Coping with the Challenges ofBeing a Significant Other
of a Law Enforcement Officer and a U.S. Military Reservist

A graduate project in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree ofMaster of Science in Counseling,
Marriage and Family Therapy

By
Jennifer Ann Mireles

December 2013
The graduate project of Jennifer Ann Mireles is approved:

__________________________________  _______________________
Charles Hanson, Ph.D.    Date

__________________________________  _______________________
Julie Hau, Ph.D.     Date

__________________________________  _______________________
Luis Rubalcava, Ph.D., Chair    Date

California State University, Northridge
Acknowledgement

I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my committee chair Professor Luis Rubalcava, Ph.D., without his supervision, constant guidance and continuous words of encouragement throughout the making of this graduate project and throughout my graduate program, it would not have been possible. You are truly an inspiration and pleasure to have known throughout this process.

I would like to thank my committee members, Professor Julie Hau, Ph.D. and Professor Charles Hanson, Ph.D., whose assistance and direction through my graduate course work along with the making of my graduate project would not have been possible.

Dr. Hau, your guidance throughout the development of my project and assistance in my formatting was such a great help. Your class also had a huge impact on my outlook of how we choose our careers and what develops our personal abilities. Thank you for providing me with the insight and direction throughout my time as a graduate student here at CSUN.

Dr. Hanson, without your guidance and compassion as my first year practicum professor and allowing me the experience to train at the Valley Trauma Center, I wouldn’t have gain the vision and understanding of this altruistic career path. Thank you for making my time here at CSUN valued and memorable. My experience within your practicum will forever remain part of my development as a Marriage Family Therapist.

In addition, a special thank you goes to my second year practicum professor/supervisor Clovis Emblen. I couldn’t have been partnered with a more
dedicated professional within the field. Without your compassion, support and guidance throughout practicum and during my traineeship at the Valley Trauma Center I wouldn’t have grown into the confident professional that I am now. You have been the guiding light during my time in this graduate program. Thank you for allowing me to share my fears and biggest accomplishments while growing in this program. I will never forget you.

Another special and much awaited acknowledgement goes to my parents and my parent-in-laws; Danny Ilejay, Debbie & Ruben Ramirez, and Amelia & Cruz Mireles for their constant support throughout my college years. Without their love, encouragement and belief in my capabilities, I would not be here now. I love you all very much. Mom, thank you for always pushing me in the right direction even though I may have been stubborn a time or two. You have always been my heart and inspiration in becoming a successful independent woman in the professional world, Dad thanks for always checking in on me throughout my program to insure I wasn’t too stressed out, and Ruby, thanks for keeping me grounded and laughing all the way to the finish line. Mom Amelia, Gracias por su apoyo durante mi programa de postgrado. Te Amo mucho. Y Dad Cruz, A pesar de que ya no están aquí, usted siempre estará en mi corazón.

To my grandparents; Stella & Danny Ilejay, Louie & Tina Noriega, & Hector Estrada thank you for always believing in me throughout this process. I hope to always make you and the family proud. Grandpa Danny, Grandma Stella, Grandpa Louie and Grandma Tina, “Can you believe it, I did it, I did it!!”To my Grandpa Hector, I know he’s shining down on me from heaven with pride. I love you and miss you.
To my siblings; Candice & Danny and extended siblings; Noemi, Carlos, Sergio & Chris, I know that my time has been limited but I want to thank you for your understanding and support during my graduate program. I just want you all to know that you were always with me during this journey. I love you all and thank you for all your continued support. A special thanks to my handsome and beautiful nephews and niece; Luis, James, Vince, Paul, Audrey and Ethan, your Tia/Nina loves you.

I would like to acknowledge and send a special thank you to my Peak Corporate Network Family, without the love and continued support of everyone I worked with I won’t have pushed myself through. To Eli Tene & Gil Priel, without their understanding and encouragement it would not have been possible for me to continue to work while attending school. Your unconditional love and support means a great deal to me and you will always be a part of my experience during my undergraduate and graduate programs. I love you Eli and Gilly Gil.

One more mention of acknowledgment, without these four individuals, my colleagues, friends and my partners in crime, Delsy Sandoval, Guru Shabd Khalsa, Kathy Membreno, & Magdalena Stoicof, I wouldn’t have had such an amazing experience throughout my graduate program. Thank you all, for being my support system, my shoulder to cry on, and my sisters. I love you all so much and am happy to have met and to have developed such strong bonds with each and every one of you. I hope to always be in touch, best of luck with your future careers.

Finally, thank you to the rest of my family and friends who supported me along the way to achieving my lifelong goals and dreams.
Dedications

I would like to dedicate my graduate project to the brave men and women of the U.S. Army Reserves and the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department. Thank you for continuing to protect our nation and communities. Without your dedication and sacrifice our communities and country would not be what it is today. In addition, I would also like to extend a special thank you to the significant others who support and stand by their loved ones who serve in either or both of these selfless professions. Thank you for sacrificing your time to allow your loved ones to protect and serve our nation.

One more special individual, I want to dedicate this graduate project to, is my loving and supportive husband, Jose Mireles. Thank you baby, for your love and support throughout my career as a graduate student. Thanks for stepping up and handling things at home when I was unable to. Your dedication and sacrifice as a L.A. County Sheriff’s Deputy and U.S. Army Reservist is truly an inspiration, and has brought to light for me, an appreciation of what you do for our country which is the reason for creating this graduate project. Thank you for your words of encouragement and continuous push during my ups and downs throughout my program at CSUN. Joe, I love you very much and I am proud to be the wife of a Los Angeles County Deputy and U.S. Army Reservist. Thank you for everything you do.
# Table of Contents

Signature Page.................................................................................................................ii  
Acknowledgment...........................................................................................................iii  
Dedication.......................................................................................................................vi  
Abstract..........................................................................................................................xi  
Chapter 1: Introduction.................................................................................................1  
  Statement of Need........................................................................................................3  
  Purpose of Thesis Project............................................................................................5  
  Significance of Project...............................................................................................7  
  Terminology.................................................................................................................9  
  Bridge to Literature Review.......................................................................................12  
Chapter 2: Introduction.................................................................................................14  
  Literature Review.......................................................................................................14  
    Divorce and Marital Difficulties.............................................................................14  
    Marital Satisfaction...............................................................................................17  
    The Effects of Deployments...................................................................................23  
    Mental Health........................................................................................................26  
    Domestic Violence..................................................................................................31  
    Officer Involved Shootings & Injuries on the Job.................................................37  
    Killed in Action or Line of Duty Death (LODD)....................................................39  
    Effects on Children..................................................................................................46  
  Synthesis of Review....................................................................................................49  
Chapter 3: Introduction.................................................................................................54  
  Intended Audience.....................................................................................................54  
  Qualifications..............................................................................................................56  
  Setting.........................................................................................................................57
Abstract

Coping with the Daily Stress of Being the Spouse
Of an Officer and a Military Reservist

By
Jennifer Ann Mireles
Master of Science in Counseling
Marriage and Family Therapy

When discussing the daily stressors of our law enforcement officers, the significant others of these brave officers tend to be overlooked. Much research has been done regarding the effects of the demands of policing, shift work, emotional dissonance, marital difficulties, mental health, effects on children, domestic violence, etc… Many significant others are fascinated and mesmerized with the excitement of the job that their significant other has while they are dating. However, significant others may not realize the true reality of what the job entails especially once the couple is married and has other marital responsibilities, such as children, financial responsibilities, homeownership, family obligations, and more. For instance, a significant other’s work obligations often include a constant change of schedules along with difficulty finding time together. Most significant others are not aware of how important independence is when partnering to someone so dedicated to serving our community and country.

This workshop has been designed to focus on providing insight to the wives behind the badge. Support and awareness of what it takes to be the significant other of a Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Deputy is key, when dealing with the challenges of busy schedules, department obligations, home obligations and much more. Knowledge on maintaining a healthy marriage and strong communication skills is what the presenters hope to enhance within their attendees of this workshop. By building on skills such as; conflict resolution, strengthening the intimate and work related bonds with your Deputy, developing a strong social support group and proper communication skills. These and many other aspects will assist in providing the spouses of law enforcement officers with a positive outlook, independency, a healthier physical and emotional demeanor, and financial stability within their marriage.
Chapter 1

Introduction

According to a report conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011), as of May 2011 there were approximately 636,410 employed Police and Sheriff Patrol Officers. Also mentioned in the 2011 Bureau of Labor Statistics report, in August 2011, there were more than 2.3 million people serving in the Armed Forces and of that 2.3 million there were approximately 846,000 people serving in the U.S. Military Reserve component (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). So who are the men and women behind the badge and uniform who support our local law enforcement officers and patrol deputies? Who are the men and women who support our U.S. Military Reservists? How would a significant other cope with the stress of dealing with having a loved one employed by both occupations? The workshop presented in this project is designed to assist in providing answers to the questions above. For instance, what are the expectations of the service member when they are dual employed by high risk occupations? Sacrifice and flexibility become part of their everyday vocabulary not to mention their family’s as well.

An officer and military service member are aware that their time, flexibility, on and off the job demands and obligations, not to mention the mandatory overtime, and the possibility of deployments, can create an emotional burden on their personal relationships. How do significant others, prepare for such demanding expectations and what are the differences within each occupation? In this proposed workshop, facilitators and clients will utilize this time to process the various obligations of a Law Enforcement Officers and a Military Reservist.
Aamodt and McCoy (2009) conducted a study on the divorce rate for law enforcement officers in comparison to various other occupations and discovered law enforcement amongst other occupations rated much lower. Actually law enforcement and military services member were nowhere near the top five ranking occupations with high divorce rates; the following were: Dancers and Choreographers, Bartenders, Massage Therapist, Gaming Cage workers and Extruding and forming machine operators, setters, and tenders; whose rates varied from 43.05% to 32.74% (Aamodt & McCoy, 2009). Law enforcement officers had a percentage of 15.01% and military service members ranked even lower coming in at 10.92%. Hughes (2011) discusses the results of a survey conducted after 9/11 of one half million service members who served between 2002 and 2005 regarding deployments and surprisingly the outcome was not as high as expected. Deployments had little cause of divorce amongst military couples especially when children were involved. Contrary to expectation, deployment lowered the risk of divorce for couples who were married younger, couples with children and women (Hughes, 2011).

For those who have read the various news media reports regarding the negative stigma that law enforcement officers have one of the highest divorce rate, this author states otherwise. Hughes (2011) does not suggest that service members do not divorce, but the author disputes the fact that if one is seeking a successful marriage it would be wise to steer clear of someone in these two high risk occupations. For all intents and purposes, given the nature of my level of expertise and experience in this topic, the focus in the workshop presentation will be geared towards the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Deputy and the U.S. Army Reservist. Additionally, this workshop is being presented to
heterosexual couples, but the author is that aware of same sex relationships in both occupations are becoming prevalent in these professions and can alter the workshop in order to accommodate gay and lesbian relationships should the demand be there. Despite society’s more liberal stance of accepting the LGBTQ community and recognizing gay marriage in various parts of our country, discussion of same sex relationships in these private communities (law enforcement and military cultures) is not openly accepted amongst these tight knit communities (Colvin, 2008). Please also note that this workshop can be altered to accommodate each military and law enforcement branches in various presentations. The workshop will briefly discuss the differences between the different types of police officers who work in both state and local enforcement along with the different military branches as well.

