A Systems Application to Stress Management Training in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police

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Research on police stress has focused primarily on its existence and origins being inherently occupational. This study verifies the existence of occupational stress, but takes a further look into the stress that exists working within an organization and being part of a family system. From a systems perspective, this study takes the "big picture" of a police officer's life and assesses the need for training in stress management. This systems' perspective asserts itself in the needs' assessment being directed toward both RCMP member and spouse.

A sample of 101 Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers, both male and female, ranging in rank from constable to superintendent, and 72 of their spouses returned question-naires. The questionnaires, using an adaptation of the Maslach

Burnout Inventory (MBI) were designed to answer the following questions:

- Is there a need in the RCMP for Stress Management training? Is there a need for a Family Systems application to this training?
- Is there an interest in police officer and spouse joint training?
- At what stage of a police offic er's career would this training be most valuable?
- In order to design a relevant curriculum, what are the specific areas of stress for the police family?

Results of this study show a need for stress management training as expressed by both RCMP member and spouse, and as evidenced by the data. The need, interest, and perceived value of joint training was evidenced in the data, as well as the

accompanying written comments.

Specific areas and items of stress were determined and compared in light of gender, rank, duty type, and years of experience. In comparing members and spouses in ratings of stress, the following results were obtained:

- Organizational, occupational, and family stress were ranked in that order by member and spouse.
- Spouses reported higher stress ratings than members in every area.
- The six spouses who reported the highest stress were all living with members who were rated in the top 10% of the high stress category.
- All factors considered, the RCMP member experiencing the most stress is a male, uniformed con-stable with between nine and twelve years of experience.

- Female members reported lower stress levels.
- The RCMP spouse experiencing the most stress is one that is living with such a member.
- Stressors ranked highest by member and spouse (although in different orders), were: raising children; finances; workload; promotional opportunities; emotionally-draining work; and, the feeling of being "always on duty".

RCMP members were asked to respond to more items than the spousal group; for members, occupational stress was ranked as the highest, followed by organizational and family stress. The stressor ranked highest by RCMP members by a considerable margin was the frustration of working within the judicial system.

The top three topics for the proposed training, rated by both member and spouse were: surviving critical incident stress; stress management - a cognitive approach; and, coping with grief and loss.

The optimum timing for this training was judged to be "pre-children" and before eight years of service. The majority favoured training within the first four years of service.

Introduction
Over the past 20 years, the subject of stress has received an unprecedented amount of attention. The subject of police stress has become a central topic in every venue - from local workshop to national convention in the police universe. Although there is a shortage of empirical studies on the topic, there is an abundance of articles written from either personal experience or observation.

The task is not to eliminate stress from the police profession; this would never happen, nor should it. The challenge is for individuals to understand their perceptions of potentially-stressful situations and their vulnerability to the negative effects of stress. The training approaches to this task are vast and varied, but the need for training in this area has been recognized by most major police forces.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police has recognized the need to educate their members on the existence and the effects of stress related to their duties. The employment of Division psychologists, the inception of the Member Assistance Program (peer counselling), the introduction of stress leave, and the implementation of stress management education into existing courses are positive steps taken to address this issue.

The systems application being discussed in this article is novel to the Canadian police community. It is appropriate to stress management because it gets "the big picture" of an individual's life. The approach recognizes that people are not islands unto themselves but rather, that they are involved with others in systems and subsystems.

This needs assessment looks at three systems that an RCMP member is involved in, but does not presuppose that these are the only three. The areas were chosen because I believe that it is in these areas most stress is created. This project assesses the stress in the occupational system where the respondent is a police officer. It then focuses on the respondent as a member of the RCMP within an organizational system. The third area the project assesses is the member's stress within the family system where he or she is a parent, a spouse, a sibling, and a child. The study then assesses the stress felt by the spouse affected or involved in the three systems.

The focus of this project is primarily on the family system: It is the area most neglected in past research and instruction in stress management. Although the family system is the entire family, I have chosen to involve just the parental subsystem (i.e., husband and wife), since they would likely be the candidates for any proposed training. The family systems approach supports the view that stress can support or magnify dysfunction, but that it can also promote healthy family growth.

The goals of the needs assessment are:

- To assess the need for stress management training.
- To determine specific areas of stress for the RCMP member and spouse - a key ingredient for relevant curriculum design
- To assess the need for the family systems application to this training.
- To determine the interest in police officer/spouse joint training.
- To determine the stage of a police officer's career during which this training would be most valuable.

Literature Review
It is not my intent in this review to portray police work as one of the most stressful occupations. The literature I have reviewed has done that over and over again.
The focus of this review will be:

A. *Police Family Stress*
What exactly is stress? Where are the main stressors in police work? (areas)
How is the family affected by stress?
B. *Intervention/Remediation by Training*
How can the organization help?

A. Police Family Stress

What Exactly is Stress?

A buzzword of the 70s and 80s, stress has been characterized in a variety of ways. Dr. Hans Selye (1956) characterized it as a "non-specific response of the body to any demand". He urged that one should not or could not avoid stress, but that one should adapt to the resulting change.

Lazarus viewed stress as a response to a stimulus, whether physiological or psychological in nature. The psychological reaction is determined by an interpretation or appraisal, either conscious or subconscious, of a challenging, threatening, or harmful event (Lazarus & Launier, 1978).

The effects of stress related to police work are well documented in the research (Alkus & Padesky, 1983; Ellison & Genz, 1983; Maslach & Jackson 1979; Perrier & Toner, 1984; Territo & Vetter, 1981). Frequently cited effects are: emotional hardening; lack of sensitivity; marital discord; aggression; irritability; and, inflexibility. Ellison and Genz (1983) reported a frequency of psychosomatic illnesses including backaches, muscle tension, fatigue, diarrhea, and appetite changes.

(Note: the term "pressure" will be used synonymously with stress in this present study.)

Where are the Main Stressors in Police Work?

In the literature discussing psychological or psychosocial stress, the same events continue to appear, but they are often rank-ordered differently. The events range from daily hassles to acute critical incidents.

"Daily hassles" can be described as low intensity events in that they are not life-threatening. These events, which are much more frequent than critical incident events, include: shiftwork; super

visor support; excessive paperwork; court leniency; lack of recognition; political pressure; lack of promotional opportunity; inadequate equipment; internal investigations; and, insufficient manpower (Gallagher-Duffy, 1986).

