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# Empathetic Cops: The Impact on Victims of Domestic Violence

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Empathetic Cops: The Impact on Victims of Domestic Violence

A Senior Honors Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for Graduation in the Honors College

By

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### Abstract

Police officer's actions when working with victims of domestic violence can have a large impact on the individual. Police training changes police officer's level of empathy for victims of domestic violence, which can then affect the response of the officer in domestic violence situations. This thesis systematically reviews the literature available on police training, empathy, and effects on victims. The review of literature demonstrated that an officer's level of empathy could have a direct effect on how they respond to domestic violence situations. There is a lack of studies available that analyze police officer's level of empathy before and after implementation of empathy training. Researchers must conduct studies that are more rigorous in order to provide police officers with the sufficient training for working with victims of domestic violence.

**Keywords:** Domestic violence, police training, empathy, police response

## Empathetic Cops: The Impact on Victims of Domestic Violence

Police officers have a responsibility to treat victims of domestic violence with respect and dignity. In order to handle domestic violence situations properly, officers must receive adequate training. The criminal justice system, and American society as a whole, has a long history of treating domestic violence as a personal issue instead of a social issue. This tactic has proven to be ineffective in reducing domestic violence in America. As a result, the criminal justice system has changed its approach at reducing domestic violence. In order to make these changes, researchers have attempted to improve police officer trainings. The purpose of these trainings is to reduce domestic violence and protect victims, which is a challenging task. Empathy for domestic violence victims is a component of many of the trainings. Every aspect of first-responder's actions can have a lasting impact on victims of domestic violence. This makes it crucial to discover how trainings can directly alter an officer's level of empathy and how their level of empathy can affect victims.

### **Background**

#### **Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence is a social issue that is widespread in the United States. This issue affects every ethnicity, social class, and gender (Peters, Trepal, de Vries, Day, & Leeth, 2009). Domestic violence can appear in different forms, including physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse (Peters et al., 2009). The Violence Prevention Division of the National Center has studied domestic violence, also referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV), for Injury Prevention and Control. The 2011 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) reports the prevalence of IPV (Breiding et al., 2014). An estimated 31.5% of women and an estimated 27.5% of men have experienced physical violence by an intimate partner during

their lifetime (Breiding et al., 2014). Physical violence, as mentioned, is only one form of domestic violence. The NISVS report includes sexual violence and psychological aggression as a form of intimate partner violence. An estimated 15.8% of women and an estimated 9.5% of men have experienced some form of sexual violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime (Breiding et al., 2014). An estimated 47.1% of women and an estimated 46.5% of men have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner at least once in their lifetime (Breiding et al., 2014). The authors of the NISVS report concluded from these statistics that IVP has a profound effect on the United States population and therefore we as a nation must address it on a widespread scale (Breiding et al., 2014).

Domestic violence has always existed in the United States and has caused a changing social and criminal justice response. In the 1800s, society considered it both morally and legally acceptable to beat one's wife if it was justified (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012). These ideals persisted and resulted in a lacking police response to domestic violence situations. Changes to both the social opinion and the legal response on domestic violence began to change dramatically in the 1970s and the 1980s (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012). The main obstacle faced during this time was the public opinion on domestic violence being a private family issue. Public awareness led to legislative changes during the 1990s and drastically impacted how police respond to domestic violence. The passing of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 1994 acknowledge domestic violence and sexual assault as crimes on the national level for the first time (National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), 2017). VAWA also allocated federal resources to combat domestic violence through community coordination (NNEDV, 2017). The House and the Senate reauthorized VAWA in 2000, 2005 and 2013. With each reauthorization, VAWA focused more on prevention and providing services to a

more individuals, including those in the LGBTQ+ community (NNEDV, 2017). Today, legislation on the federal, state, and local levels continue to change in an attempt to reduce domestic violence by implementing new criminal justice responses (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012). Although legislation has morphed over the years, domestic violence continues to be a substantial issue and is believed to be underreported (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015).

Police have responded to domestic violence according to the legislation at the time. Originally, officers avoided getting involved with domestic violence scenarios because society considered it as a private issue and therefore did not generally make arrests (Buzawa, 2012). Prior to the 1980s, a police officer could only make an arrest if they actually saw the assault occur, which was a rare phenomenon (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012). After a push from women's rights activists and battered women's advocates, along with the new possibility of policies holding police liable for neglecting victims of domestic violence, there was a change in the police response (Buzawa, 2012). At this time, during the 1970s and 1980s, the United States saw a shift in the way the criminal justice system handled domestic violence. The new focus was to charge abusers and keeping victims safe, instead of the old rhetoric of keeping families together (Buzawa, 2012). The legislation changes during this time were a result of the changing public opinion and served as the foundation for current legislation.

