

Male Police involved Intimate Partner Violence: Is it more Dangerous than Abuse by Civilians? An Argumentative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

In the wake of the killing of George Floyd, Canadian and US policing has received mass scrutiny. These violent police behavior is currently prompting questions about the appropriate use of force by police officers. Police use of force usually focuses on police officer's brutality in their official capacity, but there is a lack of empirical data on brutality and abuse perpetrated by police against their intimate partners in their private family lives. Although police officers are more likely than civilians to abuse their partners, the power and training provided to police officers by the state make them significantly more dangerous as domestic violence perpetrators. "Feminist theory" and "Hegemonic Masculinity theory" have been applied to understand the power and control that police officers have due to their training, which causes them to be considered more violent and dangerous for their families, especially for their intimate partners. To support the argument, three key themes have emerged: police abusers are skilled abusers; victims face a tremendous struggle to report the abuse; and available support systems for the victims of police abusers sometimes not adequate for them. Finally, some policy implications have been provided to address this problematic and potentially more dangerous issue.

Key words: Intimate partner violence, use of force, police involved domestic violence

INTRODUCTION

"If a person assaulted a pregnant friend of yours on the street and beat her until he broke her jaw, punch her repeatedly within the stomach, broke two of her ribs, who would you call? A psychiatrist or a cop?" (Sadusky, 2001). A cop is an obvious answer within this scenario. In our society when any domestic violence occurred, we seek help from the police to intervene in the matter (Sadusky, 2001). We presume that the police are there to shield us from abuse and have the legal right to remove an intruder. However, what will you do when your abuser is part of the system speculated to protect you?

Nowadays, the term "excessive use of force by police" is a difficult phenomenon to identify, as well as a difficult concept to define. On television, we frequently see the police using force against the minority people especially against the African Americans. For that reason, we often perceived the police as an oppressor, not as a protector. On the other hand, when we see a movie or a TV show about family violence in which the police use force to protect the victims, we see the police as a hero in whom the victims can put their faith. However, what happens in the actual life of the police when the police officer goes home to his wife and girlfriend? This is where the darker story begins. In most cases, when a police officer hurts a family member, there is no one to call as they are a police officer so their victims have to live in desperate isolation with little hope of help (Hope & Roslin, 2015; French & Fletcher, 2022).

Several efforts have been made in researching the use of force or brutality applied by the police force. Some studies established a relationship between race, sex, and religion within police brutality cases. Recently, the research by Dhanani et al. (2022) provided analysis of an extensive body of data about police involved violence, with an emphasis on racism and its disproportionate effects on the Black community. Additional studies demonstrate that although the majority of racialized individuals are killed by the police

are young men, minority women and girls are also vulnerable to police-sanctioned violence. However, there is little to no scientific data on the force used by police on their intimate partners (Russell & Pappas, 2018; French & Fletcher, 2022). To fill the gap, this paper tried to find out whether the police families are the victims of excessive use of force by the police as well as police-involved intimate partner violence.

Hence, this paper discussed a variety of topics relating to why intimate partner violence perpetrated by police officers is dangerous than abuse committed by civilians. This paper included a background section where it has revealed that how abuse within the police family remains as a private matter since the 1990s. A brief literature review on abuse committed by police officers explored how most of the literary work focuses on why police officers commit violence towards their family members and is silent on the dangerous consequences of such abuse. This paper applied “Feminist theory” and “Hegemonic Masculinity theory” in the theoretical framework section to understand the power and control that police officers have due to their training, which causes them to be considered more violent and dangerous for their families, especially for their intimate partners. To support the main argument of the paper three key themes have been explored in the discussion section and such themes have been connected with the feminist and masculinity theory. Finally, some policy implications have been discussed to address this problematic and potentially more dangerous issue.

While domestic violence is intolerable and unacceptable, when the perpetrators are in law enforcement, there are more obstacles for victims to report the abuse (Friedersdorf, 2014; French & Fletcher, 2022). This paper will argue that intimate partner abuse by police officers is posing extra challenges than abuse perpetrated by civilians in three different ways. First, police officers are skilled abusers as they by virtue of their training, learn multiple different tactics which they can use to control, intimidate, and isolate their intimate partners. Second, victims face obstacles to reporting the abuse as they have to report it to the police against another police officer. Finally, due to the role police officers play within the criminal justice system, access to state-based support services for their intimate partners is extremely limited.