Acute or critical incidents have been discussed as highly stressful, but are not as frequent as other stress-producing events. These critical incidents include tragic loss of life, injury and the threat of death or injury (Black, 1981; Gallagher-Duffy, 1986; Kaslof, 1989; Stratton, 1984). This area of stress as it relates to emergency service personnel has been receiving much warranted attention since Dr. Jeffery Mitchell introduced the critical incident stress debriefing process.

There is a limited body of knowledge in the area of police stress as it relates specifically to Canadian police officers. Both Gallagher-Duffy (1986) in Ontario and Stearns (1987) in Saskatchewan noted differences in their findings compared to similar studies in the United States and Great Britain.

Gallagher-Duffy (1986) examined the psychological stressors in police work using these four groupings: potential for personal injury or death; perceived inadequacies of the court system; poor supervision; exposure to death; and, suffering. Within these groupings were 60 factors that past research had indicated were stressful to police officers. The 336 uniformed constables in her study were asked to rate the 60 items in terms of the amount of stress produced and frequency of occurrence. In stressful job events, the top three were:

- injury and death;

- threat of injury and death; and
- high-speed chases.

'he most frequent stressors were:

- shiftwork
- paperwork excess:
- court leniency.

Interestingly, the mean frequency scores showed her four groupings in this order:

- perceived inadequacies of the court system;
- poor supervision;
- potential for personal injury anc death; and,
- exposure to death and suffering.

Gallagher-Duffy reported that the relationship between stressfulness and frequency rating is not consistent across all job stressors. She found that there was a positive correlation for the less serious job events and a negative correlation for the more serious. This would mean that for a less serious event and the more frequent a job stressor is perceived to be, the higher the stress rating. Conversely, for a more serious event but the more frequent the event, the less stressful it is perceived to be.

The need for an organization to identify the sources of stress for its employees is strongly stated by Stearns (1992) whose primary research question was, "What sources of stress in the police environment are most strongly related to higher incidence of various signs of distress (e.g., job burnout, health problems)". In a pilot study involving 135 RCMP constables, Stearns identified the most serious sources of stress for constables in the RCMP. She concluded that the most serious sources of stress for RCMP members were related to interpersonal and organizational factors. The factor determined to create the most stress was termed "inter-role conflict" and included items such as, "My job interferes with my family/social life, and, " I have to juggle my job and my family

responsibilities." The predominant theme of this factor is the conflict between the roles of police officer and family member.

Another factor labelled "work-based social support" was identified as the next correlate of the consequences of stress. The theme of this factor was cohesion among peers and feedback from supervisors. Items such as, "My supervisors are sensitive to my needs/ difficulties," and, "I get positive feedback from my immediate supervisor," were included in this factor.

Stearns labels other factors as competing demands, under constant scrutiny, issues regarding female members, and boredom. She emphasizes that stress management programs for RCMP constables should not just focus on critical incidents, but also on chronic stressors with an emphasis on reducing inter-role conflict.

In a 1986 study, Graf, a police officer in Saanich, B.C., strongly supported the correlation between work-based social support and perceived occupational stress. He examined this relationship among 105 members of the Saanich Police Department. Graf reported significant negative correlation between the number of social support persons, the satisfaction with this support, and the perception of occupational stress. Graf sums up the written comments made on his returned questionnaires by saying, "It is working within the police

organization, rather than having to deal with the situations encountered in the performance of their duties, which is the most stressful aspect of the police officer's job".

Other studies which provide lists and categories of stressors include: Eisenberg, 1975; Ellison & Genz, 1983; Loo, 1984; Perrier & Toner, 1984; Reiser, 1974; and Stratton, 1984.

How is the Family Affected

Inter-role conflict is truly a reality when the "big picture" is considered. The consistent engaging and disengaging between the roles of mother, wife and cop or father, husband and cop require consistent cognitive and emotional adjustments. Coupled with the adjustments that need to be made within each role, conflict is inevitable.

Maslach and Jackson (1979) discuss inter-role conflict in terms of competing demands, although they do not specifically use that term. They report the job's physical hazards are less debilitating than the frustration with the court system and police administration, the responsibility for other's lives and safety, and the long hours mixed with inactivity and unpredictable crises.

Jackson and Maslach (1982) undertook a study of 142 police families, where the average time married was 10.5 years; the mean age of parents was 33.5 years; the average number of years of service of the police officers was 12.1; 58% of

the spouses were working; and *90%* of the families had more than one child. They reported a link between job attitude and quality of family life. This was discussed in terms of the police officer's ability to adjust to the police role, which may require an emotional distancing in order to cope and perform effectively, and then back to the family role where emotions must be shared.

Besner and Robinson (1982) further reinforce that need for the police officer and the police family to be able to adapt to the demands of the occupation and the family. The adaptation of the police officer to work life and family life, and the necessary adjustments in between are paramount. Territo and Vetter (1981) reinforce this:

"... a law enforcement career is much more than a job or occupation for the individual; it is a way of life for the officer, his spouse, and his family. He brings the problems and frustrations encountered on the job home to the family. Conversely, he can vent the frustrations, tensions, and hostilities engendered by an unsatisfactory home life on the public."

Hageman (1978) studied 70 police officers in the Seattle, Washington area, 54 of whom were married (for an average of 4.7 years and had an average of 1.1 children. The mean age of the police officers was 24.5 years.) Thirty-two spouses were surveyed, 19 of whom were married to "rookie" police officers with less than one year of police experience. Hageman concluded that inter-role conflict was related to marital adjustment and that these conflicts did not allow the police officers to develop strong marital relationships. She

also concluded that the more police service one had, the less marital satisfaction they enjoyed. However, this conclusion is limited by the sample of police officers being less than three years of service.

Depue (1981), in the FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin described the police family as a high-risk lifestyle and discusses the balance that must be established and maintained between personal, occupational and family areas of one's life. He notes the difficulty of this task, the adjustments and the inherent problems:

"Further, adjustments to the stressors at work may prove damaging to the development of closeness within the family. In order to cope with frequent encounters with criminal behaviour, citizen hostility, and human suffering, officers often become aloof, detached, and highly controlled in their emotional lives. This coping pattern does not serve well the need to share feelings, vulnerabilities, and compassion in relationships with a spouse and children."