### **Police Training**

Shifting traditional beliefs about domestic violence in the 1970s forced police training to adopt new policies. The National Institute of Justice spent millions of dollars during the 1970s on crisis intervention training for police officers (Buzawa, 2012). Beginning at this time, arrest was viewed as a deterrent to domestic violence and therefore implemented in police departments nationwide (Buzawa, 2012). Mandatory arrest policies are now in many jurisdictions, and may

include dual arrest policies. Dual arrests result in police arresting both parties involved in the domestic violence situation, which can lead to victim dissatisfaction with police actions and reluctance to report future abuse (Buzawa, 2012). Along with policies regarding mandatory arrest, some jurisdictions have crisis intervention teams to address domestic violence situations. These crisis intervention teams typically include police officers and social workers whose main goal is to prevent future abuse (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015). Officers on crisis intervention teams receive continuing education on how to handle domestic violence situation (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015). Unfortunately, many jurisdictions do not have crisis intervention teams, as a result of low funding, and therefore do not have officers specially trained to respond accordingly to domestic violence situations.

There is a constant change in policies and procedures regarding police response to domestic violence situations, which require police officers to keep up-to-date in order to comply with the changes. Officers, therefore, are trained on the changes in policy but may not be trained on how to work with the victims of domestic violence (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012). Different jurisdictions may have different policies and procedures when it comes to addressing domestic violence, depending on geographical and geopolitical location. Training, along with policies and procedures, varies based on jurisdiction. Most recruit academies incorporate a training module on domestic violence, but may not expand the training past that point (Buzawa, 2012). In the cases where police officers only receive a basic level of training on domestic violence, the focus is not on the victim or on the large issue of domestic violence as a systemic issue (Peters et al., 2009). It is obvious that in many cases, police officers do not receive the training necessary for working with victims of domestic violence or empathizing with them.

## **Empathy**

Displaying empathy for victims of domestic violence is crucial for first-responders. Showing empathy means one person is able to understand and share the feelings of another person. For victims of domestic violence, empathy is a necessary component for facilitating change (Peters et al., 2009). When victims encounter police officers, they are often concerned that the police will not take the time to listen to them thoroughly (Peters et al., 2009). Victims of domestic violence are continuously silenced by their abusers, and do not want to encounter a police officer who does the same to them. By displaying empathy for the victim, police officers can convey that they truly care about the victim and that they are there to help in any way they can.

Helping behaviors of police, including empathy, were found to be the most important factor in victim satisfaction (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015). Listening is a crucial part of police and victim interactions, and officers must listen if they plan on showing empathy or communicating effectively with the victim. Improving communication between police and victims is likely to improve victim satisfaction with how police respond to domestic violence calls (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015). With increased victim satisfaction, there would be an increase in the likelihood that a victim of domestic violence will report abuse in the future (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015). It is pivotal that victims feel comfortable reporting domestic violence because without the initial call to police, there is no way to prosecute the crime. For this fact alone, it is clear that empathy for victims is a key aspect of a police officer's response to domestic violence.

The United States' response to domestic violence has changed dramatically over time. Originally, society viewed domestic violence as a private issue instead of a public one. Today



domestic violence is more widely viewed as a social issue that requires community coordination to address. A main factor of this community-coordinated approach is the response from law enforcement officers. In order for officers to offer help to victims of domestic violence, they must receive adequate training. Part of this training must focus on displaying empathy for victims because of the impact the officer's response has on those individuals. There is a lack of literature that researches the long-term effects of training on an officer's level of empathy. Without a significant amount of research on on-going trainings, there is also a lack of understanding on how the trainings effects victims of domestic violence. The research questions for this study are "What training best improves police officer's level of empathy towards victims of domestic violence?" and "How does police training on empathy affect victims of domestic violence?" There will be a focus on the different police trainings and what components they have that improve officers' level of empathy towards victims of domestic violence.