Historical perspective

After years of relative obscurity, the detrimental spillover of workplace stress into family life attracted the attention of many academics in the 1970s and 1980s. (Johnson, 1989; Crosby, 1984; Niederhoffer & Niederhoffer, 1978; Kanter, 1977). Before the 1971 special issue of the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* on family abuse, no article in this leading family journal included the word “violence” in its title (Gelles, 1980). Since then, there has been a marked rise in the number of texts and publications paying attention to domestic abuse. In 1974, citations from *Sociological Abstracts* revealed there were only nine papers on domestic abuse, but by 1988, the number had risen to 228 (Stith & Straus, 1995). In 1985 the U. S. Surgeon General declared family violence a national epidemic (Sheehan, 2000). As the study of Wetendorf (2000) noted only physical violence or the threat of physical abuse was against the law at that time. Therefore, it was sometimes considered irrelevant to address verbal, mental, sexual, or psychological violence (Wetendorf, 2000).

In accordance with the civil rights movement as stated by Werendorf (2000), the right of women to be protected from physical harm was acknowledged, including inside their own homes. To protect women from abusive husbands states also passed legislation (Wetendorf, 2000). Although the 1970s women’s movement went a long way towards sensitizing society to domestic abuse, violence inside police families did nothing to expose it. This does not surprise anyone, as police departments choose to keep the incident a family secret and deal with it in-house. Unfortunately, until the 1990s the code of secrecy remained intact unchanged (Werendorf, 2000). Later, in several national and international conferences such as the National Center for Women and Policing conferences, 1998/1991, the Convention of the Fraternal Order of Police tried to highlight the issue of family violence against women inside the home by the police officers (Stith & Straus, 1995). Yet the agency appears to refuse to intervene in the private life of an employee, and is deeply

dissatisfied with the legal obligation to handle the offending officer as a common criminal (Werendorf, 2000). The victim is labeled as the traitor, not the offender where forces are gathering to silence her.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Huss (2009) defined the nature of Intimate partner violence as an act of violence perpetrated within the context of significant interpersonal relationships violence between a husband and a woman, a girlfriend and a lover. Some other scholars have addressed similar topics, where it has been stated that intimate partner abuse could be found in all relationships, both same-sex and heterosexual (James et al., 2003). However, while such abuse can take place in an intimate relationship, the vast majority of it is committed by men against women (Itzin, 2010). Another definition of intimate partner violence is provided by Osatin and Short (1998), which states that intimate partner violence means using deliberate force, threat and intimidation by the dominating partner over the victim partner which ultimately means having the power over the victim.

It is not easy to gather statistical data regarding intimate partner violence, but if it is police-involved domestic violence then it's more difficult to find (Baron, 2018). According to Stinson and Liederbach (2012), the state does not maintain statistics on police officers' criminal offenses for intimate partner abuse or family violence offenses (Baron, 2018). Researchers have found that police officers who have "authoritarian" thinking like those who treat their family members like suspects and criminals are more likely to use violence against their wives or girlfriends (Anderson & Lo, 2011; Dhanani et al., 2022). Other researchers have found that police officers who experience "burnout" (Johnson et al., 2005; French & Fletcher, 2022) were more likely to use violence towards their partners. Perceived job stress, such as feeling physically or spiritually drained, has a positive effect on the perpetration of abuse (Zavala & Melander, 2018). Some scholars also reported that exposure to critical incidents such as trauma exposure, workplace discrimination, job dissatisfaction, and lack of cooperation among police officers all these factors contribute to work-related stress, which in turn affects the use of violence against their family's (Gibson et al., 2001; French & Fletcher, 2022). Finally, Erwin, Gershon, Tiburzi, & Lin (2005) showed that more seasoned police officers, those from a racial or ethnic minority group, or officers employed in a high-crime environment, recorded higher levels of stress, resulting in an increased probability of IPV perpetration. Therefore, this literature indicates that work pressure in policing may lead to the perpetuation of police-involved intimate partner violence.