Maynard and Maynard (1982) conducted a "family impact analysis" to determine what department policies are related to police family stress. The most significant stressors were identified as inherent job demands (e.g., shift rotation, promotional practices), pressure to have exclusively police friends, and maintaining the police officer image.

In a Canadian study based on 122 families in the Calgary Police Department, Lain (1983) looks at the effects of occupational stress on marital relationships. The respondents averaged 8.1 years being married and 68.4% having more than one child. A spouse's mean age was 29.8 years and 66.4% of the spouses were employed outside

the home. Police officers averaged 7.6 years of service and had a mean age of 31.5 years. The most significant findings in Lain's study were:

- The police officers were not emotionally drained, but were not getting personal satisfaction from their work.
- Officers and spouses perceived the job had hardened them emotionally.
- There was more burn-out present in the officers than the spouses.
- The coping styles of officers and spouses are not significantly different than others outside the police family realm.
- Burnout occurs early career in (less than 15 years).

Burnout occurring early in the career is consistent with other literature on burnout (Jackson & Maslach, 1982; Stearns, 1992). Many authors and researchers have noted a dearth of empirical studies on police stress, especially as it relates to the family. The literature reveals even less when we approach the practical application; the "how to deal with the problems presented."

Remediation by Training
How can the Organization Help?

Police organizations need to see and acknowledge the organizational stress placed on the police family. Although few of the researchers in the empirical studies set out to find the police organization responsible for police stress, many conclude that it is more the organization and its procedures than the occupation itself that is, in fact, responsible (Duffy-Gallagher, 1986; Maynard and Maynard, 1982; Reiser, 1974; Stearns, 1991; Stratton, 1981, Territo and Vetter, 1982). Maynard and Maynard (1982) made the

following policy recommendations for reducing stress on officer's families:

- Removal of politics from police operations to reduce arbitrary transfers and assignments.
- Use of permanent shift assign ments.
- Use of full-time counsellors to work with persons and families under stress.
- Establishment of support net works for officers and spouses.

The literature also suggests the police organization should take a proactive stance relative to police family stress. McGuire (1979) notes than often the officer has been involved in critical incidents; divorced; or in a serious state of alcoholism before a support mechanism is instituted. Niederhoffer and Niederhoffer (1978) discussed the police family as:

"... dwelling in the shadow of the job. The rhythm of their life is metered by the ringing of the telephone and the implacable schedule of the duty chart. Police department imperatives supersede the most cherished family occasions; fundamental family relations take second place."

He further suggests that the point of intervention in police family stress is the family.

Recommendations for intervention at the family level have also been made by other researchers and authors. The institution of a department psychologist involved in family counselling has been suggested and supported by Durner, 1975; Lain, 1983; Stratton, 1975. The need for peer counselling has been expressed by Depue, 1979; Graf, 1986; Klyver, 1983. Programs to familiarize spouses with the police occupation have been strongly suggested and endorsed

(Durner et al., 1975; Hageman, 1978; Klyver, 1983; Stratton, 1981). Although there is notation of successful programs of this nature in process in the U.S. cities (e.g., St. Louis, New York, Los Angeles, Boston), little has been written about an evaluation of these programs. Programs involving spouses in stress management workshops have been recommended by Burden, 1979; Jackson and Maslach, 1982; Lain, 1983; Jackson and Maslach, 1979; Maynard and Maynard, 1982; and, Territo and Vetter, 1981. A series of three video cassettes is presently available through the Canadian Police College. The topic of this audio-visual presentation is police family stress. The tapes consist of lectures by Dr. Pierre Turgeon, interspersed with discussions in a police officer/spouse forum.

Lain (1983) recommends that police officer/spouse training should involve police psychologists because the role of teaching increases the accessibility and the rapport with the psychologist. Stratton (1975) notes that communication is at the core of a successful law enforcement marriage. He suggests that police departments have orientation sessions for entering cadets and their spouses, workshops for husbands and wives together and separately throughout a police career, and that department psychologists be available for individual and family counselling.

In summary, there have been many studies, mostly Americanbased, which make conclusions validating stress as a major problem facing police personnel. These studies also identify the physical and psychological effects of stress and burnout and the eventual consequences. There are fewer studies, however, which attempt to uncover casual linkage between the areas of stress (e.g., occupational, organizational and family). Fewer yet are studies that present a clear course of action so that police organizations can make decisions which will benefit the policeman or

policewoman on the street.

Methodology
Sample
Group # 1
With permission from the RCMP Officer Commanding Victoria Sub Division, questionnaires were sent to all 325 regular members stationed in southern Vancouver Island. The following is a north to south breakdown of Victoria Sub Division:

Detachment/Unit
Total Members

Nanaimo	96
Ladysmith	9
Gabriola Island	2
Chemainus	8
Duncan	40
Lake Cowichan	6
Shawnigan Lake	7
Colwood	37
Sooke	11
Sidney	19
P.V. Harvison	4
Ganges	6
Pender Island	2
Victoria Sub Division Administration	7

Detachment/Unit
Total Members

NCIS/Joint Forces Operation	7
Customs/Immigration & Passport	6
Drug Section	19
General Investigation Section	6
Highway Patrol	13
Commercial Crime	5
Technical Support	9
Victoria Airport	11

This sampling allows input from a wide range of operational police duties. It encompasses uniformed duties from large municipalities, to small isolated islands. It also includes plainclothes duties - from technical support to investigators.

The sampling includes police officers from ages 20 to 60 years, with police service between one and 35 years. The rank structure of this group is from constable to superintendent.

Group # 2
Group #1 spouses (approx. 250) were sent a separate questionnaire which included some, but not all, of the items on the RCMP member questionnaire. The spouses were not selected as a comparison group but as a part of the primary group; a group that I believed would indicate the need for this approach to stress management training. This group, referred to as the "silent partner", has often been the "silenced partner," as they have many noteworthy things to say, but have never been given a voice.

Instrument
The questionnaires were developed specifically for this study using a variety of relevant resources, including the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), appropriate demographic items, and measures directly related to some of the research questions.

Two questionnaires were constructed to investigate "a member's perspective" and "a spouse's perspective" to police family stress. The major difference in the two questionnaires is the length.