## **Methods**

### **Overview**

I took multiple steps in order to ensure a high quality review of the literature. Initially, I completed a search that included peer-reviewed journals using key terms. These terms included "police training," "domestic violence," "police response," "empathy," and "systematic review." The databases used in the review of literature included Criminal Justice Abstracts, Education Resources Information Center, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, and Social Sciences Full Text. Additionally, I reviewed and searched the reference sections of each article to find further research studies. I searched individual journals, as well, including the following: Journal of Police Crisis Negotiations, Journal of Interpersonal Violence, Journal of Family Violence, International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences, Journal of Aggression,

Maltreatment & Trauma, The Police Journal, and the International Journal of Police Science & Management. These combined searches resulted in 92 peer-reviewed articles that the authors published from 2006 to 2016. Initially, I identified the abstracts and keywords of each study, which I then compared to the subject of interest. Those not used had abstracts and/or keywords that indicated an alternative subject as the focus of the study. I then examined the remaining studies more thoroughly through a review of introductions and conclusions, which allowed for the elimination of studies that did not align with the inclusive criteria of study design. This left 17 studies for me to examine further, four of which did not have the full text available and I then requested them through interlibrary loan. The library was unable to provide two of the four studies I requested, one was an unpublished manuscript and the other was not provided because it was originally produced on a private law enforcement employment bulletin page. Each of the 15 studies that I received and reviewed provided essential information to the topic of interest.

### **Data Analysis**

The inclusive criteria for prospective studies included study validity, focus population, study design, language, and date completed. Studies chosen had internal and external validity analyzed to determine if the studies were relevant to the ongoing discussion regarding police training and the effect it has on police officer's level of empathy for domestic violence victims. In order to determine if a study had external validity, I looked at their sampling methods. I determined that studies with random samplings had high generalizability and therefore high external validity. To determine a study's internal validity, I reviewed the study's design and analyzed the rigor of each design. The more rigorous the design, the more reliable the results of the study. The focus population for prospective studies were limited to police trainees, practicing police officers, students studying law enforcement or criminal justice, and individuals involved

in domestic violence. These studies also had to be one of the following study designs: meta-analysis, systematic review, randomized control trial or true experiment, quasi-experimental design, or cross sectional design. In addition to the study design, the prospective studies had to be originally written in English or translated into English and completed after the year 2005. See Appendix A for a detailed coding scheme used throughout this study and Appendix B for a list of the coded articles.

### **Types of Articles Collected**

An analysis of the 15 studies uncovered multiple different themes, including police training ( $n = 6$ ), officer's level of empathy ( $n = 5$ ), and police responses to domestic violence ( $n = 4$ ). Two of the articles focused on how training influenced police officer's level of empathy and four articles focused on how training influences police officer's responses to domestic violence. The methodological approaches used by the authors included five systematic reviews, five surveys that collected qualitative data, one true experiment, one quasi-experiment, and three cross-sectional designs (See Appendix B). Four of the five systematic reviews looked at other studies that analyzed police trainings and how the police responded to domestic violence calls differently after the trainings. The fifth systematic review focused on the affects that police officers' level of empathy has on victims of domestic violence. (See Appendix B).

### **Results**

The studies used presented information on what the current state of police training is, how training affects an officer's level of empathy, and how this level of empathy plays a role in the outcomes for the victims. There are multiple types of trainings that focus on domestic violence, which are implemented depending on jurisdiction. Researchers analyzed these specific trainings in order to determine the effect they had on how the officers interact with victims of

domestic violence. Researchers also studied the effects that the trainings had on police officer's level of empathy. An officer's level of empathy can be developed, which would allow officer's to better understand how the victim feels and what they are experiencing (Peters et al., 2009). A high level of empathy from first responders is important to victims, and can affect the rest of their lives (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015).

### **Current Police Training**

The current state of police training reflects the laws regarding domestic violence, which differ across the United States. Officers are trained on how to comply with the laws, which are often based on responding to specific incidents and not ongoing patterns of abuse (Buzawa, 2012). With the laws only created to handle each act separately, some victims are at risk because officers may not be trained to understand the true nature of domestic violence. The current trainings for officers also rarely recognize that there are different types of domestic violence. The three types include intimate terrorism, violent resistance, and situational couple violence (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012). Intimate terrorism includes all of the controlling attributes found on the Power and Control wheel, which trainers often use during police trainings (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012). Violent resistance a common reaction by victims when exposed to intimate terrorism. This involves the victims using violence to defend themselves or to retaliate against their abuser (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012). Situational couple violence is the third type of domestic violence and it differs quite drastically from the other types. This type of domestic violence does not involve control, but instead is a short period of aggression expressed by both partners (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012). With these different types of domestic violence occurring, officers must be able to recognize the differences. Each type of violence requires a different reaction from police officers. Intimate

terrorism and violent resistance call for ongoing contact with the police and other resources in order to protect the victim on a long-term scale, whereas situational couple violence may only require one interaction with the police. The current laws do not cover the complexities of each type of domestic violence, and therefore trainers do not include all types of domestic violence during officer trainings (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012). This makes it almost impossible for police to respond to domestic violence appropriately because they lack the skills and understanding needed to address such a complicated issue.