The police have a well-documented history of brutality or use of force against women, especially women of color (Ritchie, 2017). As Andrea Ritchie (2017) wrote, women and girls, especially minority women, were sexually assaulted, raped, brutally stripped, beaten, shot, and killed by law enforcement officials with alarming frequency. U.S. immigrant groups, including Latinos, Muslims, LGBTQ and Black Americans, have a strong skepticism of the police and are hesitant to call them for assistance for that reason (Jervis, 2020). But the total prevalence of officer-involved domestic violence is unknown. In reality, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) assessed that the rate of police perpetrated domestic violence to be at least as common as the general population (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2003). For example, a study found that within a police sample, approximately 29% of law enforcement officers had been physically violent with an intimate partner or family member in the past (Oehme et al., 2012). Again, two studies from the 1980s suggest the violence rate in police families may be significantly higher and of which one study of 728 officers from two departments of the East Coast showed that in the previous six months, 40 percent of officers reported having "got out of hand and acted aggressively towards their spouse or children (Johnson, 1991, p. 42 as cited in Kaczmarek & Blasdel, 2023)). In the second report, researchers asked 385 male officers from a variety of Southwest departments if they had pulled, forced, shoved, punched, kicked, bitten, battered, thrown stuff, bound, strangled, battered, or tried to use or use a gun or knife against their wives over the past year ("On the Front Lines: Police Stress", 1991). Twenty-eight percent of those officers admitted having engaged in some form of such conduct within the previous year

(Neidig et al., 1992). Again, one study found that female police officers whose partners are police are also at risk for police perpetrated intimate partner violence (Wetendorf, 2007).

It is important to mention that the prior data collection methods used include self-report surveys, but these are limiting due to the police officers trying to conceal acts of violence (Stinson & Liederbach, 2012). Self-reporting is a notoriously unreliable measure; as Anderson and Lo's (2011) study noted that in considering any socially unacceptable behavior, the question of the reliability of self-report data is problematic (p. 1188). These actions arise from police officers' own incentive to protect their careers through a code of silence and not make their fallacies known (Cheema, 2016; Baron, 2018). This silence highlights the trend that police involved in domestic violence are often not researched in an unbiased manner, and new reform in research is necessary (Cheema, 2016). Usually, most of that literature captures the violence that police do in their public capacity, as officers of the state. This argument paper explores the abuse and violence that police perpetrate against their intimate partners in their private lives.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As previously stated, most studies have associated work-related stress, exposure to trauma, and child violence with the perpetration of IPV by police officers. Others suggest that alcohol or other substance abuse may contribute to the high rate of abuse in police families. Therefore, it can be said that social learning (Zavala, 2013a), general strain (Zavala et al., 2015), and theories of differential coercion and social support (Zavala & Kurtz, 2016) have been used to describe this phenomenon. This argument paper is primarily framed by the "Radical feminist theory". Domestic abuse, according to radical feminist theorists, is mostly caused by patriarchy and women's subordination. The feminist theory argues that domestic violence is the result of patriarchy where the abusers are the men and the victims are the women. Therefore, the criminal justice system's inability to adequately protect and help abused women is one of the patriarchal ideologies which facilitate domestic violence (Yalley & Olutayo, 2020). Another argument of the feminist theory is the power and control of men not only inherent in physical strength but also in the system and structure of the society (Yalley & Olutayo, 2020). In dealing with domestic abuse, feminist theorists agree that resisting male dominance in institutions and culture is a critical approach (Yalley & Olutayo, 2020). Again, the feminist theory also argues that intimate partner abuse is an expression of dominance and control by the police officer over his partner (Anderson & Lo, 2011). The notion that men who assault are not necessarily angry or abusive is central to the feminist narrative; rather, they only abuse their partners as a way of asserting power and control (Goodmark, 2016).

The police profession usually attracts those individuals who have an authoritarian personality and such personality usually established through the use of force. This is supported by Philip Stinson and John Liederbach (2015), who found that the authoritarian personality of the police officers may be established through the use of violence whenever the officer is angry or feels challenged in some way, whether by a partner or by a citizen. On that note, some scholars indicate that various policy measures such as training may be appropriate to counter domestic violence involving officers (Botelho & Hassan, 2015; Leong, 2014; Dahl, 2015). However, because of the developed culture of masculinity and the specific form that masculinity takes among police officers, such training is unlikely to dramatically improve the rates of officers involved in intimate partner violence (Goodmark, 2016). The theory of masculinity provides a theoretical foundation for this counter-narrative.