Part II on the "member's perspective" contains three sections of 11 items. Part II in the "spouse's perspective" contains two sections of five items and one of 11 items. The first five items of each section in Part II are identical in both questionnaires allowing data to be compared.

Part 1

The demographic section gathered information on sex, age, marital status, family, police experience, and rank. These items allow for classification into subgroups and can provide information on career trends.

The final item in Part I was support network: "Who provides consistent emotional support?" This item will provide another observation of the relationship between social support and occupational stress among police officers.

Part 2

This section was designed not only to measure the need for stress management for member and spouse but also, to develop necessary topics, for future training. The literature, combined with personal experience, were the bases for constructing the statements to be

The MBI was used as a framework with the statement items, the reporting format, and the intended measure. The reporting format parallelled the MBI in that the participants were asked to respond to the frequency and intensity (pressure rating) of each item. The scales, however were different. Maslach uses a 0-6 and a 0-7 scale this study used a 0-4 (frequency) and a 1-10 (pressure rating) scale.

Use of a 0-4 and a 1-10 Point Scale

The 0-4 scale was used r frequency for two reasons A five point scale was chosen to facilitate

the conversion of scores on positively-stated items (i.e., 4=0, 3=1). It was chosen over a 1-5 scale to allow for an accurate single figure rating. The single figure rating would result from multiplying the frequency x pressure rating. **Given this multiplication,** it is important that "never" be represented by "0".

The 1-10 scale was used for Pressure rating because it is a commonly-used scale. For example, we often hear degrees of emotion rated 1-10.

Frequency x pressure rating There is an obvious correlation between the two items. To use frequency without pressure rating would presuppose that the item was indeed, stressful. To use pressure rating without frequency would likewise, assume the respondent was going to automatically factor in the frequency of the occurrence. The presence of both columns allows the respondent to separate frequency and pressure ratings.

The above opinion was tested in the pilot study where the responses to the items were discussed. It was determined that multiplying frequency x pressure would be accurate in surfacing the most stressful items and in developing a hierarchy of stressor. The validity if doing so was also discussed with those in the measurement field. This instrument is considered valid as long as the resultant ratings are being compared with other ratings derived in the same manner.

Part 3

Direct questions regarding the family systems application to stre management were constructed to answer these questions:

- Is there a general need/personal need for this training?
- What topics should form the content of this training?
- At what stage in your career/ family life would this training be/have been most beneficial?

After the initial construction, the questionnaires went through two revisions. The first revision was made after consultations with Dr. Gerry Stearns and Dr. Anne Marshall. The second revision was made after the questionnaires were completed and critiqued by a pilot group consisting of five RCMP members and four spouses.

The questionnaires were then printed in four-page booklet form with a "comments" page insert.

Procedure

Permission to conduct this study was received from the Officer Commanding Victoria RCMP Sub-Division.

The survey questionnaires were sent to each detachment and unit on December 14, 1991, via RCMP Sub-Division mail. A notice was mailed to Detachment Commanders, along with the envelopes, requesting that an envelope be given to each regular member in their office.

Each envelope was stamped with the return address of the Officer Commanding. Victoria Sub-Division and contained the following items:

A covering letter to the RCMP member detailing: (a) The purpose of the study (b) Guaranteed confidentiality (c) Request to take the spousal

   questionnaire home
(d) Instructions on return of ques•
   tionnaires.
   RCMP member questionnaire
   including "comments" page.
   An envelope containing:
(a) A covering letter to the
   RCMP spouse
(b) RCMP spouse questionnaire
   including "comments" page.

A marked box was placed in the

Victoria Sub-Division Mailroom and the mail clerk was given a sample of the envelopes that would be received.

On January 14, 1992, a reminder letter was sent to each detachment or unit. The unit commander was asked to post the letter which thanked all respondents and reminded others that questionnaires were being accepted until January 30, 1992.

As questionnaires were received, they were numbered so that part-nerships could be easily identified for analysis purposes. Members' questionnaires were marked "A" and spouses' questionnaires were marked "B" (e.g., married couple #1 would be marked 1"A" and 1 "B").

	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Valid N
age	35.75	8.22	21	55	100
number of children	2.04	.94	1	6	68
children at home	1.87	.85	1	4	54
children with other	1.45	.52	1	2	11
years married	11.17	8.60	1	32	81
spouses work hours/wk	35.34	3.41	4	80	62
work hours/wk	48.96	8.51	10	95	94
years of experience	13.88	8.97	1	35	101
years in present duty	6.34	6.34	1	29	98
years in present loc.	3.59	2.70	1	14	99
time in present rank	8.08	5.47	1	22	86

RCMP SPOUSE VARIABLES

	Mean	SD	Min.	Max	Valid N
age	35.14	8.80	22	52	71
number of children	1.93	.79		4	55
children at home	1.86	.82		4	49
children with other	1.00				
years married	11.65	8.06		32	66
spouses work hours/wk	46.24	7.71	37	80	54
work hours/wk	34.70	13.05	4	75	47

Results and Discussion
Return Rate

A total of one 101 regular members (31.1%) and 72 spouses returned the questionnaire. (There was no way to tell how many spouses actually received questionnaires; thus, a return rate for spouses cannot be determined.) Eighty-six member questionnaires and 60 spousal questionnaires were re-ceived within four weeks of the initial mailout. An additional 15 member questionnaires and eleven spousal questionnaires were received after the reminder was sent to each detachment or unit. Fifty-five of the 173 respondents made written comments.

The return rate in this study (31.1%) was limited by the timing and the "survey overload" of the members in Victoria Sub-Division. The questionnaires were mailed out just prior to Christmas, which is perhaps the busiest time for fami-lies. The members in Victoria SubDivision had also just completed two mandatory lifestyle questionnaires in the 12 months prior to this study. The return, however, was quite suitable and represented a good cross-section of the population.

Demographic Variables (Part I Member/Spouse Questionnaires)

Although women only accounted for 18% of the member population responding, over 50% of the police-women in Victoria Sub-Division were respondents. The spouse category was 91.6% women, with only six men identifying as spouses.

Among members, married respondents were at least six times more prevalent than single, common law, separated, and divorced. Spouses, were either married (84.7%) or common law (9.7%). The four spouses (5.6%) who registered as "divorced" would have also been presently married or in a common-law relationship.