**Statement of Need**

The current need for this workshop is to educate significant others of the obligations and expectations of their officer/service members. While undergoing research on locating workshops for significant others of law enforcement officers, there were none located in the Los Angeles County area. There is a great need for support groups for significant others and the officers, as well as educational resources to help the family members understand the law enforcement officer’s occupation, stressors and changes associated with the profession (Stone, 2007). Openshaw and Westphal (2009) discussed the possibility of creating a project called the marriage education program for law enforcement married couples, which would provide a curriculum for the attendees on how to deal with the everyday stress of being in a law enforcement relationship. This
program was presented and is currently being utilized in the state of Texas. Several issues in this project were brought to light that are being considered in the creation of this workshop, such as disclosure and trust issues, rank, and professional discipline (Openshaw & Westphal, 2009). Unlike the Law Enforcement community the U.S. Military does offer various support groups for significant others along with various support groups should the service member deploy, such as the Army Family Readiness Group, Army Reserve Family Programs, MilitaryHOMEFRONT (BJA, 2011), and many more. Many law enforcement agencies also include military deployment services for the family, should the law enforcement officer deploy. The U.S. Department of Justice Office of the Community Oriented Policing Services COPS Innovations (2008) created a brochure with many resources for the officer who is deploying in order to insure that not only will the officer be cared for by the department, but also his/her family. There is mention in the brochure that the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department in 2004 received an award (ESGR Freedom Award) for its military repatriation program (COPS Innovations, 2008). A Military Activation Committee (MAC) was created after 9/11 to provide law enforcement officers with the proper support who were called to active duty (mobilized for deployment) (COPS Innovations, 2008).

While conducting further research, there were a plethora of articles that focused on the stress of law enforcement officers and military service member encounters and ways to assist in alleviating their stressors, but there was little focus on the loved ones who are left behind to endure their own stress on their own. Many significant others are fascinated and mesmerized with the excitement of the job that their significant other has while they are dating. However, significant others may not realize the true reality of
what the job entails. For instance, a significant other’s work obligations often include a constant change of schedules along with difficulty finding time together. Most significant others are not aware of how important independence is when partnering to someone so dedicated to serving our community and country. This workshop aims at providing the necessary elements needed to aid significant others as they endure challenging events such as scheduling due to shift work (Croon, Gelderen, Heuven, Veldhoven & Zeelenberg, 2007), burnout (Burke, 1993), impending deployments (BJA, 2011), meeting outside department obligations, addressing financial issues, children (Department of Defense, 2010), obtaining family and department support, mental health (Beehr, Johnson & Nieva, 1995), officer involved shootings (The Police Chief, 2011), Line of Duty Death (LODD) (Miller, 2007), creating a safety/family care plan (FCP) (BJA, 2011) and much more. One of the largest concerns is safety of our Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) / Military Reservist when they are out in the field. This presentation will assist the significant others of these individuals by providing ways to cope with the unforeseen future stressors and the daily concerns of an LEO / Military Reservists.

**Purpose of Thesis Project**

The purpose of this project is to provide the law enforcement / military reservist communities with a resource to assist significant others in their time of need. Support is hard to implement if the significant other is not familiar with the requirements of this high risk profession for which their significant others have signed up. Significant others, who become a part of this unique private culture, whether it’s military or law
enforcement, are rarely provided direction on how to manage their loved one’s occupational obligations to either or both services. Depending on the awareness or lack of the significant others could experience the spectrum of despair to hopelessness. This workshop is to provide hope and understanding for both individuals. Even though there is much discrepancy in what the average divorce rate currently is within both occupations (Aamodt & McCoy, 2009) there is still a higher amount of married couples that stay together through the difficult periods that are experienced throughout the relationship. A study by Stone (2007) has shown that marriages that take place after an officer is already on the job last longer than those begun before the individual joins the force due to the lack of false expectations. Both occupations are labeled with the negative stigma of higher rates of divorce or separation when the discussion of marriage or exclusively dating an officer and military personnel (Aamodt & McCoy, 2009). There are many difficulties that “normal” relationships experience but LEO’s and Military Reservists have additional challenges. These challenges warrant additional interventions as there are additional concerns such as, varying schedules, injuries on the job, emotional disconnection to family and friends, hyper vigilance, etc… Because of the aforementioned reasons, this workshop is created in order to assist significant others in understanding the following points: Provide education to significant others/families of military reservists/law enforcement services members who currently serve in both occupations; The ins and outs of both occupations and how to manage it; Provide insight regarding deployments and how to get ready for “life as you know it” to change; What can your service member/Deputy do to prepare you should he/she be deployed?; What are the current stressors when dealing with a LEO/service member and what are ways to
offer support for them and their significant others?; Providing resources and various support groups should the unthinkable happen and how to prepare for such a painful event.; preparing the children; Loneliness; Domestic Violence; and Opening the lines of communication between significant others and their children.

With regards to the workshop, as mentioned in the introduction, after much research, there is little or no mention of workshops designed for law enforcement significant others in further literature reviews or internet search engines such as Google and Yahoo; except for the program mentioned in the State of Texas (Openshaw & Westphal, 2009). These types of workshops are hard to come by due to the exclusiveness of the law enforcement community which is unfortunately a major disservice to the families who sacrifice their time spent with their loved one due to the high demands of the job (Clark, 2011). With this in mind, this project aims to provide insight and knowledge to the significant others of these law enforcement officers in order to assist them with questions or concerns that they may come across.

**Significance of the Project**

Due to the lack of support groups for the law enforcement and military reservist significant others it would be extremely beneficial to have this workshop in place for such individuals who are seeking information on what their LEO is dealing with and experiencing on a daily basis. The Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department provides an informational meeting for the significant others prior to their recruit graduating from the academy, but the meeting fails to provide resources, such as, workshops or support
groups on how to assist significant others in coping with the changes their recruits will undergo throughout their law enforcement career. Along with the emotional changes the significant other will encounter during training and the weeks/months following the completion of the academy. This presentation is given by the Training Officers (T.O.) that will be working closely with recruits; this can discourage many significant others from questioning the rules and protocols of the training for fear of retaliation on their significant other as a recruit. The saying is, when a supporting significant other one must always maintain a positive outlook when dealing with your LEO’s peers and superiors (Kirschman, 2007). The impact of these meetings, though informative, creates more questions than answers and offers very little assistance for the significant others who are dealing with the fluctuations of their LEO’s various demands of their high-risk occupation.

By researching this topic further, it has been revealed that there are very few support groups that will provide the curriculum that this workshop will. This workshop is designed to provide hope, support, understanding, compromise and a new outlook to the challenges that will be brought into being married to someone who puts him/herself in harms ways each day they step out the front door. This work shop will further provide tools for the significant others when dealing with the stressors of the profession. It will also provide a unique aspect in assisting significant others who cope with having a significant other not only employed in their local law enforcement agency but also serving in the United States Army Reserves.
**Terminology**

Police and Sheriff’s Patrol Officers – to maintain order and protect life and property by enforcing local, tribal, State, and Federal law and ordinances. Perform a combination of the following duties: patrol a specific area; direct traffic; issue traffic summonses; investigate accidents; apprehend and arrest suspects, or serve legal processes of courts (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

Military Reservist – Reserve units typically serve on a part time basis, providing additional combat and specialized services support to active duty components. Reserves refer to members of the Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve and Coast Guard Reserve (National Resource Center for Healthy Marriages and Families, 2012).

Spillover – or another word “crossover” is an observation that stresses is one part of life are very likely to create stress on other parts of one’s life. Where work demand and stresses impact the quality of life of families and psychological well-being of families (Orthner & Rose, 2009).

Relationship - The condition or fact of being related; connection or association.

Connection by blood or marriage; kinship. A particular type of connection existing between people related to or having dealings with each other: has a close relationship with his siblings. A romantic or sexual involvement (www.thefreedictionary.com, 2000).

Family Systems— Treatment approach that addresses the family and individual client. Focus is on interpersonal relationships. Relationship Therapy is more appropriate label than family therapy (Corey, 2008).
Solution-focused Therapy - Solution focus brief therapy focuses on creating solutions through understanding of what the client is able to do. Little emphasis is put on the understanding of the problem and SFBT assumes that clients are able to construct their own solutions. This therapy focuses on client’s strengths by building hope and optimism, rather than focusing on the client’s weaknesses (Corey, 2008).

Shift Work – is a shift rotation that all law enforcement officers experience. This consists of around the clock varied schedules which can affect the officers sleep needs and cause isolation especially if the officer is working the early morning shift (9:00pm to 5am) (Kirschman, 2007). Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department refers to their shift work schedules as EM’s – Early mornings – PM’s – Afternoons – Days – Day Shift.

Weekend Warrior – Another reference to a reservist. A reservist who attends weekend meetings of his or her unit in order to fulfill military obligations. (Schuette, 2005).

Battle assembly/Assemblies--is the new term used for weekend drills, unit training assemblies, or multiple unit training assemblies, according to Lt. Gen. James R. Helmy, USARC commanding general and chief, Army Reserve (Schuette, 2005).

B2V – Baker to Vegas - The Baker to Vegas Relay is the most "positive" event offered to law enforcement officers today. It gives them a reason to maintain a physical fitness program so as to help them better perform their duties. Over the 20+ years the Challenge Cup/Baker to Vegas Relay has been run hundreds of thousands law enforcement personnel have tread across the desert. The original ideals of the race continue which include: teamwork, camaraderie, physical fitness and competition. The event has expanded in many ways — most notably in entries and categories. The number of teams
has grown 14 fold from the first 19 teams in 1985. The number of teams is now limited to 270. Categories have grown to include Probation Officers, District Attorneys, US Attorneys and full time civilian police personnel (www.bakervegas.com, 2013).

FAP – Department of Defense Family Advocacy Program – was created in 1984 in order to assist with issues related to military family violence. The program seeks to identify family violence as early as possible, prevent family violence, and provide treatment for victims of family violence (Family Advocacy Program, n.d.).

FCP – Family Care Plan – includes preparing for financial, legal, medical, emergency, and a various other personal issues for the soldier, the soldiers family and parents. It is a working plan for the care of families and for personal property when soldiers are preparing for deployment (BJA, 2011).

IED - An improvised explosive device (IED) is a homemade bomb constructed and deployed in ways other than in conventional military action. It may be constructed of conventional military explosives, such as an artillery round, attached to a detonating mechanism. Roadside bombs are a common use of IEDs (Wikipedia, 2013).

LODD – Line of Duty Death – or death of a fellow officer while on the job (Miller, 2007).

OEF – Operation Enduring Freedom - is the official name used by the U.S. government for the War in Afghanistan, together with a number of smaller military actions, under the umbrella of the Global "War on Terror" (GWOT) (Wikipedia, 2010).
OIF – Operation Iraqi Freedom - The primary political goal of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM was to create "a stable Iraq, with its territorial integrity intact and a broad based government that renounces WMD development and use, and no longer supports terrorism or threatens its neighbors” (Ball, 2013, p.1).