In the area of men and masculinity, Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell's theory of masculinity is the most influential theory. It has also been taken up in a large variety of other fields, in addition to its immense influence on the area of gender studies (Messerschmidt, 2019). Masculinity theorists argue that men construct their masculine identities through relationships with others by creating differences between men and women (Messerschmidt, 1993). In his article *Masculinities and Crime* (1993), James Messerschmidt

argues that crime by men is a type of social activity used as a resource for gaining masculinity when other resources are unavailable (Ptacek, 2020). Angela P. Harris (2000), in her article *Gender, Violence, Race, and Criminal Justice*, stated that “being violent is one socially recognized way of being a man” (p. 790). She also mentioned that “men use violence or the threat of violence as an affirmative way of proving individual or collective masculinity, or in desperation when they perceive their masculine self-identity to be under attack” (Harris, 2000, p. 781). Nonetheless, violence perpetrated by police officers not only constructs masculinity but also helps officers to achieve hegemonic masculinity (Cooper, 2009). The philosophy of hegemony mainly originated from Antonio Gramsci’s writings on class relations, though Connell is credited with developing the concept (McCarry, 2003). Connell describes hegemony as “the cultural dynamic by which a community assumes and maintains a dominant role in social life,” and, as Gramsci argued, once hegemony is formed, it must constantly reassert itself in order to retain its status (McCarry, 2003, p. 68). Like Gramsci, Connell also acknowledges that in order for the hegemonic ideal to be applied and created, there must be a force behind it (McCarry, 2003). Morgan claims that hegemonic masculinity was developed primarily to organize men’s power relationships and to highlight women’s “domination and control” (McCarry, 2003, p. 70). Hegemonic masculinity also defined by Michael Kimmel and he stated that hegemonic masculinity refers to the dominance that men possess and exert over others (Ferber et al., 2016, chapter 5, p. 58). Mistreatment of a woman seems like a strong way for men to claim their masculinity (Goodmark, 2016). Though, hegemonic masculinity has many goals, one of which is to claim and sustain men’s social superiority over women (Cooper, 2009). Some scholars have also argued that men who abuse their partners not only present a dominant image to themselves and to their victim, but also to their peer group (Richard & Molloy, 2020).

This paper is arguing that the abuse perpetrated by police officers against intimate partners not only more challenging but also more dangerous than abuse committed by civilians. The above “Radical Feminist theory” and “Masculinity theory” with special emphasis on the concept of hegemonic masculinity will help us to understand the argument.

Intimate partner abuse by police officer:

In 2003, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) stated that a police officer’s “intimate partner” is any person who is or was lawfully married to the police officer; has a child in common with the police officer; had or has a dating relationship with the police officer; is identified by state law as an intimate partner; cohabits with the police officer or has cohabited romantically with him. Thus, “police-involved intimate partner violence” applies to intimate partner violence that takes place within households where a police officer is the abuser of the violent acts. When domestic abuse is discussed, most of the studies focus on physical abuse. Similarly, in the case of police-involved domestic abuse, most of the study focused on physical abuse, ignoring the many other types of abuse such as verbal abuse, that police officers use. Neidig asked in 1992 about minor and severe, but only physical, violence (Stith, 1990) data involved rates of physical aggression (p.164). Ryan’s (2013) study focused on officers slapping, punching, or otherwise injuring their partners (pp. 300-301). It is very clear that literature relating to emotional, verbal or other forms of abuse by police officers is mostly missing. Only Todd and Subramanian’s (2005) findings are one of the few studies which found that 60% of police spouses reported verbal abuse (p.4). But this emphasis on physical violence obscures other types of abuse that are much more damaging to some women. Data on police domestic abuse is very complicated to obtain as a culture of secrecy and intimidation distorts it. A new report reveals that US police officers perpetrate domestic abuse at about 15 times the rate of the general population in the United States (Burmon, 2021). Domestic victims of abusive cops frequently do not know where to go as police officers always want to protect their own.