Some of the police duties were

not represented sufficiently and the nine groups were simply pared down to three groupings (administrative, uniformed, and plainclothes).

The wide range of age, service, years married etc., is similar to that of any large organization. It is abundantly obvious in this sample that the lifestyles, stress levels, and the needs of these respondents will be diverse.

Analysis of Stress Areas

In analyzing, comparing and dis-cussing the data, it is important to stay within the parameters of the goals of this needs assessment. In each area of analysis, specific mention will be made of how the data relates to the five goals.

Areas of stress are discussed in terms of the effects of the occupa-tion, the organization, and the family on members and spouses. The first paragraph of each subheading will deal specifically with

the RCMP members who responded to 33 statements in Part II of the questionnaire. These statements were equally distributed into three areas of stress: demands of the occupation; demands of the organization; and demands of the family.

The second paragraph of each subheading will be a comparison of the stressors of members and spouses. The comparison will include the 15 statements responded to by both member and spouse, with five statements in each of the above three categories. Although the spousal questionnaire contained 11 statements in the family category, only five have been used so that stress totals in each of the three areas can be compared with equal weight.

Analysis of Stress Areas
Occupational Stress

The three areas of stress dealt with in this study are occupational, organizational, and family. Members find the occupation with its inherent stressors to be the most prominent. The member finding this area the most stressful is the constable in uniform. This is not surprising, considering the uniformed constable has the heaviest workload; is usually the one with rotating shifts; spends the most time in court; and is at the front line in dealing with violence. Regardless of rank, the occupation is seen as the highest stress area by the uniformed member.

In comparing the results of members and spouses, which looked at 15 stressors common to both, occupational stress is a close second to organizational stress. The difference for the members in this comparison with the spouses is that three of the high stress occupational items were not included in the spousal questionnaire. The comparison again revealed that the highest rating of occupational stress was associated with uni

formed duties. The ratings in this area given by uniformed members and spouses were considerably higher than those of plainclothes and administration members and spouses.

The ratings of the spouses of uniformed and plainclothes members paralleled those of the members with respect to occupational stress. The plainclothes members and spouses did not view the occupation to be as high an area of stress as did their uniformed counterparts. There was, however, a disparity between the ratings of member and spouse in administrative duties. There cannot be a great deal of weight put on this though, as the number responding was small. However, the data indicates the spouses of the administrators see more of an "emotional drain" and an "always on duty" strain than what the members themselves perceive (or are willing to admit).

Past research and writing has keyed in on the area of occupational stress, often to the exclusion of factors from other areas. The data in this study certainly supports the literature in saying that the occupational stressors are very high in police work. This study, however, does not presuppose that occupational stress is the only area to consider, or that most stress emanates from this area. The responses from members alone show occupational stress to be the highest, followed by organizational stress. The data comparing members and spouses shows organizational stress slightly higher. Since the ranking of stress levels produced by these two areas varies with different variables, we can only conclude that they each provoke similarly high levels of stress on the police family.
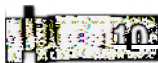
Organizational Stress

Defining this area was difficult, given the enmeshment of the

organization with the occupation. The organizational stressors were separated by determining in which variables the organization (in this case the RCMP), plays a deciding part. For example, shiftwork was viewed as an inevitable part of police work whereas workload can be changed by organizational restructuring and policy changes. These two variables were the most borderline between the two areas of stress; the other variables were easier to separate.

The member most highly affected by organizational stress was again, the uniformed constable who was followed closely by the plainclothes constable. The plainclothes member found organizational stress to be higher than occupational or family stress. It was also interesting to see that the commissioned officer rank viewed organizational stress as the highest of the three areas.

The constable and corporal rank show higher stress levels, which are stronger in the occupational and organizational areas. The sergeant level shows a tendancy toward family stress, but is still in the higher portion of the total stress level. By the time a member reaches the rank of staff sergeant, his or her level of stress seems greatly reduced and the area of family stress is rated the highest. „ Then, as expected, the commissioned officer reports more stress than does the staff sergeant and reports organizational stressors to be the highest. Although there are exceptions to this trend, most police officers would see this as quite realistic. This explanation in no way demeans any rank, but simply reflects the process of change in a policeman or policewoman's career. The reasoning for the rise in stress level, particularly in the organizational area, for the commissioned officer is that upon being commissioned they embark on what has been described to me as "almost a

second career" within the organization.

Comparison of members with spouses in the area of organizational stress reveals this area to be rated the most stressful by both. This comparison was made using the 15 common, stress variables, five from each area. The spouses of uniformed members were the group

Top 10 Stressors - Members

Variables		Mean	S. D.	Min.	Max.	N
I.*	Working within judicial system (A5)	20.30	10.04	2.0	40	101
2.	Workload is too heavy (B2)	15.67	11.37	0	40	101
3*	Encountering irate/ignorant people (A7)	15.25	8.48	1.0	40	101
4*	Control over Career (B I)	14.38	9.44	0	40	101
5.	Finance - source of family stress (C4)	13.36	10.98	0	40	91
6.	Children - source of family stress (C3)	12.87	10.19	0	40	78
7.	Promotional opportunity (B6)	12.85	9.59	0	40	100
8.	Work is emotionally draining (A4)			0	40	101
9.	Feeling of "always on duty" (A8)	11.93	10.41	0	40	101
10.	Shiftwork interferes with family/ social life (A9)	11.70	10.55	0	40	101

'Variables not present on Spousal Questionnaires

Member and Spouse Comparison of Stress Totals

Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	t-Test Value	d.f.	Significance*
OCCUPATIONAL TOTALS						
Members	101	50.69	29.9	.35	171	N/S
Spouse	72	52.43	35.2			
ORGANIZATIONAL. TOTALS						
Members	101	52.83	27.13	.33	171	N/S
Spouse	72	54.32	32.67			
FAMILY TOTALS						
Members	91	37.23	28.84	.59	161	\
Spouse	72	40.07	32.45			
TOTAL						
Members	101	137.07	69.62	.85	171	N/S
Spouse	72	146.82	80.29			

*2 - tail test of significance

that rated this the highest, followed closely by their marital partners. Spouses rated the organizational stress higher than did the members.