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) - PTSD can develop after experiencing a traumatic event that involved physical injury and/or the threat of physical harm. The individual who develops PTSD can be the one who was harmed, perhaps the harm may have happened to a loved one, or the person may have witnessed a harmful event that happened to loved ones or strangers (DSM-IV-TR, 2000).

“One weekend a month - two weeks a year” – Old reservist motto – For many, the old days of training one weekend a month and two weeks a year are history. The so-called Weekend Warriors have a new routine: months and years away from lives and families, in hot spots flaring up around the world (Draper, 2003).

**Bridge to Lit Review**

As a result of the shortage of workshops available, these significant others of LEO’s are offered little support which could contribute to marital breakdown amongst these couples. There have been numerous studies on the divorce rate of these high risk occupations which will be discussed, along with the effects of martial satisfaction and how the shift work and deployments can affect the couple’s relationship. Even though there is a paucity of research on the affects of martial satisfaction in law enforcement marriage due to the tight knit community there are several articles that discuss the stress and concerns that these relationships encounter (Miller, 2007). Once the literature review
is concluded the workshop material will be outlined. This includes a developmental guidance oriented power point along with various handouts that may assist the attendee along with resources and materials for future concerns as well. On a side note, there are many other hazardous and high-risk occupations, such as EMTs, Fire Fighters, Military Active Duty Soldiers, etc…(Matsakis, 2005) that can also benefit from the topics presented in this workshop.
Chapter 2

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to be able to provide much needed resources and information for significant others of LEO’s and Military Reservists who have or are currently undergoing stressful situations due to their significant other being employed in high-risk occupations. The topics to be presented will be the divorce rate of these professions, marital satisfaction, the possibility of deployment and how to cope with one’s partner being away, mental/physical health factors, domestic violence, financial obligations, officer involved shootings, being hurt on the job, killed in action or on duty, the expectations of the job and what to expect, fear and coping, internal and external obligations of the job, effects on children and benefits to having the proper resources and support (i.e. family, friends and community/employer support). Since the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department tends to keep a lot of their statistical information under lock and key much of the data presented comes from various law enforcement agencies and not directly from the Sheriff’s Department. First discussed will be the statistics of divorce within these two occupations.

Literature Review

Divorce and Marital Difficulties

McCoy and Aamodt (2010) discussed the divorce rate amongst police officers. They disputed the notion that police officers hold one of the highest divorce rates due to the demands of their occupation. For instance, some reasons postulated for police officers’ work contributing to high divorce rates include the demands of shift work, the
challenges of working with supervisors, public scrutiny, legal allegations, and the use of force. These are some of the issues that can come between an officer and his loved ones (McCoy & Aamodt, 2010). Data demonstrate that LEO’s and military service members were not near the top of the U.S. Census Bureau’s list from the 2000 U.S. Census and surprisingly law enforcement officers were ranked 30 on the Census Bureau list of occupations with the highest divorce rates in 2000. The stigma in popular culture is that partnering, marrying or dating a police officer is related to higher probabilities of divorce, termination of the relationship or separation. Aamodt and McCoy (2010) collected data from 2000 U.S. Census (Census, 2000) and discovered that, “the divorce/separation rates for law enforcement occupations (14.47%) was lower than both the national average (16.96%) as well as the rate expected given the demographic and income characteristics of the law enforcement (16.35%). When separated into various occupations within law enforcement, police officers were ranked low with a percentage of 15.01% which was lower than the national average (Aamodt & McCoy, 2010, p. 4).” Their study provided the divorce rate for military, rank not specified as (10.92%), which was even lower than law enforcement officers. Given the dearth of research that has been conducted on this topic, there is some evidence, but contrary to popular belief that the relationship between a law enforcement occupation and divorce seems unclear. Some of the aspects that future research could address are martial satisfaction, couple communication, support system, mental and physical health, the demands of the children, etc…

Came, Howse, Steacy, Thomas and Wolf (1989) identified marital breakdown by the Toronto forces employee assistance program, to a group of women from the Metropolitan Toronto Police Wives Association in order for them to acquire a better
understanding of what type of stressors and experiences their husbands face when on patrol. The group was presented with various pictures of horrific scenes that most officers on patrol will encounter on a daily/nightly basis; such as murder victims, suicides, deaths of children (accidental and intentional), gunshot victims (GSV) etc… (Came, et al., 1989). The reason for this particular workshop was to provide these wives the awareness and insight to the various situations that their husbands may experience. Currently there is nothing specifically geared toward the significant others of the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department, though there are other outside agencies such as the National Police Wives Association and the LAPD Wives Association. Yet, there is nothing specific to the L.A. County Sheriff’s Department significant others or families, which is another reason for creating this workshop. In a survey conducted by the Toronto Police in 1981, it was found that the divorce and separation rate (63%) was double the national average among ordinary Canadian residents (Came et al., 1989). These results are contrary to the most recent data. What remains unclear is if nation (Canada instead of the United States) issues, or if time (1989 instead of the recent census) explains these differences. Nevertheless, consideration for Came et al., (1989) explanation that the breakdown in communication seems to be the main reason for the marital breakdowns amongst law enforcement couples requires consideration.

Furthermore, law enforcement marriages, the marriage/divorce trends for active and reservists in the military are also being challenged. In the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, the statistics of how many active and reservists military personnel are presented. “Over half (55%) of all Active Components and 48% of Reserve Component members are currently married (NHMRC, 2011, p.1).” Unfortunately, just as LEO’s are
criticized for the higher possibility of divorce, so are military personnel, due to their various work obligations which can send them on special orders overseas for trainings or deployments. This can lead to hardships for the significant others who are left behind to handle all the household chores on their own. The U.S. Military takes prides in providing various programs that can provide support for those families left behind while their service member is away. But what if your service member was a Reservist? The lack of support groups may not be as readily available, especially if the service member’s unit is not within one’s place of residence. This may add additional stress to the significant other and could cause feelings of abandonment. These feelings and more can be why the trends for divorce result in higher rates. “In 2009, the divorce rate in the Reserve Component was lower than among Active Duty members (2.8% vs. 3.6%) (NHMRC, 2011, p. 1).”

There are various reasons for the speculation of such high divorce rates for both of these occupations; the lack of communication, stress, looming deployments, traumatic and dangerous situations, can have a major influence on the couple’s relationship. The next section will examine the variations of how those aforementioned variables can influence the outcome of divorce. Furthermore, how these variables may effect martial satisfaction and what can be done to preserve the marriage to LEO’s and Military Reservists.

**Marital Satisfaction**

What are some key elements needed in order to maintain a flourishing marriage? Good communication and listening skills, time spent together, understanding and support,
good physical and mental health, are some of the necessities for a marriage to withstand the trials and tribulations of everyday life. Consequently, what if there was a need for additional resources due to having a loved one employed in a high risk occupation? There will be added stressors that can deteriorate the relationship if the foundation is not preserved. A major stressor for military reservist families is the possibility of deployment. The saying military families have adapted when dealing with the possibility of deployment is, “not if, but when.” “The separation can create stress due to the loss of emotional support, disconnected relationships, and increased caretaking and household responsibilities for the civilian significant other. It can also cause significant others to experience loneliness, anger, depression, and anxiety” (NHMI, 2011, p. 2). These factors alone can have a major impact on both significant others during a deployment, which can in turn run the risk of infidelity. The absence of a support system can be detrimental to the couple. Further, the anticipation of return can be emotional and stressful on a family. In addition, the separation that can cause added emotional stress and feelings of abandonment (NHMI, 2011).

The pressure these officers endure on a daily basis can have devastating effects on a marriage should the LEO shut down and fail to discuss what feelings or concerns they are experiencing. If the LEO are simultaneously in the Military Reserves, which can be an added stressor on the family should the Reservist be deployed or sent away for military training for an allotted time, additional stress ensues. Came et al., (1989) discusses two kinds of stresses; “Overload phenomenon and critical incident stress” (p. 36). The overload phenomenon is associated more closely to being over worked and not being able to balance the workload. This phenomenon can resemble sleep deprivation
caused by shift work and mandated overtime obligations. The critical incident stress is a lot more serious and is associated with unsafe or shocking work conditions on a daily basis. If not addressed or taken care of such situations may lead to post traumatic stress disorder or (PTSD). For example, exposure to horrific crime scenes, abused or deaths of children, injury due to use of force and other traumatic occurrences can affect the mental wellbeing of the LEO if not tended to appropriately.

Another area of potential marital breakdown is in the areas of communication, and the difficulties due to the traumatic situations that LEO experience on a daily basis. Isolation is another debilitating factor impacting marital breakdown. Since, LEO often seek comfort by gaining support from their peers, they may simultaneously “pull away” from outside people who are unable to relate to what they are experiencing. In any relationship, social relationships among one’s peers and family provide additional support for both individuals in the relationship. A significant other of a LEO/Reservist tends to struggle with maintaining those friendships when the questions always asked are along the following lines: “Aren’t you afraid of him getting hurt or killed? Aren’t you lonely? When do you see each other? He’s away again for how long (Military)?” These are just a few of the questions that can deter a law enforcement married couple from attending social functions. The constant questioning either of the strength of the relationship or the changes in the LEO’s character and comparisons of mistakes that other LEO have made may become exhausting. Due to these challenges, law enforcement officer’s peer within their private community to allow the LEO to express and discuss what has been transpiring on the job. Concurrently, the isolation for the significant other can have devastating affects on a successful marriage.
Croon, Gelderen, Heuven, Veldhoven and Zeelenberg (2007), conducted a study, regarding the affects of shift work, psychological strain at the end of a work shift and emotional dissonance, along with the Conservation of Resource Theory (COR). The COR “offers an integrative stress theory that considers external environmental processes as well as internal ones (Croon, et al., 2007, p. 447). These resources can include aspects such that an individual can utilize when needing to obtain important items. In the case of a police officer, it would be adequate rest, which would provide energy, stamina and personal health. When a police officer begins their career as a patrol officer/deputy they are assigned a shift or “Shift Work,” which is the time frame that they will be working when patrolling the streets of a particular community. Shifts vary in time. Some examples are, the early morning shift (9pm – 5am), day shift (5am – 1pm) and PM Shift (1pm – 9pm). Shift work can vary in the increments of work time depending on the agency and their scheduling department or personnel.

Croon et al., (2007) discusses the possible affects that psychological strain can have on the law enforcement officer. For instance, inadequate sleep or the lack of a private life or issues affects their private lives. Emotional dissonance as described in the article; “refers to a discrepancy between felt and displayed emotions” (Croon, et al., 2007, p. 447). Officers are taught “to check their feelings at the door” when starting a shift. Being emotionally involved with a victim can prevent the officer from doing his job and can also put him in danger should the situation become dangerous or unsafe. Expressing and repressing various emotions while on patrol can be challenging to the officer. For example, the officer may have to present himself as authoritative when dealing with an offender and then switch to having a sympathetic ear for the victim
though he may not be having these particular feelings (Croon, et al., 2007). Having to regulate feelings is something an officer has to do on a daily basis on the job, which can also have detrimental effects in the law enforcement officer’s personal life.