Experts have developed and implemented specific trainings, in certain jurisdictions, on how police officers should handle domestic violence situations. One of these trainings involved the enactment of a domestic violence response team (DVRT). The DVRT included social workers and trained volunteers, who would accompany police officers to the scene of domestic violence crimes (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015). The trained workers would address the emotional component of the situation while the police would handle the procedural aspects, including arrests. In addition to officers being trained on DVRT for domestic violence incidents, the creators of the training also provided ongoing education to the officers (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015). After the implementation of the DVRT, 79% of officers responded positively to the usefulness of the team and 47% of the officers requested that they continue to receive training from the team (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015). It is important to note that these types of domestic violence response teams are not feasible for all jurisdictions, based on both their size and funding level. For those jurisdictions where it is not a possibility, it is even more important for every officer to be empathetic, sensitive to the issue, and take all cases seriously (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015).

Other studies have also focused on the importance of taking domestic violence situations seriously and handling them accordingly. The International Association of Chief of Police (IACP) developed the “Domestic Violence: Model Policy” in 2006 (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012). The IACP outlined how police should be handling domestic violence cases in order to assure the ability to prosecute. It was common that officers would not consider the situations serious, and would therefore neglect to collect evidence from the scene (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012). Without proper collection of evidence, it was almost impossible to prosecute domestic violence cases. This shows how crucial it is for officers to recognize that they cannot take domestic violence lightly, and that they need to follow specific guidelines for handling each incident. The implementation of the IACP’s model policy, or a similar policy, would force officers to respond properly to domestic violence, including how seriously they handle the situations (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012). When officers handle incidents thoughtfully, it expresses that they care about the outcome for the victim. The collection of proper evidence can be the difference of the criminal justice system releasing the offender or them being convicted and sent to prison. This makes it very important that officers receive training and adhere to specific policies regarding the handling of domestic violence cases.

Trainings on cultural competence are also relevant when discussing domestic violence because the issue can affect any community. The University of Illinois has implemented a training on cultural competence; “Policing in a Multiracial Society Program” (PMSP). The training involves teaching police officers how to recognize their values, biases, and any stereotypes they may have (Schlosser, Cha-Jua, Valgoi, & Neville, 2015). Those who participate in the training must become aware of their underlying thoughts and then learn the skills for reducing their biases and not allowing their personal values to affect their work (Schlosser, Cha-

Jua, Valgoi, & Neville, 2015). This training focused on racial issues between communities and their police, which was a difficult topic for many officers to discuss. The training was successful in educating officers on the topic of cultural competence, but did not research how this education affected their actions when policing (Schlosser, Cha-Jua, Valgoi, & Neville, 2015). Although this research focused on cultural competence when it comes to racial tensions, it offers insight into police training as a whole. Domestic violence is an issue that affects all types of people, making it crucial that training for officers includes cultural competence. The PMSP and domestic violence trainings could be combined to educate officers on how to respond to calls appropriately, without their personal biases having an effect on the victim. Without being culturally competent, it would be very difficult for officers to empathize with victims because officers would not be able to overcome the stereotypes they may hold.

Many researchers have specific recommendations for improving the current state of police training on domestic violence in America. One of the most important recommendations is to truly investing in training on domestic violence. There is currently a high focus on training officers in the areas of physical fitness and firearms, but a lacking amount of time focused on domestic violence (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012). There must be an investment of both time and money in order to improve trainings. The trainings should be ongoing because of the ever-changing policies regarding domestic violence and the influx of new information regarding the issue (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012). Police trainings on domestic violence must also address the issue of stereotypes. Law enforcement officers cannot ignore that negative gender and racial stereotypes still exist and can affect an officer's ability to properly handle situations (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012 & Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015). In order to ensure the effectiveness of trainings and policies, researchers must continuously gather

information regarding implementation. Society and law enforcement supervisors must hold officers to a high standard when it comes to how they handle domestic violence cases. It is not uncommon for police to fall short of following policies and procedures, and to continue to do so because of a lack of punishment or retraining (O'Dell, 2007). Therefore, there is a need for disciplining officers who do not follow policies and procedures and an implementation of required retraining for those who do not feel that they had the proper knowledge of how to handle the domestic violence situation. There is an overall need to improve police trainings on domestic violence in order to improve how officers respond to incidents and how they treat victims.