The higher rating given to organizational stress may surprise some people. It does not surprise me, nor does it surprise other researchers with previous operational police

experience (Graf, 1986; Stearns, 1992). The majority of police personnel would also not be surprised to hear that organizational stressors are as strong or stronger than those associated to the occupation. I believe the

reason research has not adequately surfaced this area of stress is that it has not asked the right questions. Educators in the police realm need to be aware that along with courses in "officer survival" there needs to be education in "office survival".

Family Stress

This area, although receiving a lower rating than the two areas mentioned previously, has often been overlooked as a stress area in police work. Looking at this area along with the other two allows us

to get "the big picture" of the presence of stress or pressure in the life of a police officer.

It is noteworthy that the spouses of police officers in administrative functions rated this the highest. It was the area rated highest by the members in administration functions also, but their rating was much lower than their spouses. The staff sergeant rank rated family Stress as the highest area of stress, which parallels the high ratings from administrators considering all four of the responding staff sergeants were in administrative positions. There is nothing in the

data that clearly explains why administrative people rated this area as their highest area of stress. It should be noted that even though the area was this group's highest, the stress scores are relatively low.

This group is an average age of 47.3 years and has an average of two children per family. We could assume that these children are in their late teens and likely, college/ university age which might account for the high ratings in "finance as a source of stress" and "raising children as a source of stress".

It is obvious that the area of

family stress is a contributor to the total stress of the police family. This study was not able to pinpoint the exact influence of the inter-role conflict noted in the literature review (Hageman, 1978; Jackson and Maslach, 1982; Stearns, 1992). The effects of inter-role conflict will likely be sprinkled among the three areas of stress.

Total Stress

This rating combines the three areas of stress and highlights the people most affected by stress. When combining the data, it can be concluded that the RCMP officer reporting the most stress is a uniformed male senior constable. The data also reveals that the spouses reporting the most stress are those of the uniformed male senior constable. Spouses married to members with 13-16 years of RCMP service reported the greatest stress. Seven of the ten spouses in that category were uniformed constables.

Five of the 18 female member respondents were single and did not respond to the family stress variables. As a result, only 13 female members responded to each category and were included. In reviewing the data, the scores obtained from the Occupational and Organizational stress areas continued to reflect a lower stress level as compared to male members.

Marital status was not found to be a consistent comparison as the single members did not complete the family section. In the occupational and organizational stress areas, the five members responding as separated reported the highest stress level.

Comparing the members and spouses in these three areas of stress duty, rank, gender, and years of service provides a view of who is affected by stress and how. The parallels in the data between member and spouse are signs of the cohesion that exists in one's perception of stress affects the other. This will

become even more apparent as the individual stressors are examined and factors affecting high stress couples are examined.

Analysis of

Individual Stressors
RCMP Members

By far, the top stressor for mem bers was Working within the Judicial System. This item is likely to include the frustration of judicial decisions, the treatment of the member by defence counsel and recent case law which limits the execution of police duty. This stress finding is similar to that of Gallagher-Duffy (1986) who surveyed 336 uniformed constables in Ontario and found that the highest area of stress was the perceived inadequacies of the court system. This variable and the item and by ranked #3 (encountering irate/ ignorant people) were two stressors that surprised me in their ranking.

Unfortunately, these two were not present on the spousal questionnaire, so the spouse's reactions to these are not available.

Fortunately, these are two stressors that I believe can be reduced in intensity via training in a cognitive approach to stress management.

Member and Spouse Comparison of Stress Totals by Duty

MEMBER			SPOUSE		
Admin Uniform P/C			Admin, Uniform P/C		
(n=7) (n=60) (n=24)			(n=7) (n=41) (n=23)		
Occupational Stress	23.57	56.62	48.08	49.0	56.10	47.30
Organizational Stress	31.29	55.63	56.13	52.71	56.41	51.70
Family Stress	36.71	35.98	40.50	54.57	40.88	35.09
TOTAL STRESS	91.57	148.23	144.71	156.29	153.39	134.09

Member and Spouse Comparison of Total Stress by Member's **Years of Service**

	Years of Service					
Member	0-4	5-8	9-12	13-16	17-20	21-35
	(n=17)	(n=9)	(n=15)	(n=13)	(n=13)	(n=24)
Stress Totals	118.18	147.33	**167.47**	161.38	154.92	127.04
Spouse	0-4	5-8	9-12	13-16	17-20	21-35
	(n=7)	(n=4)	(n=9)	(n=10)	(n=6)	(n=19)
Stress Totals	128.43	166.25	166.78	**175.10**	150.33	138.26

Other surprises in these ratings were the absence of "encountering death and human tragedy" (ranked #11) and "danger as a source of stress" (ranked #16) in the top ten stressors. The surprise was the high ratings of these stressors in most other studies. In looking at the data closely, it is clear that these variables received a lower ranking due to a lower frequency. The pressure ratings were above average, but the frequency of occurrence was "seldom - sometimes". Most of the other studies reviewed were American-based and usually in a metropolitan area where there is a higher frequency of dangerous situations and tragedy.

The other stressor that was not present in the comparison table is "control over career" (ranked #4). This variable being highly ranked is not surprising in light of a strong human desire to control one's life. This need to feel "in control" is seemingly more pronounced in the lives of police officers. Whether this is a result of what has been discussed by others as the "police personality", which draws one to the profession, or whether the need is adopted in police training, is undetermined. The good news again with this stressor is that the RCMP is moving in a positive direction with their new Human Resources Management Program. Increased communication between Staffing and Personnel and the members and spouses in the format being proposed can ultimately reduce this stressor.

Comparison of Members and Spouses

The six stressors ranked highest by the member were also ranked highest by the spouse in slightly different order. The rank order parallels closely that of member and spouse on all 15 variables, with the exception of workload is too heavy. (Members ranked it as #1 and the spouses as #6.) A reason for this disparity may be the difference in wording between the member questionnaire and the spousal questionnaire. Members was asked to respond to, "I feel my workload is too heavy"; spouses responded to "My spouse's workload cuts into family time."

The other reason, perhaps more germane, is that the spouses found other variables more stressful. The two variables ranked highest by the spousal group were in the area of family stress. It is not surprising that the spouses ranked raising children and finances as #1 and #2 in light of the statistics that 76.4% of the spouses have children and 68.1 % have children still at home. The members ranked these two variables #2 and #3 with finances being more stressful than raising children.