The Law Enforcement Healthy Marriage and Family Project by Openshaw and Westphal, was created in January 2005 by the Mesquite Police Department (MPD) and the Texas A & M University Commerce. This project’s focus was on marital satisfaction among law enforcement officers and their significant others. The article addresses several key points and goals that the workshop provided in this project will reflect. There were two goals when creating this project; “…provide general marriage education for law enforcement officers and their significant others to enhance marital satisfaction and increase marriage skills and the second, to reduce the number of divorces in the high-risk population of law enforcement officers and other first responders through introduction of marriage education developed specifically to meet the needs of this special population (Openshaw, L. & Westphal, G., 2009, p.1).”

Openshaw and Westphal (2009) conducted needs surveys, which inquired for each participant, on communication, job-stress, family stress and financial obligations. In response to the survey, the LEO’s greatest concerns were “shift work, time away from their significant others and a lack of understanding and respect from the community” (Openshaw & Westphal, 2009, p. 2). The significant others on the other hand disclosed that their main concerns were, “the time away from the family, the lack of openness in marriage or inability to communicate and share emotions, change in personality or callousness and lack of joy, the safety of their significant other, and the lack of treatment as an equal by significant others who remain in ‘police mode’ even when off duty”
(Openshaw & Westphal, 2009, p. 2). Knowing the concerns of the couples the marriage education program focused on providing the curriculum needed for these law enforcement marriages. Several areas of the curriculum focused on the unique stressors these families endured on a daily basis, stress management techniques, various character traits to be aware. This provided great insight on the family and law enforcement cultures and the differences each one shares. This served to build and enhance communication and problem solving skills amongst the couples. A unique take on how to meet your significant other’s emotional needs, sharing needs and being able to communicate love is also included within the program’s curriculum.

Lastly, the couples are provided ways to develop a defense for their marriage relationship and family by assisting them in forgiveness and boundary settings. One concern mentioned in the program pilot was the issue of full disclosure should the various agencies attend the workshop or higher-ranking officers, which may lead to feelings of judgment by others within the department (Openshaw & Westphal, 2009). The introduction of such a program, if offered here in Southern California, would be beneficial to all law enforcement couples, especially those new to the various law enforcement agencies from Los Angeles County area to the entire country. The mention of how to deal with your LEO having to be deployed, should also be incorporated within this program, should the LEO be in the U.S. Military Reserve Unit.
The Effects of Deployments

Within the last ten years, there are many families that have experienced the heartbreaking affects of seeing a loved one receive the call to duty and deploy to serve in a six months to two years deployments overseas in such missions as Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) or Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). “According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) data, 23% of the approximately 18,000 law enforcement departments in the United States have Guard and Reserve citizens-service members in their ranks who were called to active duty under the provisions of United States Code (USC) Title 10” (BJA, 2010, p. 2). Next, the difference between the Guard and the Reserve will be identified.

The two main differences between the Guard and the Reserves reflects duties they serve during war time conflict. Members of the Guard serve state side when natural disasters hit our communities such as hurricanes or major floods; whereas, Reserves only have one duty to support the Commander and Chief (BJA, 2010). Many of our local law enforcement officers have dual occupations and are part of one of these Reserve components. So how does this make their dual occupation duties differ from someone who only serves as a LEO? What are the effects on the home front? As mentioned deployment is a risk no matter if it is wartime or peacetime in our country. So how are these families able to prepare for the possible risk of having their LEO deployed?

A guidebook, by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Bureau of Justice Assistance, authors discuss the policies, procedures, and how to begin a Family
Care Plan (FCP). Families are advised to begin to assess their FCP prior to their loved ones receiving the call to duty and to reassess it every six months to ensure that all pertinent information is current and up-to-date. The FCP section provides resources such as financial management, legal preparations, medical/health, and other miscellaneous issues that can assist families when they are in the high stress time of pre-deployment. During this time, service members have time to prepare such aspects before they are deployed. Besides the military’s FCP, the LEO’s department should also have a designated Military Liaison Officer (MLO), who can assist the LEO with questions regarding his deployment, paperwork, communication with the department while deployed, transitions and reintegration and more (IACP & BJA, 2010). Although this attend to the needs of the deployed person, what about the effects on the significant others? That is, what are the effects on Military Husbands, Wives and Partners? In the following section a focus on Military Wives, and deployed husbands will be taken.

Many research studies have been conducted regarding the affects of deployment on the service member, but a scant amount of research on the significant others left behind. For instance, what are the experiences they undergo while they await their significant other’s return? Marnocha (2012) conducted a study that discussed the perceptions of transition, adaption, and coping with deployment. The article states that many families experience major stress when dealing with the deployment of a father, husband, or significant other. Whether the service member is a boyfriend, son, husband, or father; the family, children and significant others are constantly on high alert while their loved one is deployed and will experience the emotional “ups and downs” throughout the separation. “Fifty percent of military personnel are married and nine out
of ten military significant others are female. Dealing with deployment can be an overwhelming process for the significant other, as they cope with loneliness, loss of emotional support, pressure of an extensive separation, shifting responsibilities, potential difficulty in dealing with the children, financial constraints, and constant disruption of family roles” (Marnocha, 2012, p. 1).

Significant others not only worry about the possibility of deployment, but they also are also confronted with the reality of their service member’s deployment to hostile environments, where he could be put in harm’s way (Marnocha, 2012). For example, having to deal with life threatening situations he or his unit comrades may encounter are of considerable concern. For significant others who are partnered with someone who is employed by both occupations, LEO / Reservist, the stressors can be troublesome to the relationship. The sacrifices made daily by the significant other, who stand behind their loved ones in both or either of these hazardous occupations, is both commendable and selfless and tends to be unrecognized by the public.

When dealing with the stress of deployment military/LEO significant others must make sure that they have the appropriate support system intact in order to survive such high anxiety roles. Maintaining mental and physical health is a must when having to deal with these emotional experiences. Marnocha’s study say states, “Throughout the various phases of deployment, it is imperative that the wife learns strategies to reduce or minimize stressors and maintain her health and well-being” (Marnocha, 2012, p. 7).
Mental Health

In the research studies that have been read for this thesis project, there has been a focus on the emphasis of mental and physical health for the significant others of these LEO’s and Reservists. Orthner and Rose (2009) discussed the work separation demands and the significant other’s psychological well-being. The purpose of including such research is to provide insight to the work demands of a LEO and the effects these demands have on the significant other’s mental health. In general mental and physical health of all families under any type of occupation is important but when “living in the shoes” of a LEO and or Military Reservist significant other the mental and physical health is critical as they deal with high levels of stress and anxiety. What can happen if an LEO forgets to leave his work frustrations and concerns at work and brings them home to the family anxiously awaiting his return? This can be a result of a spillover or transference. This is not only geared toward high-risk occupations such as policing or military service jobs, but this also can be experienced in any number of occupations. “The jobs most associated with these negative outcomes include those with irregular work schedules, rotating on and off scheduled shift work, work schedules that conflict with marital partners, excessively long work weeks, and jobs that require long periods of separation from family members” (Orthner & Rose, 2009, p. 392). Due to these demands a lot of LEO and Military couples suffer from additional stresses that someone who would work a regular 9am to 5pm job would not. So how can an LEO / Military significant other cope with these various demands of her husband’s job while maintaining good mental health and resiliency?
With regards to building a support system, a primary and secondary support system is central in order to maintain an optimistic outlook for the entire family. “The primary support system is likely to come from their immediate informal network of close relationships to the partner, friends, or other close community connections” (Orthner & Rose, 2009, p. 394). “This support system can provide intrinsic support to the person and serve as a form of social capital that can be relied on during challenging times” (Orthner & Rose, 2009, p. 394). So an LEO significant other can look to family, friends, coworkers, her partner’s coworkers, other LEO’s wives, etc… when they are in need of an empathic ear. An LEO significant other should also figure out which member in her support system can fulfill which need when needed. Then, she can consider who she can turn to in her time of turmoil or frustration. “The secondary support system may come from the partners work organization through which supportive set of services or positive organizational climate may help make the work related separation or demands more amenable” (Orthner & Rose, 2009, p.394). So in other words, reaching out to support groups and/or getting involved in a community outreach group can assist the LEO / Military Reservist significant other in maintaining an optimistic outlook and good mental health. For instance, research demonstrates that, “people who are embedded in positive close relationships are much more likely to report fewer health related problems, higher self-esteem, and better personal adjustment to stressors than those in weak informal support networks” (Sinokki, Hinkka, Ahola, Koskinen, & Kivimäki et al., 2009, p. 394).

When dealing with mental and psychological well-being it is very important to have a strong support system. Military significant others also need the same type of support system as well, especially during long deployments. Additionally, when
discussing marital satisfaction, the more important than these various support system
groups is their partner and or the validity of their marriage (Orthner & Rose 2009). It was
found that “higher marital quality was associated with lower stress, less depression, lower
blood pressure, and higher satisfaction of life” (Holt-Lundsted, Birmingham, and Jones,
2008, p. 394). LEOs and LEO significant others are no stranger to the stressors of the job.
LEO’s deal with the mental and psychological demands of the community, high risk
environments, possible officer involved shootings, murders, rapes, domestic violence
calls, etc… On the other hand, LEO significant others are the silent partners who not only
have to send their loved ones into harm’s way every night but they also deal with the
unknown as to who or what their LEO is going to encounter each night. Both the LEO
and LEO significant other need to develop various coping skills and support systems in
order to deal positively with the anxiety and stress that comes along with the job.

Englert, Gertz, Matsch, Johnson Palmer and Sachau (2012) conducted a study on
Work-Life Conflict and Organizational Support in a Military Law Enforcement Agency.
The main focus, was on the demands of the job, the demands at home and the multiple
disruptions that can occur with attempting to fulfill an obligation. The authors termed it
work-to-family conflict (WFC, Englert, et al., 2012, p.113). When running a household
whether with or without children there are many duties that need to be performed. The
household duties are one of many chores in addition to the work obligations. There are
times when one or both become neglected and one significant other tends to be handling
not only the duties at home, but also at her job as well. This can lead to conflict amongst
the couple due to the lack of involvement within the home by both parties, which may
lead to resentment.
The LEO / Military Reservist has many obligations at work that can deter his attention away from his responsibilities at home. For example, LEO’s stressful police work and job obligations like shift work, longer work weeks, and emotional labors, which can have an impact on their ability to help in the home. For Military personnel partaking in high risk missions, long hours, secrecy, possible deployments, long separation from their family and relocations can have repercussions in their home life (Englert, et al., 2012). These can all affect a LEO’s mental well-being and also strain the marriage as well. In order to maintain the least amount of WFC, the LEO / Military Reservist needs to establish a strong social and organizational support system. “Social Support can buffer the effects of job related strain, reducing the negative effects of stressors” (Englert, et al., 2012, p. 114).” This means the LEO / Military Reservist should have not just family and friends as an emotional support system, but also peers from within the department or unit in order to vent and express their frustrations and concerns of the job without feeling judged or misunderstood. This should be in conjunction to their significant other as well.