Why intimate partner abuse by police officers is different from other abuse

There are several theories about what makes a traditional domestic violence perpetrator, abuse those who

are close to them, more specifically those who are their family members. One of the findings indicates that most domestic violence offenders abuse their family members to obtain control over what they think they are expected to do (Patton et al., 2021). Some experts also found some common behaviors among general abusers such as abusers are controlling and manipulative, for as a man they deserve the absolute right to be responsible for all facets of a relationship and so on (Elmquist et al., 2014). Intimate partner abuse victims always fear what the abuser will do next or the fear that no one will believe them. Many of those victims who affected by the abuse are, afraid to seek help from the police only because, their partner will react negatively if they report them. But sometimes some of the victim's report to the police anyways but due to the nature of police culture of the "code of silence" prevents them from gaining help.

In 1991, Leonor Johnson, a sociologist in one of his study suggests that out of nine hundred thousand law enforcement officers in America, more than three hundred thousand officers are likely to commit acts of domestic abuse (Lait, 1997). In the 1990s when a Los Angeles police officer murdered his wife and then committed suicide, a review of domestic abuse allegations was brought against police officers (Lait, 1997). Such review study finds that a total of 227 cases was brought against police officers out of which only 91 cases sustained and in only 4 cases police officers were criminally convicted (Lait, 1997). The most shocking part is out of those 4 cases only one 1 officer has been suspended and was asked to take three weeks off (Lait, 1997). Though any type of domestic abuse is dangerous police-involved domestic abuse is way more dangerous. To support this argument, three supporting themes have been identified. To better understand the supporting themes, it is important to look at some of the police-involved domestic abuse-related cases. A brief illustration of the police-involved domestic abuse-related cases are given below:

Case 1: Rosaura Torres, an author and partner at a publishing house, was married to her husband, a Philadelphia police officer who ascended to the top ranks of the police department, for sixteen years. Rosaura was battered, kicked and choked by her husband over almost two decades of her marriage. Rosaura had a fractured eye as a result, which has left her partly blind. Ignoring her repeated pleas to stop, Rosaura's husband continued his assault on her. Rosaura threatened to report against him, but he assured her it would be useless to go to the police. Unfortunately, he was right Rosaura wrote to the police and city officials when her husband was up for promotion, detailing her husband's violent tendencies. They dismissed her letters and encouraged her husband, ignoring Rosaura's revelations. In 2004, Rosaura escaped the violence by ending her marriage. Since then, her partner, who was never criminally charged with her injury, has retired from the police force and fled the country. Since then, Rosaura has been able to get back to her feet. She also wrote a book titled "Abuse Hidden Behind the Badge" and on that book she shared her own personal experiences of domestic abuse and became an activist for battered spouses. (Cheema, 2016, p. 487)

Case 2: Pam was married to Kavin Brainard, a police officer for seven years in Plainwell, Michigan. Kavin shot and killed Pam before committing suicide. Pam's family and friends reported that Kavin controlled the majority of his wife's activities and incited emotional strain on a daily basis. They also mentioned that he never physically assaulted her but constantly monitored her actions, controlled her interaction with others and often verbally abused her. Friends and family also mentioned that Pam was terrified to call the police about this domestic abuse issue for fear of the consequences as he was a police officer. According to the information, Pam was trapped in this relationship and wanted to get out. (Klinoff et al., 2015, p. 110)

Police abusers are trained abusers

The first theme identified in the argument of "police-involved domestic violence is more dangerous than abuse by civilians", and arguably the most important for this argument paper is police abusers are skilled and professional abusers. Police academies usually train newly recruited police officers about how to treat domestic violence situations, such as signs of domestic violence, arrest methods, victim services and so on (Cheema, 2016). But the abuser who are civilians, other than the police officer, is not well trained with these tactics. So, the police officers with the help of their training take control of any situation in their work

(Wetendorf, 1998; French & Fletcher, 2022). This means they can use their policing training, tactics and equipment to intimidate and terrorize their victim. Some scholars found that:

Officers are carefully trained to use escalating degrees of verbal and non-verbal responses and ultimately, in appropriate situations, to use escalating degrees of physical force. Officers who carry that authoritarian character and demeanor into their homes may also expect their intimate partners, children, and other family members to comply with their demands. Family members who argue, resist, or ignore them may be seen as a direct challenge to that authority. (Garvey, 2015, p. 2)

Diane Wetendorf, an advocate who has worked with hundreds of women subjected to abuse by police officers, states that policing is a profession where the officers are well trained on how to handle any situation and besides that, they have their police badge, gun and most importantly they also have the weight of the police culture to back them. Police know very well how and where to hit a partner in a way so that it will not leave noticeable marks and the victims will not be capable of providing any physical supporting evidence when they want to report the physical abuse (Mazzola, 2014). It is evident that police officers always project authority in their workplace because they are trained to carry out their jobs in that manner (French & Fletcher, 2022). No doubt such skill helps them gain individuals compliance with lawful demands while on their job, but it may inspire victims to fear what will happen if the abuser's expectations are not met in an abusive relationship.