### **Effects of Training on Empathy**

Training on domestic violence can have an impact on many aspects of how a police officer responds to situations. Without proper training, officers may use their own opinions and biases when working with victims of domestic violence. For instance, officers have tried to attempt a mediation strategy between the offender and the victim (McMullan, Carlan, & Nored, 2010). This can lead to temporary solutions but does not address the often on-going nature of domestic violence (McMullan, Carlan, & Nored, 2010). Officers should not rely on their own beliefs on what is best for the victim, but instead should adhere to policies while still understanding the victim's experience. It is crucial that police departments adequately prepared all officers for handling all types of domestic violence situations, including incidents involving the LGBTQ+ community. In order to handle situations involving members of the LGBTQ+ community, officers must receive training regarding empathy. Many officers have never taken a training regarding domestic violence in same-sex relationships, but most police have already encountered a situation involving this population (Tesch, Bekerian, English, & Harrington,



2010). This shows that police department often do not give their officers the proper tools to express empathy in all situations because of the lack of available trainings. Police opinions also affect their ability to be empathetic because they do not discuss and address their biases openly.

Understand one's own biases and prejudices can allow them to move past their own beliefs and recognize each person as having their own experience. A survey conducted with 22 officers in Upstate New York offers insights into police officer's opinions regarding victims of domestic violence (Horwitz et al., 2011). The results of the survey indicated that officers are often frustrated with victims of recurring domestic violence situations because they have not utilized the resources available to help them leave their abuser (Horwitz et al., 2011). Some officers also expressed that they felt as if they were wasting their time responding to domestic violence at the same homes because the victim has chosen to stay (Horwitz et al., 2011). These underlying beliefs held by the officers offer insight into why the officers must address their personal biases through debriefings and trainings. There must be safe spaces, with trained professionals, available for officers to express their opinions while also recognizing why they hold those beliefs. Processing these thoughts is an important step that departments should be incorporating throughout domestic violence scenario trainings.

Researchers have taken various approaches to increase officer's level of empathy when working with victims of domestic violence. The implementation of Domestic Violence Response Teams (DVRT) and the training's educational component proved to be one effective method. Those who received the training to be part of the DVRT and the officers who worked with them were able to empathize with victims and accomplished their goal of connecting victims with services (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015). Another study that directly measured how officers have changed their behavior after training focused on the impact that domestic violence has on those

involved (Ruff, 2012). After the implementation of the trainings, officers stayed at the scene longer, collected evidence in a more succinct manner, and they were more likely to focus on the needs of the victim (Ruff, 2012). By paying attention to victim's needs, the officers were better able to understand the emotions of the victim along with how their actions affected the outcome for the victim. The on-going nature of the training can also make an impact on officer's actions by continuously addressing their biases and recognizing the impact of their interventions (Ruff, 2012). Another aspect of domestic violence trainings that can be effective when striving to improve officer's empathizing skills is the implementation of trainings from the victim's perspective. This type of training allows officers to understand the difference between self-defense and unnecessary violence in domestic violence situations (O'Dell, 2007). By incorporating the victim's perspective, officers can avoid dual-arrest situations and reduce the trauma that victim's experience during an incident (O'Dell, 2007). This different perspective also increases the officer's level of empathy for the victim because they are able to understand how the individual recognizes warning signs from their partner, how they try to avoid a violent situation, and how they defend themselves when the situation escalates into violence. It is also important that officers try to think about what is running through a victim's mind throughout a relationship involving domestic violence. This is necessary because domestic violence is a daily struggle for many victims and police may not have ever considered the amount of psychological control involved with many cases. The officer's overall understanding of the complexities of domestic violence and their level of empathy then influences the victim on various levels.

### **Effects on Victims of Domestic Violence**

The police response to domestic violence situations can have an impact on the outcomes of the situations, in both the short and the long-term. Officers hold the power to decide on who,

if anyone, they will arrest at the scene of domestic violence situations (Tatum & Pence, 2015). The only way for policies to be effective is if officers enforce them when responding to calls. With proper training, officers are more likely to enforce mandatory arrest policies as well as conduct the proper procedures when at the scene (Tatum & Pence, 2015). Part of these procedures include the documentation of the incident and the collection of evidence. Without officers following these procedures correctly, it is very difficult for the incident to result in the conviction of the offender. Therefore, lack of proper training on how to follow procedures has resulted in officer's overlooking or ignoring critical facts, including symptoms of strangulation (O'Dell, 2007). Officer's handling of a domestic violence case can also alter the prosecution's ability to convict the offender on the felony level. In order to make this conviction, it must be proven that the offender has afflicted "serious bodily harm" (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012). This determination of if the offender should be charged with a felony is left up to the evidence collected by officers and the interpretation of the evidence by the prosecution (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012). Without proper training, officers are less likely to be able to collect the proper evidence for a conviction, having a lasting effect on the victim in the situation. If the criminal justice system does not hold the offender accountable for their actions, the victim may feel victimized for a second time.