“Organizational support or perceived organizational support; reflects an employee’s general belief that the work organization values his/her contributions and cares about his/her wellbeing” (Eisenberger et al., 1986, p.64). Correspondingly, for the law enforcement agency there should be a designated person, such as his training officer (T.O.), co-workers (fellow officers/reservists) or supervisors (watch sergeants or the captain), that can reassure the LEO that he is in fact doing his job correctly. In maintaining a proper support system both the LEO /Military Reservist can establish proper mental health well-being, which can also be utilized by the significant others of
these LEO/Military Reservists. In doing so, this can assist LEO’s in avoiding future burnout on the job which will be mentioned in the next section.

Burnout in police officers is quite common and not unusual for this high risk occupation. Burke (1993) discusses the various variables that can affect an LEO’s performance on the job and at home. In this research, the lack of coping skills and support system demonstrated a deleterious impact on marital satisfaction. When an LEO is experiencing burnout it has been reported that they will display anger, more time away from the family, lack of involvement with their families, and have troubled marriages. This can be alarming to the significant other who is on the receiving end of this behavior. If unaware of their LEO’s mental anguish, such behavior could lead to serious issues such as domestic violence or even substance abuse, which will be discussed later. The key to avoiding a potential burnout is having the outlets needed for coping such as the various support groups mentioned prior.

Another major coping mechanism previously mentioned is communication. “Police officers who talked more to others reported fewer negative feelings states and less consumption of alcohol” (Burke, 1993, p. 179). In addition, police officers used problem solving reported fewer psychosomatic symptoms. Police officers undertaking more physical exercise smoked less. Finally, police officers coping through anger-catharsis reported more negative feeling states (Burke, 1993). Hochschild (1983) uncovered concerns for the mental health of LEO’s and points out emotional dissonance. This psychological strain as a result of police work has an impact on the LEO and his relationship.
Emotional Dissonance “refers to a discrepancy between felt and displayed emotions” (Hochschild, 1983). “When a LEO is experiencing these feelings it is a good indicator that that the LEO’s psychological and physical well-being may be in distress, due to exhaustion and depersonalization” (Croon, Gelderen, Heuven, Veldhoven and Zeelenberg, 2007, p. 447).” Due to the high stress of the job LEO’s must be able to regulate his emotions when responding to a call and when dealing with the public in high risk situations such as domestic violence calls, apprehending a stolen vehicle, gunshot victims (GSVs), etc…When there is a lack of a support system or disconnect within the marriage, such as communication or where a high stress situation impacts the relationship and is not dealt with properly, an abusive relationship can develop amongst the couple.

**Domestic Violence**

When the topic of responding to Domestic Violence (DV) calls are discussed, the unpredictability and dangerousness of the situation that a LEO could encounter when responding to this particular call can increase a significant others hypervigilance. DV calls are categorized by LEO as one of the most dangerous calls to respond to due to the unpredictable nature of the situation, which could result in injury or death of the victim, offender or even the officer. Carroll and Meyer (2011) argued the myths and realities of responding to domestic violence calls. Contrary to popular belief that DV calls are the most dangerous, “[f]indings typically indicate that robberies and burglaries are the most dangerous calls for law enforcement officers and that these calls pose a far greater risk for assault than do domestic violence calls for service” (Carroll & Meyer, 2011, p. 1).
The reason why there is so much speculation regarding Domestic Violence calls being dangerous is due to the possible injuries and/or death of the law enforcement officer when responding to these high risk calls.

Another reason why domestic violence calls are lumped into this category is that “DV disturbances are combined with many other types of disturbances, including bar fights, gang matters, and persons brandishing weapons” (Carroll & Meyer, 2011, p. 1). Additionally, there is no research found that stated that there is a heightened level of danger or risk associated with these types of calls. “In a fourteen year span investigation, 771 LEO’s were killed in the line of duty, indicating that the average per year was 54 officers” (Carroll & Meyer, 2011, p. 2). Only 14% of those officers were killed in response to a DV calls. Despite the low percentage outcome, DV calls are still considered to result in a high amount of lost LEO’s.

The debate of circumstances of these officers deaths were also researched and 3 categories emerged. They include ambushed of provoked attacks, making contact with the suspect, and tactical situations. More than half of the slain officer’s fall under the category of being ambushed or unprovoked at 51 percent. This indicates that the officers never made contact with the suspect prior to being killed. What is more surprising is during “lethal domestic violence calls, more than three quarters of ambushes and unprovoked attacks on victim officers occurred within the first minutes of arrival on the scene” (Carroll & Meyer, 2011, p. 2). Carroll and Meyer (2011) divides the results further confirming the following: 13 percent of ambushes occurred immediately upon arrival, 27 percent occurred while officers were making their approach to the residence, and 36 percent of attacks occurred immediately upon the officer’s entering a residence.
Regarding contact with suspects, as stated previously, it was reported that 40 percent were killed while attempting or making contact with the suspect. This is also dissected further: the percentage of officers killed while confronting the suspect was 67 percent, in pursuit of the suspect 25 percent and while the suspect was in custody 8 percent” (Carroll & Meyer, 2011p. 2). The differences between this set of potential outcomes verses the aforementioned is that the LEO have more warning regarding the dangerous situation before it turns fatal. The final reason for officers being murdered are tactical situations such as killing events, “the murder of an officer occurred in the context of a larger killing event by the domestic violence suspect” (Carroll & Meyer, 2011, p. 2).

In a lot of these situations, the law enforcement officer was an innocent bystander who was killed consequently, following the suspect’s murdered intimate partner or children. Unfortunately, the law enforcement officers that respond to these calls have no control over what the suspects may have intended or unintended to do upon their arrival to the residence. With the proper training provided and the safety protocols learned during training our LEO’s should be able to conduct themselves in a safe manner despite these horrific statistics. So what if the victim was an LEO/Military Reservist wife?

Unfortunately, domestic violence among law enforcement and military couples is very much alive and well. The reality is LEO/Reservist are in fact human and are capable of committing such acts. The sensitivity of these incident is not something most law enforcement and military personnel discuss openly. However, domestic violence perpetrated by LEO/Reservists should be addressed because it does happen. Miller’s (2007) debate of domestic violence among officers and their families will be addressed. In today’s society, domestic violence is not tolerated; whereas, 20 years ago it was
overlooked and not taken seriously. As Miller (2007) states, “At one time, this was law enforcement’s dirty little secret” (p. 35). The fear of arrest, loss of job and weapon, humiliation, loss of financial security, loss of a good officers in the department, battery charges and/or legal prosecution are just some reasons why this was kept protected within law enforcement departments.

“Like other unlawful behavior on the part of officers that is actively or passively abetted, undeterred domestic violence undermines the credibility and effectiveness of the department with both its own personal and the general public. Such omissions places the agency in the line of potential civil and criminal actions (Miller, 2007). So in other words, if domestic violence is overlooked by a law enforcement agency there can be serious repercussions that could affect the law enforcement agency’s integrity. Such violations should be made public reflecting that the agency is negligent in dealing with such matters. Because of such incidents, the public may develop mistrust in the agencies allegiance to protecting the community from individuals who commit such acts as domestic violence.

Until recently, many departments have maintained a code of silence around such matters, often manipulating the significant other by persuading her to not make an incident report. An incident report could result in the officer’s loss of job, which could result in financial issues for the family. Since the issue has been focused on many changes in policies and procedures that are now implemented within most law enforcement agencies regarding this issue. This is called a “Zero Tolerance” policy, which has been put into action for the victims of this tragic situation (Miller, 2007). With the new policies in effect, two standards have also been implemented in most law
enforcement departments: “conduct unbecoming” and “failure to conform to law” (Miller, 2007, p. 36). This indicates that should an officer misuse these policies it could be grounds for termination.

Proper training on how to deal with responding to a fellow LEO’s home has been added, as well as training supervisors to become aware of the signs of potential or escalating domestic violence issues at the officer’s home. “Many of the signals that a domestic violence problem may be brewing or ongoing in an officer’s family are generic stress-related symptoms, while others are more specific and may include increased isolativeness of the officer, signs of sleepiness or alcohol abuse, emotional liability or split personality; increases incidence of excessive force on the job, talking about the spouse in a particularly derogatory way, blaming the spouse for all of the officer’s problems, or signs of physical injury that are attributed to accidents, but may represent wounds received in physical altercations with the spouse” (Miller, 2007, p. 37). If the supervisor is able to approach the officer prior to the incident escalating, the supervisor may be able to assist the officer in saving his marriage and guiding him to seek a mental health provider such as a Therapist/Counselor. One remark, regarding therapy, if LEO’s are forced into therapy the likelihood of it being successful is minimal. Should the law enforcement officer elect to attend therapy, on his own to therapy the outcome may be a successful one. If the officer is found guilty of domestic violence he will be relieved of duty. However, should the investigation demonstrate no evidence of abusive behavior, it will be to the discretion of the law enforcement agencies as to when he could return to work and at which capacity.
As of a result of secrecy within police culture, domestic violence tends to remain unreported, because of the sensitive issues that are followed such as…. LEO’s and their families undergo more demands than the average family such as the varied scheduled, long hours, and exposure to dangerous situations (Lott, 1994). This can be a lethal combination if domestic violence is introduced into the family and is not addressed immediately. Lott (1994) addresses the secrecy and breaking the code amongst officers. The repercussions of not breaking the silence when dealing with a fellow officer who has committed a domestic violence act is ….. As mentioned, there is a special bond formed within the law enforcement community where secrecy is a must. “The dangerous nature of the job, combined with the authority to use force, creates close bonds among officers” (Lott, 1994, p. 12). That is, officers depend on one another for safety and support.

Per Lott (1994), LEO develop a code of silence that tends to exclude the general public and sometimes even their families. Should a fellow officer break the silence code, there could be major repercussions and even retaliation by other officers such as: shunning the violators, exposing their inadequacies, or even denying assistance in emergency situations. Lott (1994) further discusses the involvement of LEO who attended training where the prevalence of domestic violence within their marriages was the topic of discussion. “Approximately 40 percent of the officers surveyed, reported at least one episode of physical aggression during a conflict with their spouse or companion in the previous year” (Lott, 1994, p. 12). This outcome may be higher than the actual results due to the unreported incidents that may occur. As aforementioned, if supervisors are trained to detect potential domestic violence within their LEO it could prevent additional and or escalated occurrences in the future. Lott (1994) also found that patrol
officers have increased levels of violent behavior. “Furthermore, officers who reported working excessively long hours and failing to take leave had higher rates of marital aggression, suggesting that increased job dedication may result in increased marital violence” (Lott, 1994, p. 12).

**Officer Involved Shootings or are Injured on the Job**

Significant others of LEO/Military Reservist are aware of the high possibility that their loved one could be injured on the job in law enforcement. Examples include, injuries, which could be as minor as straining one’s back in the following situations: exiting and entering their patrol vehicle or during struggle to gain control of a resistant suspect. However, injuries could be as severe as being shot or stabbed with a weapon carried by a suspect. In the military during a deployment, injuries could be as minor as twisting an ankle while traversing rough terrain or as severe as coming in contact with an IED or some other form of explosive and/or even hostile or friendly fire. The overwhelming stress and concern that significant others endure regarding these terrifying possibilities can be troublesome for married couples. This can lead to additional stress on the LEO or service member due to their constant worrying about the affects their high risk careers have on their families.