Interrogation is another skill acquired by police officers. Interrogation training is important as it is utilized for questioning the suspects. However, police officers, who are also abusers, constantly use these tactics to interrogate and cross-examine their domestic victims about their activities, or about their friends and family (Garvey, 2015). Skilled interrogators employ various psychological techniques to get the information they seek (Goodmark, 2016). An abuser may use these skills to obtain data from a victim, keep the victim off track and unaware of what is in the victim's best interest, and persuade the victim to adhere to the abuser's wishes (Garvey, 2015).

Police officers also abuse their victims verbally. As Johnson et al's., (2005) study point out that "verbal abuse by a police officer whose job training provides the skills to be physically and psychologically dominant through physical posturing and verbal intimidation" (p.4). Diane Wetendorf mentioned in her study that abusers scream at the victims as they talk to criminals on the street. In addition, well-trained police officers also know how to access sensitive data to locate victims (Wetendorf, 2000). They can track anyone with whom the partner might come into contact, or from whom she might seek help (Wetendorf, 2000). Police officers also know how to talk to witnesses in a way that will elicit important information (Wetendorf, 2000). Such tactics and expertise can be used by the police officers to harass and threaten the victim or her family and friends, or to locate the victim anywhere she flees for safety. However typical intimate partner abusers do not find this tactic easier.

Victims face obstacle to reporting the abuse in Criminal Justice System

When a woman abused is by their partner, the criminal justice system is the most advanced response to provide justice, but if the batterer is a police officer such a legal system provides little to no protection to the partners of police officers (Goodmark, 2006). If intimate partners seek help from the criminal justice system, abusive police officers perceived it as an "act of aggression" (Wetendorf, 2000). Police abusers frequently remind the victim that there is no escape for her. If she calls the police or seeks help from the criminal justice system "No one will believe her" (Wetendorf, 2000). One of the victims of police abuser told the Bureau of Investigative Journalism that:

He [Police abuser] used to say the police would protect him and if I phoned up against him, he'd just get me put in prison," she said. "One day it was too much and I did phone. In hindsight that was the

biggest mistake of my whole life. (Heal, 2020)

The victims of police abuser also face obstacles to report the abusive incident. In reality, women who are exposed to harassment by a police service member may not be able to access support because police are the ones who primarily respond to emergency calls and with this in mind, police services may not be a safe resource for those victims (Garvey, 2015). Again, according to the mandatory arrest policies, if the officers have probable cause to believe that an act of domestic violence has occurred, they can arrest the suspect without a warrant (Voce and Boxell, 2018). The primary witness in several cases of domestic violence against women is the woman herself, and her testimony is vital in supporting the claims of assault (“A police officer involved,” 2015). The woman’s integrity is regularly measured against the accused and assessed by evidence analysis (Joseph, 2017). If the suspect is a member of the police forces, his position is authoritative and thus it provides greater weight than the female victim (Goodmark, 2016) and there is a huge chance that the victim could become the suspect of such mandatory arrest policies. For that reason, many women will not report domestic or sexual violence to the police as they fear being retraumatized (Joseph, 2017). According to Statistics Canada, in 2019 nearly 40% of sexual assault cases reported to Kelowna RCMP, were dismissed as unfounded (Police Accountability and Police-Involved Domestic Violence, 2020). Police in Canada dismisses 1 in 5 cases of sexual assault claims as baseless (Murphy, 2020).