In certain situations, it is possible that police will arrest the victim along with the offender. This was an unexpected result of mandatory arrest laws that were implemented in multiple states. Victims who experienced dual arrests were dissatisfied with the actions of police and were less likely to report abuse in the future (Buzawa, 2012). In order to avoid dual arrest scenarios, officers must receive training from the victim's perspective, which allows them to learn the difference between self-defense and unnecessary violence. Training from the victim's

perspective could drastically reduce the negative effects officer's actions have on victims of domestic violence. Police attitudes and treatment of victims has an impact on a victim's attitude on the entire criminal justice system (Gracia, Garcia, & Lila, 2014). Without trust in the system, victims will not report abuse and are unlikely to leave their abusive situations. It is therefore the first-responders' duty to show empathy towards the victim in order to gain their trust. Police may be the first person who the victim discloses the abuse to, which means that the officer's response to this information will have a lasting effect on the victim (Peters et al., 2009). Police must show victims empathy in order for them to disclose the extent of the abuse, while officers also must be ready to point out the victim's strengths and empower them to make their own decisions (Peters et al., 2009).

Empowering the victim and not making judgements on what their decision should be a skill all police officers must learn. Those who have empathy for domestic violence victims are more likely to be concerned about the welfare of the victim and value their decisions (Lila, Gracia, & García, 2013). By allowing the victim to make an uncoerced decision on if they want to press charges, the victim will gain a piece of their independence. This will empower victims of domestic violence because they are constantly controlled by their abuser and do not need to be controlled by the police as well. Empathy for the victim is necessary because officers with lower levels of empathy are less likely to support the victim if they decide not to press charges (Gracia, García, & Lila, 2011). Victims are often already skeptical of reporting abuse before interacting with police because of the societal culture regarding domestic violence (McMullan, Carlan, & Nored, 2010). With all of these factors interacting, it is important that officers keep in mind the impact their actions have on victims. Their actions alone can make the difference of if the victim

reaches out to other services (McMullan, Carlan, & Nored, 2010). Police must understand the severity of the effect that their actions and reactions have on victim's entire lives.

Along with an effect on individual lives, the police response to domestic violence has an effect on entire community's and the broader society. When addressing the social issue of domestic violence, police must respond in an organized manner that expresses true concern for the problem. Officers can express this concern by connecting families to resources, which is imminent when a child is involved. By being first-responders to domestic violence, police have a duty to provide proper referrals to families in order to begin the intervention process (Shields, 2008). Officers must be informed on the available resources available in their communities in order to fight domestic violence on a systematic level because without proper intervention, it is more likely that the abuse will continue (Shields, 2008). The actions and beliefs of police reflect the broader community response to domestic violence. If police view domestic violence as a personal issue instead of a crime, it sends a negative message to their entire community (Gracia, García, & Lila, 2011). Police have a responsibility to set the tone for how society must respond to domestic violence. A coordinated response between police and domestic violence resource centers will display to the community that domestic violence is a crime that will not be tolerated (Lila, Gracia, & García, 2013 & Gracia, Garcia, & Lila, 2014). With support from the broader society, victims will feel more supported and the rate of domestic violence can be reduced through a coordinated community effort. This, however, cannot be accomplished without the full support of police officers because they are so closely tied to the issue of domestic violence.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The results depict a high level of need for increased police training on working with victims of domestic violence. In order to combat the social issue, this training must be on going

and in-depth. The training must begin in the police academy and then be implemented on an annual basis. Studies have shown that this approach is effective in increasing an officer's understanding of a victim's experience. Trainings conducted by crisis intervention teams, which are already in existence, have shown to be an effective means of educating other officers (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015). This training should consider the victim's perspective in order for officers to fully grasp the emotions of the victim during a domestic violence dispute. Officers must understand that domestic violence can come in many forms, all of which require a different response. The three types of intimate partner violence are intimate terrorism, violent resistance, and situational couple violence (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012). Police officers must be given the tools to understand all types of domestic violence, how to react to them, and how to empathize with a victim in each situation. With training, it is possible that officers will handle situations differently because they understand the complexities of domestic violence.

Another aspect of adequately preparing police officers for working with victims of domestic violence is diversity trainings. As a result of domestic violence being a widespread issue, all populations within the United States are affected by it. This makes it essential for police officers to understand how different individuals react in domestic violence situations, and how they can help them. In order to integrate diversity trainings, it may be necessary to bring in experts on different populations to discuss the issue of domestic violence within that community. Although this may not be possible for smaller jurisdictions, it is something that larger jurisdictions must invest in if the department wants to properly prepare officers.