Matsakis, (2005) discusses various coping mechanisms that can assist significant others of LEO and military reservists. Unfortunately, there is no control over what harm can come to these men and women who serve our communities and our country. The families of these LEO’s and military service members, send their loved ones off to
dangerous situations with the hope that they return safely and unharmed. “Soldiers and police are in danger around the clock, whether on duty or not, criminals don’t work nine to five; neither do enemy soldiers” (Matsakis, 2005, p. 25). Matsakis (2005) brings attention to family member’s current fears of their significant others high risk occupation.

Another thing that needs special attention is the fact that in these particular jobs these service members can be exposed to illnesses, from the common cold to STD to deadly diseases such as AID. These are examples of the many things to which the LEO/Military Reservist can possibly be exposed. Significant others are often left feeling helpless when they see the psychological toll the job plays on their loved ones.

Parker, Snibbe, and Stratton (1984) conducted a survey with the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department regarding officer involved shootings and the affects such shootings have on the Deputy’s mental health and the possibility of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Further, deputies experienced psychological reactions such as, “time distortion, sleep difficulties, fear of legal consequences, and various emotional reactions, i.e., anger, elation or crying” (Parker, et al., 1984, p. 127). Similar to military service members who have been in contact with various traumatic situations during a deployment, our local law enforcement experience similar situations on a daily/weekly basis. If not properly addressed, the LEO may experience symptoms of acute stress or post-traumatic stress disorder. According to the results of the survey, “an overwhelming percentage of the deputies reported very little difficulty returning to active street duty” (Parker et al., 1984, p. 130). While a shooting is a major traumatic event that any LEO will most likely experience there is a great deal of inconsistency amongst the deputies surveyed regarding their emotional responses. With this in mind, it would be
inappropriate for mental health professional to automatically classify this experience with a diagnosis or as debilitating. Especially considering such a diagnosis could have an impact on a LEO’s career.

The fears by the LEO/Military Reservist significant others are addressed by utilizing coping mechanisms which is allowed to bring awareness to the significant other’s fears and how to recognize them from levels of intensity; biggest fear to the smallest fear. This method allows the significant other to address out loud what their main concerns are which can alleviate some of their major concerns and reduce some of the stress. By in no means, will significant others of LEO’s / Military Reservist ever not have fears; unfortunately it comes with the territory of their significant others high risk jobs. Due to these high risk jobs unfortunately, all significant others at one time or another have thought the unthinkable…Death.

**Killed In Action or Line of Duty Death (LODD)**

In the LEO/Military communities losing one of their own is a huge tragedy and a major loss to the station or military unit. This can strike deep within every member of this tight knit family oriented police / military family. This is the most horrific thing any significant other of a LEO or military reservist can ever experience. Receiving “the call” from the sergeant or your significant other’s partner or the “knock at the door” from the DOD to deliver the news you hope to never receive, is something all significant others and families fear. Anyone who has a loved one in a high risk profession has thought of this scenario at one time and are probably too scared to say it out loud for fear of it
coming true. Are the significant others of these service members prepared for what will need to be taken care of if such tragedy occurs? The military and all law enforcement agencies have policies and procedures in place for such a tragic incident. The military communities offer many resources for the families of the fallen. A guidebook released by the Bureau of Justice Assistance U.S. Department of Justice and the International Association of Chiefs of Police (2011) states that active military families living on base or near the Rear Detachment or RD, have direct access to the necessary support groups that the family may need during this unfortunate time.

As discussed in previous articles the vast majority of the recently deployed service members have been reservists. Families of these Reservists usually live off base and are not living by a local military base or RD and are unaware of the various resources that can be provided to them in their time of need. “Military Unit Commanders will not deploy a service member until their Family Care Plan is validated” (BJA, 2011, p. 3). The Unit requires that every service member has a Family Care Plan or FCP intact prior to them leaving for their scheduled missions. The FCP are steps that are put in place prior to the service member deploying such as setting up a will, securing and discussing financial obligations, medical benefits, bank account information, discussing any outstanding legal matters, etc… By having this FCP prepared ahead of time, and should the unthinkable happen, this can lessen stressful concerns about important paperwork and there is a plan that the service member and their significant other agreed upon prior to deployment. This by no means will alleviate the pain of the loss of that loved one but can aid in dealing with personal matters a little easier. The military has many support groups for such tragic times that can assist in these unfortunate matters. Not to mention, if your service member
is also an LEO there are additional resources through the law enforcement agencies as well that significant others can look into for additional support.

The above recognizes that the thought of this tragedy can be overwhelming and an emotional roller coaster. LEO significant others are taught to be strong and supportive of their Officers in the presence of others and try not to consume daily thoughts with the “what ifs.” But the truth of the matter is being and LEO is dangerous and unpredictable and significant others are going to be concerned with the safety of the LEO. Miller (2007), discusses the various stages of grief experienced by the surviving LEOs and their significant others. Here are some statistics; “Every year at least 52 police officers are killed in the line of duty, and 26,000 are injured in service related assaults” (Miller, 2007, p. 14). This may not seem like a high number compared to the numbers of the 1960 where 2,219 officers were killed in the line of duty death (LODD) and 328,000 were injured in work related incidents.

Many factors come into play as to why the number stated previously has dropped significantly, like proper protective gear and reinforced training exercises in order to prepare LEO’s for the unexpected. As stated before, “the most dangerous calls LEO’s respond to that could result in LODD is Domestic Violence ones” (Carroll & Meyer, 2011, p. 1). The vast majority of LODD’s occur at night, “Friday being one of the most dangerous and busiest night and Sunday being slower but that doesn’t mean that LODD’s can’t happen on any day or time of the week” (Miller, 2007, p. 14).

When dealing with the trauma of a fellow LEO killed-in-the-line-of-duty the families aren’t the only ones affected by the tragedy, the surviving officers of the agency
are also mourning the loss of one of their own. Many of the surviving comrades experience stages of grief. The various stages are Shock and Disbelief, Telling stories about the deceased, grief leadership, sadness, anger, survivor guilt and permanently altered world view (Miller, 2007, p. 14). These stages do not necessarily happen in order or are experienced by every person affected but it is good to have awareness of what the surviving LEOs could be experiencing. *Shock and disbelief* is common and is usually the first stage of grief experienced, this can be feelings of numbness; *Telling stories about the deceased*, this is done in memorializing the fallen officer and is done in a group setting with other LEO’s who knew the fallen officer. This is can be done in a bar setting, as long as the alcoholic intake is not impairing their ability to function. Another way for officers to properly grieve is at the funeral services. The *Grief Leadership* stage demonstrates for the surviving officers that there is still a family of support and that they are all suffering the loss together. At this point, sadness will set in and reflecting of the loss of the fallen officer may decrease the surviving LEOs appetite and they may experience feelings of fatigue.

With sadness comes *anger*. Anger can be aimed at various individuals and/or situations such as “at the perpetrator of the officers death – whether a cold-blooded shooter in a gunshot death or stupidly careless motorist in a traffic fatality; also it can be directed toward the members of the perpetrator’s broader group, such as all lawbreakers or traffic violators (Miller, 2007). Many LEO’s may develop feelings of resentment toward family, friends, and/or the civilian community “who just don’t get it” the dangers of being an LEO and the risks they endure everyday” (Miller, 2007, p. 14). *Survivors Guilt* can be linked with anger which can develop in officers who were present the day
the LEO was killed. The survivor’s guilt can bring into question the actions of the fallen officer or the agency staff that may have assigned the LEO the task. Not to mention, the surviving LEO’s may experience feelings of a *permanently altered world* which can alter their view on the job and the community. This rarely happens but when it does the officer may resign from his position as an LEO. It is wise to keep in mind that the LEOs who experience these feelings of grief are not labeled weak, emotional or incapable of doing their jobs (Miller, 2007, p. 15). These LEO’s pride themselves in maintaining their composure when dealing with tragedy on a daily basis. When a tragedy such as a LODD occurs it not only affects the families but also the law enforcement family as well.

The family of the fallen are tremendously impacted when an LODD occurs. Unfortunately loved ones pass away and grief and sadness occur and then as time goes by things tend to return back to some form of normalcy. Now imagine this, every time the news appears, the internet is turned on, or the radio is on and the surviving significant other is reminded of what happened to her LEO who was killed in the line of duty. What about the news media posted up on the significant others front lawn, the constant calls regarding the specific details of what happened and having to explain and defend the LEO’s actions can be quite overwhelming for the entire family including the children. Under normal circumstances when a loved one dies the family is able to mourn and grieve in the privacy of their home. When an LEO is killed it becomes a media circus. Not only does the LEO wife have to deal with the media but she also has to deal with the trauma of the investigation conducted by the agency, court proceedings, and media exposure which is a constant reminder of her significant other’s death. All of that, on top of the general public scrutiny that will also come with the media coverage regarding the
death of the officer. There are many reactions that are experienced by the family of the fallen, let’s explore this further.

Miller (2007, p. 15) states “Family members, especially spouses, of slain Officers typically show a number of physical and psychological reactions in the aftermath of a loved one’s death.” The support a significant other may receive in the interim may be debilitating later when additional support is needed. The support of the fallen LEO’s comrades for the family may become unavailable due to their own family obligations and may distance themselves from the constant reminder of their fallen comrade. When the news of the heartbreaking incident is delivered the family experiences a “mortal blow to the self” (Miller, 2007, p. 16). “This can lead to wanting to know the details of the tragedy; from the location, injuries inflicted on the officer, the brutality of the killings, types of weapons used, and whether and how much the officer suffered” (Miller, 2007, p. 16). The family may then experience an “impulse to take action,” such as attending the court proceedings, thoughts of revenge on the perpetrators, experiencing feelings of hatred toward the perpetrator, anger toward the law enforcement agency for putting their loved one in harm’s way, etc… These feelings can last for many years.

Some families direct their approach to assisting in apprehending and prosecution of the perpetrator. Another feeling experienced is “free-floating anxiety or fear” which can lead to isolation and hyper vigilance. The significant other will abruptly change their routines due to their anxiety of helplessness by installing alarms, avoiding places that they used to go, not leaving the house after dark and avoiding any reminder of the tragic incident i.e.; people, the location, media, music etc... “Some spouses may sleep in their
deceased loved one’s uniform and others may burn it” (Miller, 2007, p. 16). This is all depending on the feelings of each significant other’s experience.

Hyper startled response is when the significant other deflects and barricades themselves within their home as a means of protection such as; “insuring the safety of the children, developing a daily schedule, turning away any type of stranger, making sure children are constantly checking in, etc…” (Miller, 2007, p. 17) This can affect older children and it could lead to resentment of the living parent due to the restrictions or over bearing parenting. This can lead to isolation and alienation, if family rejects assistance from the law enforcement agency or other support groups. The surviving loved ones may also experience disturbing dreams of their loved ones and irrational guilt; such as, “if only I didn’t argue with him prior to starting his shift it might not have been a distraction,” or “he should have stayed home, he said that he wasn’t feeling good, if he would have stayed home this would not have happened to us.” “And the common psychophysiological disorders include loss of appetite and sleep disruptions, gastrointestinal and cardiovascular symptoms decrease the resistance to infections and increase anxiety and depression” (Miller, 2007, p. 16). These are just some of the various emotions that a significant other may experience when exposed to such an awful heart wrenching time. This is will also be touched on in the affects on children section of this paper.