The stressor ranked #3 and significantly as high by spouses was equity in promotional opportunity. Members ranked this item as #4, closely behind raising children. This item may have been ranked considerably higher by members, except that members in administrative duties did not feel that this item created stress for them. In this grouping, 85.7% were in the ranks of S/Sgt. or commissioned officer, and would not likely be concerned about personal promotional opportunity.

Two variables also rated in the top six stressors were the feeling of being always on duty(#5) and policework being emotionally draining(#6). These factors may be linked together and would lend themselves for further research and explanation.

The data makes two things quite clear. When looking at stress in a person's life, the whole picture must be in focus; stressors emerge from every facet of one's life. As well, much of the stress indicated can be reduced through a well-established plan for training.

Analysis of Factors Affecting High Stress Members and Spouses

Spouses with the six highest stress ratings are partnered with members rated in the top 11 stress ratings. Another factor appears to be the number of children present in the high-stress families. This factor also surfaced as, raising children as a source of family stress and was ranked #1 by spouses and #3 by members.

Other factors less significant, but nevertheless present, are the years in the same duty and years in the same location. More analysis would be necessary to determine the validity and reliability of these factors.

The number of members on uniformed duty in the high stress category is certainly consistent with previous discussion in this article.

The most valuable insight gained from this analysis is the apparent cohesion that exists between member and spouse. This cohesiveness obviously extends to feeling the same pressures within the police family structure. It is precisely for this reason that valuable, useful training must exist, not just for the RCMP member, but for this family sub-system (member and spouse).

Analysis of the Need and the Personal Interest for Member/Spouse Training Relevant to Police Family Stress Assessment of Need by Direct Question

In Part III A of the questionnaire, questions were asked to determine the need for training relevant to police family stress. Each question was answerable by "yes" and "no" and had a four-point benefit rating.

The four-point rating would reflect the respondent's anticipated benefit from such training from not helpful (1) to very helpful (4).

The initial question was, "Have you received any training in stress management?" The response indicated that the majority of members and spouses have had no such training; 60.7% of the re-spondents, including '57.4% of members and 65.3% of spouses, answered "No".

Question three asked for the perceived need in having joint training (member and spouse) in Stress Management. The need for this training was well-indicated by 93.1% of respondents. This positive response included 94.0% of the members and 91.6% of the spouses.

The benefit rating demonstrated a high anticipated benefit from receiving this kind of training.

Assessment of Need by Stress Rating

Almost half (48.5%) of members rated themselves in the moderately high category or higher. Although only one member rated himself as being under extremely high stress, another 15.8% placed themselves in the high-stress category.

The spouses have over half of their group (58.3%) in the moderately high category or higher. Again, only one spouse was categorized in the extremely high category, but 18.0% reported high stress.

Assessment of Personal Interest for Member/Spouse Training

More than seventy-nine per cent (79.8%) of the respondents were interested in having this training. Included in this group were 80.2% of members and 79.2% of spouses. Members and spouses believed that the training would be highly beneficial to them.

The need for stress management training and the interest in members and spouse training together has been clearly documented in the stress ratings and by direct response.

## Analysis of Data in Response to Topics for Training Curriculum

The questionnaires in Part III B gave the sample an opportunity for input into curriculum development. A selection of eight topics was proposed and respondents were asked to rate their anticipated benefit from those topics on a fourpoint scale (I = not helpful to 4 = very helpful).

Priority should be given to these three topics: surviving critical incident stress, coping with grief and loss, and stress management. It is interesting to see that although the members' mean score in communication in marriage was low, there was a good percentage who rated the topic as "very helpful". The spousal group not only had higher mean ratings but also, as indicated by the mode on five topics, rated these topics as very helpful to them.
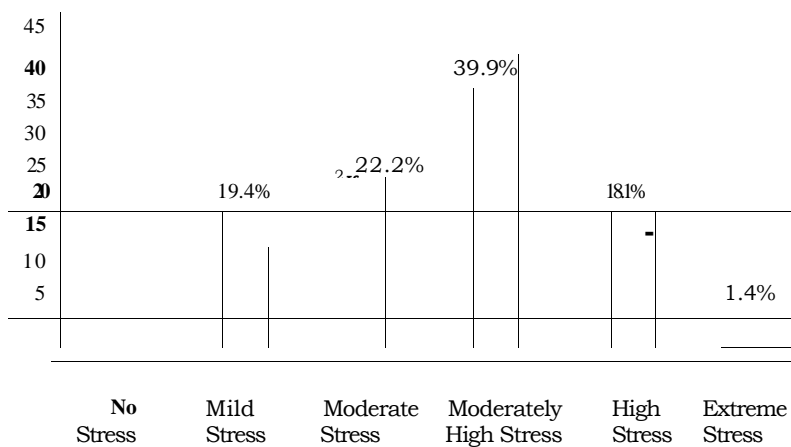
Although this study does not propose to design a curriculum, it provides building blocks to meet the needs that the study demonstrates are present. The high ratings given

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Distribution of Stress Ratings by Grouping

RCMP Members (N = 101)

RCMP Spouses (N = 72)

14
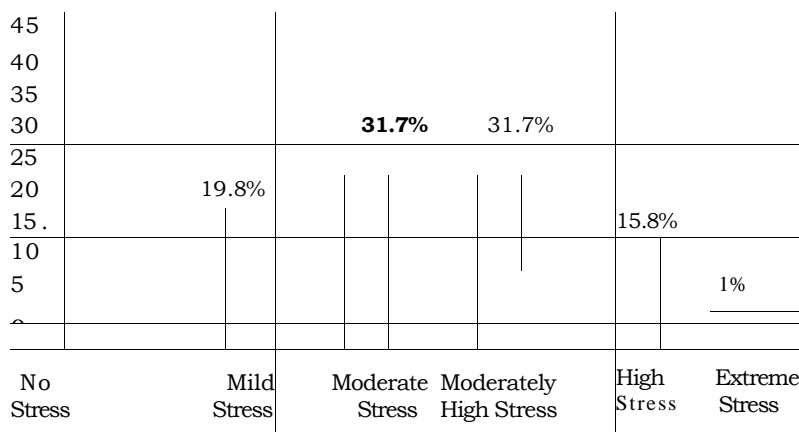
to the topics, coping with grief and loss, and surviving critical incident stress are indicative of two things. There is a lack of or absence of existing training, as well as a need to understand issues around death for themselves and for others that they may be helping.