Researchers have also suggested that police officers are vetted before being hired based on their personal beliefs regarding domestic violence. Lila, Gracia, and García (2013) suggest that officers who display high levels of sexism and low levels of empathy be eliminated from the

candidate pool. Police departments should also consider male entitlement and personal biases when looking at police recruits (O'Dell, 2007). These undesirable personality traits are likely to have an effect on how officers react in certain situations, including how they treat victims. By reducing the number of officers who have pre-existing negative stereotypes and biases against victims of domestic violence, it would be less challenging to implement trainings on empathizing with those individuals.

The literature used to reach this conclusion included studies with varying research designs and sampling methods. Five systematic reviews were analyzed and were all found to have high internal validity. The systematic reviews were published by Buzawa (2012), Eigenberg, Kappeler, and McGuffee (2012), Lockwood and Prohaska (2015), O'Dell (2007), and Peters et. al. (2009). The authors of these systematic reviews chose to analyze studies relating to how police training affects police officer's action and how those action affect victims of domestic violence. The authors each found similar results from the studies they analyzed, which allowed them to conclude that police training can affect both the officer's response to domestic violence as well as directly affect the victim. The combination of having both inclusive and exclusive criteria along with analyzing studies that resulted similarly, the authors of the systematic reviews ensured high internal validity.

There were limitations to some of the studies used, including the quasi-experimental study conducted by Ruff (2012). The study assessed the differences in domestic violence case files before and after a training was implemented. The study conducted by Ruff (2012) had low internal validity, as acknowledged by the author, because it could not be assured that the training was the only variable that affected the different in the case files. Although it could not be confirmed that the training was the only variable in play, the study did imply that training had an

impact on how police responded to and document domestic violence calls. The study by Ruff (2012) was conducted in Canada, but still had high external validity because of the similarities between Canada and the United States. The study, overall, offers insight into how training affects police actions and can also be applied when discussing police training in the United States. The true-experiment, conducted by Schlosser, Cha-Jua, Valgoi, and Neville (2015) proved to have both high internal and external validity. The study used pre and post surveys, discussions, and module evaluation data to ensure the outcomes of the study were not biased. The findings from the 2015 study can be generalized throughout the United States because it involved police recruits along with veteran police officers, showing results for all age groups.

Five of the studies analyzed utilized surveys in order to determine their results. Two of the five surveys were conducted by the same authors in different years (Gracia, Garcia, & Lila, 2011 and Lila, Gracia, & Garcia, 2013). For each of these studies, the setting was in Spain but the authors state that the results have external validity in terms of applying the study to the United States because of the similarities in the recruitment and training of police officers. As for internal validity, both the studies have limitations. For both studies, the authors mention that the surveys were conducted in a group setting and therefore may have affected their results, causing the studies to have low internal validity.

Horwitz et al. (2011) conducted a survey that also had low internal validity because it was conducted in a group setting and officer's shared their responses and thoughts in this group setting. This could have affected the results because of peer-pressure and group dynamics. Although the opinions of the officers involved with this study are insightful, they may not be generalizable to the rest of the United States. Horwitz et al. (2011) only included 22 officers from one upstate New York police department and therefore does not provide a large enough



sample size to have high external validity. The survey conducted by McMullan, Carlan, and Nored (2010) also cannot be generalized to the rest of the United States because it only included students from four public universities in one southern state. This survey also had low internal validity because the survey offered little opportunity for participants to provide qualitative responses and therefore did not provide space for participants to explain their answers, as pointed out by the authors (McMullan, Carlan, & Nored, 2010). The survey conducted by Tesch, Bekerian, English, and Harrington (2010) had low external validity because the sample was taken from towns with similar sociodemographic areas. A larger sample size would have been more effective for analyzing how police respond to same-sex domestic violence calls. The study also has low internal validity, as recognized by the authors. Tesch, Bekerian, English, and Harrington (2010) state that the survey was not administered in person and only a letter was provided to explain the survey to the participants. This may have caused confusion for the participants about the survey, which was unknown to the researchers because the surveys were conducted anonymously and confidentially. Although the surveys used often had low internal and external validity, they still offered insight into the thoughts of police officers, police recruits, and students in law enforcement. These insights were useful when analyzing how police officers respond to domestic violence situations and what they believe trainings should entail.

The cross-sectional study conducted by Gracia, Garcia, and Lila (2014) was also completed in Spain. Again, the authors state that the results are generalizable to the United States because of the similarities in the recruitment and training of police officers in both countries. The study's internal validity is questionable because there were multiple variables that could have impacted officer's preferences. The authors state that these variables were not included in the scenarios used for their research (Gracia, Garcia, & Lila, 2014). Shields (2008) also conducted a

cross-sectional study, which analyzed investigation files for felony domestic violence cases collected by the San Francisco Police Department. This study has high external validity because over 3,000 files were examined from many different officers, showing that there was an overall change in documentation. Shields' study has low internal validity because more than one variable may have impacted how the officers documented domestic violence cases.