The most important thing that is stressed about how to cope with the loss of a slain law enforcement officer is “support.” Support will provide assistance for the family and fellow surviving officers through this difficult ordeal. It may not heal all wounds completely but it can offer the emotional support needed. In the bereavement and support
portion Miller (2007) article discusses the importance of support through family bereavement therapy; 1) “helping the family understand and put into perspective the rage and guilt they feel about their loved one’s murder, 2) helping survivors examine their grief reactions and other people’s availability to them so they regain their confidence in the social order, 3) helping them family accept the death of their relative as something irrevocable yet bearable, and 4) assisting members of the immediate and extended kinship system in establishing a new family structure that permits individual members to grow in a more healthy and fulfilling manner” (Miller, 2007, p. 18).

By assisting the family in bereavement therapy this can insure a healthy recovery. The family by no means will ever forget this horrible time in their lives but they can slowly move forward towards developing a new daily routine and still remember their loved one. “A cop’s life encompasses all those around him or her in police family and home family alike. Each deserves proper consideration, support and respect (Miller, 2007, p. 21).”

**Effects on Children**

For children, having a parent in the law enforcement or military community can be stressful and cumbersome to their upbringing and development. Children are resilient when faced the possibility of tragedy or trauma. Their minds are open and are willing to attempt to understand what their parents are experiencing, especially their non-service member parent. Deployments and shift work for the parents of these children can raise questions on their roles within the family. It is important that both parents address any
concerns or questions their children may have about “Daddy’s job.” Depending on the age of the child it is best to explain it to them in an age appropriate manner (Kirschman, 2007). Children are observant and can sense when there is distress amongst their parents.

Disregarding the truth can only have negative effects on the child’s self-esteem and could create further worry for the child to endure. Should tragedy strike, it is important to allow the child to express their feelings and address their questions regarding the incident as long as it is age appropriate. Continuing with Miller, (2007) should the parent be tragically killed on duty the child may experience feelings of “fear that they will be abandoned” by the other parent because they are consumed with outside obligations such as funeral arrangements, extended family and friend visits, and other personal obligations that the child does not understand. Not to mention the high amount of media coverage regarding the incident that can constantly remind the child of the loss of their parent. Unlike other deaths, this can be overwhelming and stressful due to the repetitiveness of the story being retold over and over again by the news media.

Therefore, it is imperative that you provide accurate but age appropriate information regarding the event. If not done so properly this can add to the child’s anxiety, worry, and increased fear. Miller (2007) mentions that by including the child in the memorializing phase of coping this can help in assisting their grieving process. In addition to the support at home, it can also be beneficial to advise the child’s teachers at school of the loss of their parent so that they can address this situation with the other students so when the child returns to school they are greeted with positive reinforcement and have a safe and comfortable environment. For children, especially, during the first few months after the loss of their parent, this can have a tremendous impact on their grief.
recovery. These steps of grief experienced by the loss of an LEO parent can also go hand in hand with a parent who is killed in action on a deployment but the adjustment period may be a little easier on the child due to the absence of the parent.

With regards to military obligations and the possibility of deployment, parents need to keep the children informed of the possibility of “Daddy going away for a while.” It is imperative that parents discuss with children again, in an age appropriate manner that their parent is leaving for a while. Encouraging children to discuss their fears openly and freely is a must. Additionally maintaining their current routines and establishing new ones should also be discussed. Continuing to maintain an open line of communication with the child to ensure that they are comfortable with the upcoming changes to their lifestyles.

The Department of Defense (2010), reported on the Impact of Deployment of Members of the Armed Forces of Their Dependent Children, state that “Army Families have found that children ages 0 to 5 coped least well with deployment-related absence, compared with older children (DOD, 2010, p. 20).” Reasons for these children not coping as well as older children can be lack of expression of feelings, mood changes, attention seeking, appetite changes, sadness and sleep problems. Infants, preschoolers and school aged children with a deployed parent tend to externalize their behaviors by aggression, hyperactivity, problematic behavior, and attention difficulties. Adolescents, on the other hand, internalize their behaviors which can result in depression, anxiety and withdrawal. This can be problematic for parents not working in these high risk occupations due to the withdrawal of their child.
The National Center for Children in Poverty (2010), states that Children in military families experience high rates of mental health, trauma and related problems. These rates vary from the length of deployment to the frequency of deployments that the child undergoes. The previous article by Miller (2007), NCCP (2010) also discovered that children who are adolescents internalize their behaviors where younger children externalize their behaviors. “Current research shows that a child’s response to a parent’s deployment varies by age, phase of deployment, gender, as well as other family factors” (NCCP, 2010, p. 5). With these varying factors, one factor that can assist the family in this difficult time is having a support system in place prior to the deployment.

“There has been evidence that has discovered that children are resilient to the separation of parental deployment and that children in these military families are able to adjust and display resiliency regardless of the challenges they may face during their parents deployment” (NCCP, 2010, p. 7). Like with most children who experience some type of trauma in their life, resiliency is very much alive and well in children of both Law Enforcement Officers and U.S. Military Reservists as long as their support system within their immediate and extended families are maintained, these children will come to live happy and fulfilling lives.

**Synthesis of Review**

Walking in the shoes of an LEO/Military Reservist significant other can be heavy and difficult at times but can be rewarding and proud depending on the strength of the relationship of the couple. As the research has suggested being a law enforcement officer
and a Military Reservist is difficult and without the proper tools in place it can be even harder on the families of these men and women who serve our communities and country. There has been much research on the effects of these at risk professions and there are many studies on how it affects these individuals and there are even outlets provided for them in their time of need but what about the loved ones who have to remain reserved, supportive, calm, and optimistic despite their fears and concerns for their loved one who puts themselves in harm’s way each time they step out of their front door.

LEO / Military Reservist significant others are not set apart from everyday relationship issues that regular couples have but they do face additional concerns for their significant other and they are held to a higher standard by the media. By putting together this workshop it can create unity and an outside support system for other significant others who are experiencing the same concerns or questions. This workshop is to be used as a safe place for LEO / Military Reservists significant others to bring up questions that they may be afraid of asking their significant other which may show vulnerability and weakness. Being an LEO/Military Reservist significant other comes with a list of standards; for example, learning to be independent, handling the household responsibilities, financial responsibilities, taking care of the children on their own, dealing with “Shift work,” long hours, and most importantly, the fear of your LEO being hurt or killed on the job, which is one of the most concerning thoughts that are experienced by LEO/Military significant others.

Due to the public scrutiny and judgment of others including the peers of other LEO/Military Reservist this workshop would be closed to only Law Enforcement and Military Reservist significant others. Both of these communities have a unique
understanding of not showing vulnerability or asking for professional help for fear of the “stigma” of not being able to maintain control of themselves or their homes. The workshop would be presented in a way that it can also allow open discussions amongst the attendees along with providing psycho-education on the various topics. Solution focused techniques will be presented during the workshop along with a brief discussion of how family systems therapy is integrated within various cultures like police and military cultures (Corey, 2008).

The workshop will have a structured discussion but still allowing the attendees to ask questions or provide their own personal experiences throughout the presentation. At the end of the workshop the presenter will provide the attendees with various resources for additional support services, such as, individual counseling, family counseling, support groups, group counseling, services for children of all ages, financial assistance, grief counseling services, etc…

Much of the research written discusses the issues at hand, such as myths and realities of divorce and infidelity, loneliness, affects on children, communication issues, emotional and intimacy issues, trauma, deployments, fear, LODD’s, and etc… The issues are discussed at length on how the LEO/Military Reservist can handle the situation but there is little support or information provided to the families on how to cope with the daily stressors of being a significant other of a LEO / Military Reservist which can inform them of the changes their loved one will experience and continue to experience as they become veterans in their departments.

The experience of the academy and patrol training along with the military trainings that can send your reservist away for an extended period of time can be
emotionally draining on the significant others of these service members... The only window of opportunity provided to the significant others after the LEO’s completion of the academy is a family night provided by the department. Most significant others in attendance want to demonstrate that they are proud and not fearful of the dangers their LEO will come into contact with day after day or night after night. Significant others may be advised by their LEOs prior to the meeting advising them not to ask inappropriate questions that could embarrass them in front of their peers or commanding officers. Like much of the research and books read most significant others are told to keep a strong confident stance when surrounded by other Law Enforcement personnel and to keep their emotions and concerns to themselves. Providing this workshop will allow significant others to discuss openly their concerns, fears, frustrations, and other aspects of the job that they would not be able to during a regular get together amongst other LEO’s and/or their LEOs.

Providing insight and awareness to the duties and obligations of a LEO can be useful along with providing a safe environment for the significant others to network and establish a support system among one another. In researching further, there has been no mention in providing LEO significant others with the proper tools on how to cope with their LEO’s schedule, lack of emotional connection, stress of the job, dealing with public scrutiny, court obligations, lack of sleep and much more.

There is a book that comes highly recommended for all Law Enforcement Personnel and their families, “I Love A Cop,” this book addresses all of the various topics previously mentioned and how beneficial it could be if there were a workshop that could provide insight to the families and significant others of these LEOs. There are
support groups for military reservist significant others when it comes to dealing with Pre-deployment, during deployment and Post-deployments of their service members. Just like the military, the Law Enforcement community could benefit from the same type of support and proper education to significant others of what their loved one experiences on a daily basis and how to adapt and adjust to their changes without losing their own individuality. Just like what the military provides its reservists and their families, LEO’s and their significant other could benefit from Pre-academy/Patrol training, during training and post academy/patrol training in order to provide insight of the expectations of the job.

With the lack of workshops like the one being presented this would be the first of its kind, not only will the presenter be touching on the stress of being married to an LEO there will also be a discussion of the obligations of a military reservist while they are a LEO and the demands and opportunities that go along with the dual employment affairs. This workshop will address the emotional needs of a LEO significant other along with the needs of a Military Reservist significant other who is enduring the emotional distress of having a significant other who has dual employment in two high risk professions.
Chapter 3

Introduction

As a wife of a husband who currently hold both positions; L.A. County Sheriff’s Deputy and U.S. Army Reservist, my role as the “supportive significant other” can be difficult at times. In researching this topic, there are little resources available that can provide support and information to significant others such as myself. Except for blogs or social media but nothing formal like this workshop being created.

This workshop is being presented to the significant others of our hard working dedicated Law Enforcement Officers who are dual employed by the U.S. Military Reserves. These significant others, because of the high risk professions their loved one has chosen, are in need of positive reinforcement such as providing the necessary tools to survive being a significant other of an individual who chooses to put their lives on the line in order to protect and serve our communities and country. The purpose of providing this workshop is to provide insight to the struggles that a significant other will face throughout their LEO’s career; from shift work, to missing special occasions such as birthdays, holidays, anniversaries, to the lack of emotional and intimate connectivity, and so on. Loving your LEO can be difficult at times and the purpose of this workshop is to assist married couples in their fight to keep their marriage and family together despite the emotional roller coaster they will face.