In the rare case when the woman took the courage to complain, they often do not get the proper justice. Several studies also show that officers who are found guilty of having engaged in domestic violence are unlikely to be relieved of their duties, arrested, or prosecuted (Friedersdorf, 2014). U.S. and Canadian police departments have no policy of automatically firing officers with a criminal conviction for domestic abuse (Friedersdorf, 2014). In addition, both countries have huge loopholes in their gun-control laws that let police officers hang on to firearms even when convicted of domestic violence crimes (Friedersdorf, 2014). One of the most surprising statistics uncovered by the New York Times and PBS program FRONTLINE in a study on police abusers, out of 56 police departments “almost 30 percent of officers convicted of domestic violence were still working in the same agency a year later, compared with 1 percent of those who failed drug tests and 7 percent of those accused of robbery” (Cohen et al., 2013). The New York Times also claimed that even after having a criminal record of battering a partner, a police officer can stay on the job in some police departments, but cannot stay on the job if they test positive for marijuana (Cohen et al., 2013).

Another surprising point is that a civilian female victim and even female police officer victims do not get proper justice if the batterer is a male police officer. Even in the book *Police Wife: The Secret Epidemic of Police Domestic Violence* the authors mentioned that eight policewomen in Toronto who were in an abusive relationship with fellow cops also faced enormous obstacles to get justice from the law enforcement authorities (Hope & Roslin, 2014). Again, even if the victim does manage to get the abuser convicted, police officers threaten that he will lose his job, and then she will have no financial support for their children (Weterndorf, 2000). The victim is also told by abusive police officers that if he loses his employment, he will lose her life. Overall, as the criminal justice system is hostile and foreign to her, but is the abuser’s daily work environment (Perlstein, 2015), thus victims face tremendous threats to report the abuse.

State based support system for police involved intimate partner victim is extremely limited

The regular procedure in case of intimate partner abuse is to seek shelter with a local domestic violence agency or protection through the legal system. However, the police officers have unlimited access in shelters because either they have brought people subjected to violence to shelter or they have participated in training with shelter staff members (Russel & Pappas, 2018). With keeping this in mind, partners of abusive officers are frequently unwilling to seek help from those services. While only one in four incidents ever gets reported to police, shelters still regularly turn away abused women because they are full (Hope & Roslin, 2015). Even some shelter staff admit they are powerless to protect an abused police spouse (Hope & Roslin,

2015). Again, the counselors who conventionally help domestic abuse victims are also clueless about how to provide proper support to the victims of police abuse. In support of this argument, in the book *Police Domestic Violence: A Handbook for Victims*, Diane Wetendorf, stated that “victims of police batterers frequently complain that advocates don’t grasp how special their case is because the perpetrator is a policeman” (Hope & Roslin, 2015). Again, for women who are wives or girlfriends of cops, the expectation from them is not to involve the department in any personal problems (Johnson, 2000). And intimate partners of police officers are also well introduced with the culture of “Code of silence” that “no officer blames or implicates another officer who is accused of a wrongdoing” (Joseph, 2017, p. 3). So, the wives or girlfriends of the cop know very well that as the case will be handled by officers who are colleagues or friends of their abuser, there is little hope to get justice. Intuitively speaking, this “code of silence” is the greatest barrier to the effective inquiry of complaints against police officers (Joseph, 2017, p.4). Additionally, if a minority woman such as Black or South Asians is the victim of police-involved domestic abuse, with the prevailing sexist and racist attitudes towards them (Shook et al., 2020), there is a chance that those women may feel more vulnerable to seek help from police.

DISCUSSION

This paper is arguing that intimate partner abuse perpetrated by police officers is dangerous and posing extra challenges than abuse perpetrated by others (civilians) and in support of the argument three themes have emerged. First, police abusers are trained abusers, secondly, victims face a tremendous challenge to report the abuse to the proper authority and finally, the resources available to police-involved domestic violence victims are severely limited. These three themes indicating that domestic violence involving officers comes from a specific society, the heavily masculinized world of policing. By investigating police officers’ acts and attitudes through a Radical feminist theory and Connell’s theory of masculinity with special emphasis on the hegemonic masculinity perspective, it becomes apparent that the policing community not only tolerates but actively promotes the attitudes and behaviors that underpin intimate partner violence.