Tatum and Pence (2015) also conducted a cross-sectional study, which had both low internal and external validity. The authors state that the research was only conducted to determine factors that affect arrest in domestic violence situations for one jurisdiction and that the results are not generalizable (Tatum & Pence, 2015). The study had low internal validity because the authors did not examine if an offender's alcohol or substance use affected the rate of arrest, which may have been an important variable to consider. Although the study had its limitations, the research still provided information on what factors can affect the likelihood of arrest in domestic violence situations.

In order to gain a better understanding of how trainings effect officer's actions during domestic violence situations, more rigorous and longitudinal studies must be conducted. Many of the current research studies rely on short-term changes, generally limited to under a year after the trainings are implemented. To grasp the true effect of ongoing trainings, researchers must conduct studies over multiple years. This would give researchers a more concrete understanding of how trainings can affect officers after each year of new training is implemented. These studies must look into an officer's level of empathy before and after each annual training, as well as the officer's actions when on domestic violence calls. It would also be helpful to have more information gathered about the outcomes of each case, including the emotional outcome for the victim. Individuals who have been in contact with officers who have received ongoing training

may be able to offer more insight into how the officer's actions truly affected them.

Researchers could use this information to improve future trainings and have a widespread impact on how police respond to domestic violence in America.

In addition to improving police trainings, police departments must consider working with social workers when combatting domestic violence. Both professions focus on helping victims, making it possible for them to work together on the issue. With collaboration between social work and the police force, it would allow victims to connect with the criminal justice system as well as other resources. Police, as first-responders, should be able to neutralize the domestic violence situation while they are present. After the initial point of contact with the police, victims could then be connected with a social worker. This would allow the officers to focus on the immediate situation while the social workers would be able to have a longer connection with the victim. The collaboration between the two professions would be beneficial for the victim and would be a way to combat domestic violence on a systematic level. In order to reduce domestic violence on a national level, all professionals who work with victims must become allies in the fight against the social issue.

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## Appendix A

## Coding of studies examined

Variable	Description	Scoring Criteria
Date Completed	Year of study	Year
Internal Validity	Was internal validity high or low for the study?	High Low
External Validity	Was external validity high or low for the study?	High Low
Population	Sample population	Leave blank if not applicable PO- Police Officers PR- Police Recruits S- Students R-Police Records
Sample Size	Number of individuals/records within the sample population	Leave blank if not applicable, otherwise report number of subjects
Sample Description	Description of the sample	NC- Not Clear SC- Somewhat Clear C- Clear
Study Design	The type of study design used	SR- Systematic Review S- Survey RCT/TE- Randomized Control Trial or True Experiment QE- Quasi-Experimental Design CSD- Cross-sectional design

Type of study	What was the main focus?	DV- Effects police have on victims of domestic violence T- Training of police officers P- Policies regarding domestic violence E- Police officers level of empathy POO- Police officer's opinions/reactions to domestic violence situations PR- Police response to domestic violence
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## Appendix B

Coded articles included in review.

Authors & Year	Internal Validity	External Validity	Population	Sample Size	Sample Description	Study Design	Type of Study
Buzawa (2012)	High	High				SR	T, P, & PR
Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee (2012)	High	High				SR	T & PR
Gracia, Garcia, & Lila (2011)	Low	High	PO	378	C	S	POO
Gracia, Garcia, & Lila (2014)	Low	High	PO	308	C	CSD	POO
Horwitz et al. (2011)	Low	High	PO	22	C	S	POO
Lila, Gracia, Garcia (2013)	Low	High	PO	404	C	S	POO & E
Lockwood & Prohaska (2015)	High	High				SR	P, PR, & DV
McMullan, Carlan, Nored (2010)	Low	Low	S	491	C	S	T & DV

O'Dell (2007)	High	High				SR	P & T
Peters et al. (2009)	High	High				SR	E & DV
Ruff (2012)	Low	High	PO	1,032	C	QE	T, PR, & DV
Schlosser, Cha-Jua, Valgoi, & Neville (2015)	High	High	PR & PO	3 cohort groups	NC	RCT/TE	POO
Shields (2008)	Low	High	R	> 3,000	C	CSD	P & PR
Tatum & Pence (2015)	Low	Low	R	3,200	C	CSD	PR
Tesch, Bekerian, English, & Harrington (2010)	Low	Low	PO	91	C	S	T