Intended Audience

This workshop is being built for significant others who are married or in an exclusive relationship with a L.A. County Sheriff’s Deputy who may or may not also be
an U.S. Army Reservists. In these modern times of same sex marriages this presentation can be altered to depict related issues to the specific population if and when needed but the main focus of this particular workshop will be for heterosexual married and/or committed couples. Due to the sensitivity of the material being presented, this workshop it will be closed to the outside public to insure that the integrity and confidentiality of the significant others attending will be discreet along with their service member’s identities. The nature of the materials that will be presented such as divorce, fears of infidelity, officer involved shootings, trauma, LODD, etc… require that this workshop be closed to children, unless the material is altered to be age appropriate at which point the workshop can accommodate the younger population.

Later on this presentation can be converted to assist parents and extended family of these Law Enforcement Officers in dealing with the changes of their loved one, but for the purpose of this particular workshop the focus and intended audience will just be the significant others of LEO’s. The presenter can alter and adjust the workshop in order to serve various ranks in authority in order to protect the significant others of lower ranking Deputies or Service Members. In order to insure that the workshop is able to separate the higher ranking officers from the lower ranking officers, there will be a questionnaire given to the attendee prior to the workshop that will address the LEO’s rank and years in service. The current presenter’s formal knowledge is based on being married to a Deputy employed by the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department. Accordingly, the presentation focus will be on this particular department. The workshop will also discuss the two types of trainings that the Deputy will endure: custody and patrol training.
The significant other of a rookie is the most vulnerable and struggles to find her role in this new world that her husband has entered. This workshop is also going to provide guidance and assistance to those significant others who are new to the department and provide them with the resources and tools they will need to survive such as, knowing how to juggle the schedules, rotating days off, having emotional support, dealing with the negative stigmas from extended family, friends and the media, loneliness, and more. This workshop will help assist significant others who are in need of emotional support, especially for those who don’t have family members or friends involved within the law enforcement community which can be very challenging and isolating.

**Qualifications**

The professional presenting the workshop will need to have a Master’s Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy and have some background relating with Law Enforcement / Military Reservist relationship issues. If the presenter is a significant other of a LEO/Military Reservist, this may gain the rapport, confidence and respect from other LEO/Military Reservist significant others who are in attendance versus an individual who does not have the background or the experience in dealing with the experience firsthand. The presenter should be fluent in the English language and have a professional knowledge in making presentations, be comfortable in using computer programs such as Microsoft Power Point and being able to navigate comfortably around the internet to search for resources to provide the group, and finally being able to handle a structured and/or processing workshop within a group setting. Included in this presentation, the
presenter can recruit additional guest speakers who may share their own personal real life experiences of being a LEO/Military Reservist significant other.

**Setting**

The workshop can be presented in a classroom, hotel ballroom or auditorium setting. Depending on the size of the group, the presenter will need a projector with computer hook ups, projection screens, microphones, and WIFI in order to pull videos from the internet; in order to present the power point presentation to the entire group. Depending on the length of the workshop snacks and beverages will also be provided along with handouts about the information that is being presented. If the option is permissible perhaps this work could be done on site of the local law enforcement agency. For instance, the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department’s, Star Center, where the majority of recruitment trainings are conducted and graduation ceremonies for the recruits who complete the academy. This could be a good location for the significant others to become familiar with and see where their significant others went every day during their training.

For other agencies, the use of a conference room, such as the one used during briefing, at a local station could also be a good setting. Should this workshop be approved and supported by the local law enforcement agencies there could also be an opportunity to incorporate this within each station, prior, during, or after the completion of training, which could allow the significant others to get an idea of where their LEO’s reports to work every day. This can also familiarize the family with the area their significant other works as well.
Outline of the Project

How to Cope with the challenges of Being the Significant Other of a Law Enforcement Officer and a Military Reservist

• Statement of Purpose - This workshop has been designed to focus on providing insight to the wives behind the badge. Support and awareness of what it takes to be the significant other of a Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Deputy is key, when dealing with the challenges of busy schedules, department obligations, home obligations and much more. Knowledge on maintaining a healthy marriage and strong communication skills is what the presenters hope to enhance within their attendees of this workshop. By building on skills such as; conflict resolution, strengthening the intimate and work related bonds with your Deputy, developing a strong social support group and proper communication. These and many other aspects will assist in providing an individual with a positive outlook, independency, a healthier physical and emotional demeanor, and financial stability within your marriage.

• Introduction

• Defining what they “do”

• What to expect

• What not to expect

• Financial Obligations

• Your Deputy has successfully completed the academy, now what?
• Going out to Patrol Training

• How to juggle the shift work schedules

• Myths of divorce

• Infidelity in police couples

• Domestic Violence

• Key to a successful marriage

• Benefits to having proper resources and support

• Process Group Activity – Q & A
  
  • Introduce yourself to your neighbor/people at your table and see if there are or aren’t similarities that you have experienced. Think of questions that you needed answered that you were never given the answer to. We will discuss openly. Remember this is confidential so please respect your sisters and peers. We are here to help one another.

• Mental Health

• Next Time Your Stressed Quote

• Group Activity - Mind Jar Water Bottle Activity, Assess stressors and identify positive things in relationship

• How to maintain communication

• Managing your Deputy’s additional obligations while maintaining the household
• Dealing with outside public scrutiny

• Being hurt on the job

• Officer involved shootings

• If your Deputy is also a Military Reservist

• Additional resources for Military Reservists families

• What resources can the Station provide your family should your Deputy deploy?

• Medical Benefits should your deputy deploy

• A spouses worst nightmare; in the line of duty deaths or killed in action

• How to address fears and finding ways to cope

• Keeping up with your Deputy by being assertive

• Dealing with the highs and lows of patrol training

• Sleep Deprivation Cartoons

• Emotional Disconnection from your Deputy

• Affects on children

• Resources

• Inspirational picture

• The difference between us and them (picture)
• Words of encouragement “Remember you are not alone. It takes a strong confident woman to sacrifice her own needs for the needs of others.”

• References
Chapter 4

Summary/Conclusion

After reviewing the material and researching for additional resources it has been brought forward that this workshop could possibly be beneficial to all who attend. As a significant other of a Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Deputy and U.S. Army Reservist, my firsthand experience in dealing with the ups and downs that follow once your loved one has completed training is difficult if you’re not prepared or provided the necessary tools to guide you through the challenges being presented and provided the understanding on how your lives will be affected. Yes, committing yourself to an individual dedicated to a high-risk profession, such as police work or military service, can be challenging but can also be rewarding, but word to the wise, life as you know it will never be the same. The stress and emotional roller coaster your LEO will experience, a significant other will also experience in their own way. It is pertinent that, as significant others, in order to provide support and empathy for the LEO, the significant other must take the proper steps in providing self-care to insure that the support being given is genuine and not resentful. So what does this entail? Presented in the workshop will be techniques that significant others such as myself, can utilize when experiencing feelings of concern or frustration.

One thing that would have been beneficial to this project would have been an anonymous survey to law enforcement significant others regarding their feelings on how they deal with the challenges of their LEO/Reservist’s jobs. This may perhaps allow for discovery of the importance of family stability and connectedness amongst the couple. Despite the push to provide this workshop the survey could also provide insight on whether significant others of LEO’s/Reservist would be willing to attend a work shop
such as the one being presented and if so it could also provide further information on what other topics could be added or removed from the presenting workshop.

Additional research on dual employments such as Police work and Military Reserves is another avenue that could be elaborated on with more research on the affects it has on the family component. Again, much research has been conducted on the affects it has on the active duty service member when having to deal with multiple deployments but what about a Reservist who is dual employed as a LEO and is having to leave his family for multiple deployments. What type of permanent affects can this have on a marriage and can the relationship continue to flourish even with a strong support system intact.

With much speculation of the high divorce rates of these high risk professions, if significant others were educated and provided awareness of and tools for dealing with the types of demands and obligations that these jobs require this may prevent unnecessary disagreements within the couple and lower the statistics of divorce in these professions. The simple fact is the job these service members possess is not for the faint at heart. As significant others of these men and women, we are aware of the sacrifices that are made on a daily basis. Sometimes they go noticed and other times they don’t, but the hard cold truth is the significant others who sacrifice their time spent with their LEO’s and Reservists for the greater good, are never rewarded or recognized. That doesn’t mean it’s easy, it just means that it’s just another aspect of the job and we, as significant others, thrive on our ability to survive and keep things in order on the home front while our loved ones maintain order on our streets.
Another aspect to the workshop that is of importance is proper communication in the relationship. Men and women are built differently when it comes to communicating their needs but an open communication line no matter the style of communication makes a difference when having to discuss issues related to law enforcement and military work such as mandatory overtime, having to work holidays, shiftwork hours, out of work obligations like off training parties, fund raisers for the stations (Benefit Rides, Baker to Vegas Run, Mug Runs, etc…), missing special occasions, possible deployments and more. It is important to develop an understanding, that despite how it may seem on the outside, being the significant other in this profession is not an easy task. Marriage alone is built on trust, honesty, respect, dependability, compassion, empathy and love but takes work, when married to a law enforcement officer, in addition to the previous components mentioned, “sacrifice and compromise” become part of the daily rituals within these relationships.

Being a Police Officer/Military Service Member, whether Active Duty or Reservist, requires these individuals to sacrifice their personal time with their loved ones in order to serve and protect our communities and nation from individuals who want to cause harm. This is an honorable profession that at times is scrutinized by the public and media because of the unique culture within these professions that at times is only understood by those who have lived and experienced the things that only other LEO’s/Reservists have witnessed.

Follow up research on how the workshop in Texas has been progressing may also be beneficial to future research of this topic. The statistics of marriage counseling for couple in the Law Enforcement / Military Reserve professions could also shed light on
the marital breakdowns within these relationships and what could possibly be done to salvage the marriage before its too late. The U.S. Military has put together several family guidebooks to assist family members and the service members in their time of need including: A survivors guide to benefits taking care of our families; A support and resource guide for working with military families; Understanding the experience of military families and their returning war fighters; and Trauma faced by children of military families. However, in researching support groups for law enforcement families, there were none. As a significant other, if a guide book or reference guide were created it may have alleviated some of my concern or frustration I experienced and may have guided me to a better understand of the things my LEO was experiencing and as well helped define the feelings I experienced while he was going through the academy and patrol training.

Significant others of these high-risk professions have learned to put their own emotional needs aside in order to provide ample support to their LEO/Reservist. Despite the fear and concern for the loved ones who work in these professions, a great deal of pride and admiration goes hand and hand with these feelings as well. I have always told my Deputy, “Do what is necessary to get home to me in one piece, safe and sound.” As selfish as that sounds, sometimes that is all I have that gets me through the night while he is out there protecting our streets. Until you have walked in a LEO significant other’s shoes you will never know what it feels like to send your loved one into harm’s way not knowing if he will return or not. Please keep this in mind when discussing police work with those who do because their stories may not be as pleasant as you think.
References


http://www.healthymarriageinfo.org


http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/naylor/CPIM0111/#/28


http://cops.usdoj.gov/Publications/e011226431.pdf


Appendix

Workshop Power Point

“How to Cope with the Challenges of Being the Significant Other of a Law Enforcement Officer and a Military Reservist”