The intimate partners of police officers are especially reluctant to report violence because their partners who are police officers have a gun, and likely know how to manipulate the system to avoid penalty or to shift the blame to the victim or both (French & Fletcher, 2022). An authoritarian “looks” or bodily posture of the police officers, invasion of the victim’s personal space, or merely placing a hand on the victim can effectively convey a threat for the victims (Mazzola, 2014). In a study by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, several participants mentioned that they suffered emotional or physical abuse at the hands of police officer partners and believed their partners used their professional positions to seek to intimidate or harass them (Heal, 2020). Similarly, in the Rosaura Torres case, her husband used his official power for which she was really terrified to seek help from law enforcement authorities. Here it is clear that because of the institutional power of the police officers, they have a dominant attitude towards their partner which is directly connected to the theory of hegemonic masculinity. As Connell specifically stated that behind the hegemonic ideal, there has to be a power, only then it can argue that hegemonic masculinity has been established.

Again, police are the first respondents in an emergency call. Police determine whether in any intimate partner violence-related cases there is probable cause to arrest the abuser or not, even police investigate the whole matter and sometimes become a witness for the domestic abuse cases. For this reason, the victims of police abusers might also be reluctant to report the violence as they know that out of concern police officers will mostly side the abuser officer and there is another chance to become double victims in mandatory arrest policies. As the doctrine, known as “qualified immunity,” through which police officers are prevented from being personally held liable for any constitutional violence, except otherwise, makes it extremely difficult for victims and their families to hold abusive officers accountable (Baude, 2018). This is related to the radical feminist theory as the law enforcement authority’s failure to protect the victim is a reflection of a

patriarchal sign which ultimately reinforces domestic abuse (Yalley & Olutayo, 2020).

Another reason for which women reluctant to report police-involved intimate partner abuse is because they are aware that reports of abuse made to a local department will not be kept confidential within that local department. Women may also be worried that domestic violence reporting may affect the job of the accused officer, which will also have an effect on her life. Here the police officers possess the dominant power over the victim which is also supported by the hegemonic masculinity theory. So, victims of police-involved domestic violence face bias from law enforcement authorities and the justice system, psychological coercion, and a high risk of lethality as compared to other victims of domestic violence.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Police-involved domestic violence creates unique challenges and dangers for the victim. All government authorities, police officers, activists, inspectors and lawyers must work together to deter domestic violence in police official's family life. Officer-involved domestic abuse should be included in a comprehensive database of police brutality. Police abuse in the home should be viewed as a public safety issue rather than a personal one. Third parties must be able to gather and publish unbiased data if uniform reporting standards are to be enforced.

Again, separate skilled investigative agencies need to establish to investigate police involved domestic abuse. Police should not intervene in police involved domestic violence situations without a counsellor present, which may help to reduce the biasness of mandatory arrest policies. Someone with a feminist perspective and counseling and trauma training should be present and assigned to support the survivor from the moment the police first become involved and until the survivor discharges (Johnson & Conner, 2017).

Finally, it is important to make connection between at home and on-the-job violence and disseminate ways to predict violence. Further research should be done in collaboration with police departments, in order to gain a more accurate pictures of officer involved domestic violence.

CONCLUSION

The police officers have an arsenal of skills and tactics which they use to harass their intimate victims, professional training includes much instruction on the use of escalating degrees of force and the use of deadly force. As we have tragically seen in yet more horrific police killings of unarmed African Americans, not even cameras or eyewitnesses are enough to deter police violence. It is clear that the police community has become used to an excessive lack of transparency. There is even amid nonstop media coverage, but still, law enforcement agencies seemed determined to prove those protesting police brutality right by responding with more police violence. But the crucial point is many of those incidents of police brutality at least recorded. The same cannot be said for violent police behavior at home, where there is not even a uniform requirement for reporting officer-involved domestic violence.

The aim of this paper was to argue that police-involved domestic violence is more dangerous than other abuse and, in my opinion, the supporting three themes clearly prove this point. Nonetheless, a counter-narrative will inevitably emerge. This counterargument will hold that a police officer's profession is a stressful job. Many studies have found that "policing is a most stress full job" (Frank et al., 2017, p. 352) and such job-related stresses have been noted to contribute to domestic violence in police officer families (Baron, 2018). However, stress does not really cause abuse as there are lots of stressful jobs such as paramedics, surgeons and firefighters but they do not have this kind of problem. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers must attempt to address this issue and recognize that domestic abuse perpetrated by police against their family members is not a private matter, it is a crime that has a more

dangerous impact on victims than traditional batterer. Addressing this issue will help us to reduce one of the most severe social issues still lingering today.

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