advocates may be ambivalent about getting involved. She may be afraid to trust community-based advocates, knowing from her own experience on the job that advocates and police work closely on cases and often informally share information that is supposed to be confidential.

If the abuser works with the advocates, the victim may fear he will be able to manipulate his personal and professional relationships to gain the advocates' sympathy. He can set the stage by telling the advocates that he and his intimate partner have been having problems and warn them that she might contact them. He can even receive advocacy services from the agency by claiming to be the true victim, thereby blocking her access to services.

Why she doesn't leave

The victim may believe that if she were to leave the abuser before he is ready to let her go, he will do whatever it takes to coerce her to return. He may have told her that *he* will decide when the relationship is over, and have threatened to kill her if she attempts to escape. She knows from previous experience with him or from working domestic violence cases that abuse often escalates rather than ends when victims try to separate from the abuser. She predicts that if she were to leave him, he would stalk her. She also fears that he will harass and threaten her family and friends in his attempt to locate her. He might pressure them with threats to kill them or kill her, their children, and/or himself.

If he and the victim are married, he can drain her emotionally, physically and financially through a lengthy divorce in which he threatens to end up with the majority of their marital assets. If they have children in common, he can crush her with a lengthy custody battle at the end of which he has a very good chance of being awarded custody of their children.^{23 24}

The abuser is likely to extend his power and control over the victim far beyond the boundaries of their relationship by enlisting the support of their family, friends, neighbors, fellow officers and supervisors on the police department. He denies the abuse, and uses his deadliest weapon—the word of an accused male officer over that of an accusing female officer—to bring others over to his side. Everyone who accepts his word as true and believes his denials, justifications, and rationalizations becomes his ally.

How Advocates Might Assist Victims

It may be rare that advocates receive a request for assistance from a female officer. When they do, however, they should see this as an indication that the abuse has escalated to an extremely volatile point, as many police officers would approach an advocate only as a last resort. Advocates can provide support to the victim by relaying sound information about how to approach the department and what to expect in regards to the department's response. It is a good idea to obtain a copy of the local police agency's policy before being involved with a case and to have the domestic violence agency's board of directors and staff members discuss the implications of this type of case and agree on an agency protocol.

It may be necessary to make exceptions to the agency's standard intake procedures in order to accommodate the needs of a victim of police-perpetrated domestic violence. Agencies might want to consult legal counsel for information on confidentiality laws in their state and protection of clients' records from subpoenas.

When exploring her options, the advocate can encourage the victim to consider what she already knows about her employing department. This might help her predict how the department will respond if she reports the abuse, and help her decide what steps she is willing to take. Anticipating the potential outcomes of her actions can assist her in preparing for those outcomes. This will help her do what she can to best protect herself from potential consequences of her decisions. Questions and areas to explore include:

- What is the department's policy on officer-involved domestic violence?
- Does the department usually follow its policies?
- What does the victim know about how the department has handled other officer-involved complaints?
- Does she think that the department is likely to be receptive or dismissive of her complaint?
- What is the make-up of the agency – the number of women and minorities in the agency and the number of women and minorities in command positions?
- What is the general attitude toward female officers in the department?
- What is the general attitude toward responding to 911 domestic violence calls?
- What does the victim know about the department's handling of sexual harassment or sexual discrimination complaints?

- How long has her abuser been with the department?

- Does he have family members with the department?
- What is his rank?
- Has he had special training and assignments?
- What is the abuser's reputation in the department? (with supervisors/peers)
- Does he have union support? Police organization support?

- How long has she been on the department?
- What is her rank?
- Has she had special training and assignments?
- What is her reputation in the department? (with supervisors/peers)
- Does she have union support? Police organization support?

- Has she made any previous complaints against the abuser or against another male officer? What was the outcome?
- Who in the department knows about her situation? (employee assistance program, chaplain, supervisors, fellow officers) What do they know?
- Who outside of the department knows about her situation? What do they know?

- Has the abuser been talking about her to other officers/supervisors?
- What does she think he has been telling them?
- Has she been talking about him to other officers/supervisors?

- What impact would reassignment, administrative leave, fitness-for-duty evaluation have on her personal life/professional life?
- What does she predict the abuser will do to her if he is reassigned, put on leave or terminated?
- What will she do if she is terminated? (financial, emotional, other options for employment, dependence on salary, benefits, pension)

If the victim determines that she wants to proceed with a complaint, the advocate can help the victim prepare a clear statement of what she would like to have happen as a result of her complaint, and wherever possible link it to the department's standards of conduct for officers. Whether or not she wants the department to initiate an investigation, it is important to talk about what she plans to disclose in an internal investigation when or if it occurs. She needs to consider that though she may

not feel ready to disclose everything about the abuse, there are serious consequences for lying or withholding information during the investigation. Her credibility is her greatest asset, and lying or withholding information will damage it. Many victims have been terminated for not being forthcoming with all the information from the beginning of the investigation.

If she wants the prosecutor to pursue criminal charges, she needs to consider that the Garrity Rule can potentially shield the abuser from criminal prosecution. Under Garrity, the department can order an officer, under condition of further employment, to honestly answer the investigator's questions. But, any information the officer gives under coercion of Garrity cannot be handed over by the department to the prosecutor for use in criminal proceedings.²⁵

Interventions Available to Police Agencies

How a department responds when an employee or employees are involved in police-perpetrated domestic violence defines the integrity, philosophy and policy of the agency. Possible actions and intervening measures include:

- Developing an on-duty safety plan for the victim, including a risk and lethality assessment
- Allowing the victim to take a leave of absence without loss of pay or seniority or unnecessary inconvenience or hardship)
- Separating the victim and abuser on the job
- Issuing an Administrative Order of Protection
- Transferring the abuser to a different shift or assignment
- Assigning another officer to ride with the victim and/or the abuser while on duty to prevent intimidation or stalking
- Allowing the victim to get counseling at the local domestic violence agency instead of through an Employee Assistance Program, department counselor, or department chaplain
- Documenting incidents, collecting and keeping any evidence of the abuser's attempts to contact her, such as phone messages, caller-ID numbers, e-mails, letters and cards
- Informing the victim of any and all disciplinary action taken against the abuser, including service of an Administrative Order of Protection
- Keeping information as confidential as possible, and sharing information within the ranks strictly on a need to know basis
- Making every effort to prevent the abuser or anyone who may collude with him from having access to documentation, evidence, or investigative reports
- Ensuring that no one in the department knows the specifics of her safety plan or where she is staying

Closing Thoughts

While this article is by no means an exhaustive review of the perils and challenges facing both victims and their advocates, it hopefully provides enough information to enable advocates to effectively intervene in a crisis situation. Advocates are strongly advised to contact the Battered Women's Justice Project for technical assistance. Readers who would like more extensive information about police-perpetrated domestic violence can read *When the Batterer Is a Law Enforcement Officer: A Guide for Advocates*. The *Guide* is available through the Battered Women's Justice Project website <www.bwjp.org>. Another resource specifically addressing female officers as

victims is *Crossing the Threshold: Female Officers and Police-Perpetrated Domestic Violence*. This book and other materials on officer-involved domestic violence are available on the Abuse of Power website <www.abuseofpower.info>. Individuals or organizations can also contact Diane Wetendorf directly at (847) 749-2560.

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