When in a Police Career would Training be Most Beneficial

The consensus of the members is at a point between zero and eight years of service, with a fairly even split between the first four years and the next four. A number (nine) of the respondents indicated that they would like to have received this type of training early in their career and marriage and then again later. Ideally, it would be best to provide this training initially at Recruit Training (Depot) and then again prior to nine years of service. The ninth year is not a landmark, but this study has shown 9 -12 years of service to be the greatest time of stress for the police family.

The spousal group strongly indicated that training would be most valuable early in service. An additional question that the spouses answered gives an indication of where in the life of the family this training would be most valuable. The spouses were asked to indicate whether the training would be best in a stage of premarriage, pre-children, mid-children, or post-children. Forty per cent of the spouses chose the pre-children stage, with 27.7% selecting pre-marriage and 23.6% choosing the mid-children stage.

Recommendations for Training

On the basis of the demonstrated need to train both member and spouse in curriculum relevant to combatting police/family stress, the following recommendations are made:

• That joint training (member and spouse together) be routinely offered during the first four years of a member's career.

The response in this study indicates a desire to receive this type of training early in service and preferably "pre-children".

This training, although suitable for recruit training, would be more valuable to the police family after some experience in the field. Ideally, training in police-family stress management should be received at intervals during the career.

• That the curriculum for this training be centred around a cognitive approach to stress management including techniques of self-talk, muscle relaxation, anger management, cognitive restructuring, and, understanding emotions.

Comments received, both written and verbal, indicate a level of frustration with the organization and with the judicial system. A rational emotive or cognitive approach to the frustrations and anger will allow the participants to see that stress is not created by an event but by our perceptions of that event.

• That the curriculum include topics germane to police duty and to family functioning. Based on this study, training should include critical incident stress/post traumatic stress disorder, issues around grief and loss, conflict resolution, communication in marriage, financial management, and career management.

Much of what should form a relevant curriculum falls under the title of communication. The acquisition of active listening skills not only effects change in communication but also, in attitude. Normalizing thoughts and emotions in specific circumstances and under standing individual differences are other areas to consider. The transition from role to role that predominantly exists in police work and the balancing of competing demands that exists for member and spouse are relevant areas for curriculum design.

• That the training be facilitated ¡ by mental health professionals, preferably with a police family background.

The advantage of using one or more mental health professionals is two-fold. It is critical to have someone whose training and background is in psychology and who is able to instruct and facilitate in a professional, well-informed, and approachable manner. As well, using a professional who is available for follow up and future counselling allows a rapport to be built between the police family and the police psychologist or counsellor.

• That this needs assessment and proposal for a systems application to stress management training be regarded by RCMP management as a viable suggestion for combatting police family stress.

(Editor's Note: A detailed list of references used for Cst. Logan's study can be obtained from RCMP Headquarters, in care of the **RCMP Gazette.)**

Highlights of Written Comments from Questionnaires

"I believe it is difficult for my husband to sometimes be a part of what the children and I do socially due to shiftwork."

"There simply isn't enough time to deal effectively with each file the way it should be dealt with. The justice system is a joke - there is no justice and no system."

"I have reached my limit in frustra.

tion over the Force's management (or lack thereof) of its own supervisors. From my perspective the Force prefers to deal with its own problems via the head-in-the-sand approach. All the training I have been provided with most certainly meets the needs of the Force but there is a clear lack of training for member's personal needs, i.e., career direction, finance management, effective communication within the family, retirement planning (in early stages of career) etc. etc. In short, the reason I have a regimental number in the RCMP is because I'm just that -a number."

"Much stress comes from inside the detachment. Senior NCOs and officers have a combative approach to getting what they want. They produce an "us against them" attitude within the ranks which makes us feel like we are not only have to battle the system, but also have to watch our backs from our own management. I neither like them or trust them."

"The Force's focus on the member and his/her career rather than family-oriented focus makes me doubtful of a program like this. Policy would have to change first."

"In the years that I have been involved with the Force, the perception is that members/spouses seeking help or support will be viewed with suspicion by Force management and/or thought to be less than adequate."

"For my situation, I feel distance from family creates too much stress and it is good/comforting to see someone has addressed this stressor in a study of this sort. All too often the family and family stresses not completely related to the "worklife" of the member are overlooked."

"When police have authority on the job, it is difficult to come home and switch to a reciprocal role and see their wives and children not as felons but with the respect and honour due them in spite of their "infractions" (part of life)."

"It often feels like the RCMP expects my spouse to be "available" at any time and disregards the importance of family life."

"I feel sometimes that members keep alot of their stress inside rather than talk about it - maybe they are trained not to talk about their work. I know as a wife, my husband does not share a lot with me and that adds strain to our marriage. I strongly believe couples should seek stress management courses together, I think it would help the wife/husband understand the spouse's stress level at work."

"It is my opinion that the Force should have spouses and members take a course before marriage of the expectations and realities of living with a police officer. Some of the stressors such as shiftwork, transfers, the emotional aspect of the work - denial, black humour, defence mechanisms, drugs, alcohol abuse, etc. Forewarned is forearmed."

"I believe that certain training would be beneficial at different stages of my career. (i.e., financial and investment training at zero to four years and mid-career, **and** pre-retirement.) I have on several occasions attempted to find a stress management workshop to attend and have been unable to do so. Ideally it would be nice to see a Sub-Division workshop every two (?) months - an afternoon or evening, with follow-up sessions available throughout the year. I have spoken to other members who feel similarly."

"I strongly feel that stress management be implemented into the everyday lifestyle of police work. Not only are members vulnerable to stress related problems/disease, so are our spouses. Therefore, I think it is extremely worthwhile to have both parties involved in some sort of stress management. The Force should recognize this more than they are at the present time."

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In 1992, while working in Victoria S/Div. GIS, Cst. Logan completed an MEd in Counselling Psychology (University of Victoria) and is now pursuing a PhD in Psychology.

He is a past contributor to the RCMP Gazette.