

POLICE RESPONSE TO CHILDREN PRESENT AT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
INCIDENTS

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my husband and parents for their continued support and encouragement. I will forever appreciate the never-ending love and support throughout every endeavor and goal I have strove to accomplish.

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ABSTRACT

Police response to domestic violence incidents has continued to change and expand in the past several decades. Although domestic violence was originally considered a private matter not warranting police intervention, it now represents one of the most common calls for service received by police agencies. While police intervention in domestic violence incidents has improved substantially, response to children present remains an undeveloped area of research and practice. The present study examined 345 police reports from an agency in the Northwest in order to explore police response to domestic violence incidents and specifically their response to children. Similar to results from previous research, the present study found that children were present in 47% of domestic violence incidents. The majority (57.7%) of children present were under the age of six and at least one child was directly exposed to the altercation in 68.1% of incidents in which the level of exposure was indicated. Although Idaho utilizes an enhanced charge for domestic violence incidents that take place in the presence of a child, it was not always utilized in cases that met the criteria. Police response in the form of referral for services, contacting victim-witness coordinator, or other intervention was also rarely provided. Results from logistic regression analysis suggest that child presence is a statistically significant predictor of police response, follow-up, and arrest, although in differing directions. While child presence increased the probability of police response and follow-up, it decreased the likelihood of arrest. In fact, the most significant predictor of arrest was sex of the offender, with likelihood of arrest increasing by 221% when the

offender was female. The study concludes that police response to children present at domestic violence incidents is minimal and additional training regarding resources available, influence of domestic violence on children, and methods for properly identifying the primary aggressor are warranted.

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INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence (DV) has been a growing area of concern in the United States for decades (Cowan & Schwartz, 2004). Police response to DV has changed dramatically since the 1970s as the action became criminalized and incorporated into both state and national statutes. In response to intense political pressure from a variety of advocacy groups, legal reforms were implemented that were designed to strengthen the criminal justice system's response to domestic violence. One of the most common reforms in regards to police response includes the implementation of mandatory arrest policies. These reforms continue to persist today with the development of civil protection orders and the growing acknowledgment of emotional abuse. However, despite persistent advances in responses to domestic violence, the criminal justice system has remained largely stagnant in regards to children witnessing such incidents. Although domestic violence is now almost universally considered a crime in the U.S. and dealt with as such, child abuse and children's exposure to domestic violence is still primarily considered a social service issue. For example, while the criminalization of domestic violence became institutionalized and accepted throughout the United States, the primary goal of child protective services has remained concentrated on maintaining the child-parent relationship through family preservation programs, not the criminal prosecution of offenders (Cowan & Schwartz, 2004).

The prevalence and influence of children witnessing DV is vast and it continues to be a rising national problem. Research suggests that nearly 30% of children live in

homes with domestic violence and there is expanding research regarding the heightened risk for adjustment difficulties among children exposed to these situations (McDonald, Jouriles, Ramisetty-Mikler, Caetano, & Green, 2006). Additional emphasis on children's exposure to DV is important because research demonstrates that families with documentation of domestic violence have a substantially larger number of children in the home compared to families without a documented history of domestic violence (Fantuzzo, Boruch, Beriama, & Atkins, 1997). Although childhood exposure to domestic violence has been a growing concern for both researchers and practitioners (Edleson et al., 2007), reforms and policy initiatives to combat the issue have remained largely insignificant. For example, Alaska is the only state that includes domestic violence in the presence of a child in its definition of child abuse within its juvenile code (Zink et al., 2004). However, an increasing number of states have implemented enhancements for offenders who commit domestic violence in the presence of a child, which generally increases the charge from a misdemeanor to a felony (Zink et al., 2004). This is particularly important in regards to police response to domestic violence incidents with children present because it requires police officers to specifically note whether or not a child was present at the incident in order for the enhancement to be applied.

Furthermore, the prevalence and significant impact of witnessing domestic violence on children highlights the need to acknowledge and assist children present at such incidents. Since police officers typically represent the first public service agents to be contacted regarding domestic violence incidents, they are in a unique position to intervene on behalf of the child(ren) present at the scene (Richardson-Foster, Stanley, Miller, & Thomson, 2012). Adequate police response has the potential to reduce the

negative effects associated with witnessing domestic violence and increase victim satisfaction (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). Researchers have recommended that future efforts to reduce the frequency and influence of children's exposure to domestic violence focus on methods that encourage law enforcement to identify children who have been exposed to the violence (Shields, 2008). This demonstrates the importance of reviewing police response to domestic violence in order to implement policies that reduce the prevalence and impact of childhood exposure to DV. Despite the importance of police response to children at domestic violence incidents, there is very limited research on the subject. Although one study explored the issue in the United Kingdom (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012), very little, if any, research has been conducted on the matter in the United States. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to investigate how often children are present at domestic violence incidents as well as police response to the children present at such situations. In order to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon, police reports were examined from a municipal police department in the Northwest. The descriptive and exploratory nature of this study provides valuable insight regarding the extent and nature of police response to children present at domestic violence incidents.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Domestic Violence and Children's Exposure

Before moving forward into the specifics of police response, it is important to consider the complex nature of domestic violence and childhood exposure in general.

According to the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), domestic violence is:

A pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. (Office on Violence Against Women, 2013, p.1)

Although this definition provided by the OVW is a common conceptualization of domestic violence, Michael Johnson in his book, *A Typology of Domestic Violence*, suggests that there are actually four types of domestic violence: intimate terrorism, violent resistance, mutual violent control, and situational couple violence (Johnson, 2008). Intimate terrorism occurs when the abuser uses violence as a means of acquiring general control over his/her partner (Johnson, 2008). Therefore, the abuser is both abusive and controlling, managing multiple aspects of the victim's life. In a very small number of cases, both individuals in a relationship may exhibit behaviors associated with intimate terrorism. Johnson (2008) defines this type of domestic violence as mutual violent control, which is characterized by both parties using abusive behaviors to seek general control over the other person. The third category of domestic violence is violent resistance, which occurs when the victim fights back against their abusive and controlling

partner. In other words, the victim acts violently in self-defense or anticipating violence from an abusive and controlling partner (i.e., an intimate terrorist). The final type is situational couple violence, which is described as violence that is situationally provoked and does not include the desire of acquiring general control over the relationship. Rather, the tensions and emotions of a conflict lead the abuser to resort to violence. This may be a one-time occurrence or a pattern of violent behavior (Johnson, 2008). While intimate terrorism most closely aligns with the definition provided by the Office on Violence Against Women, police officers may encounter situations that resemble other forms of domestic violence identified by Johnson (2008). Awareness of the various types of domestic violence incidents illustrates the complexity of defining and identifying such a broad concept.

Similar to the notion of domestic violence, the idea of childhood exposure is also complex and multifaceted. Researchers have identified several ways that children can be exposed to domestic violence. A study conducted by Holden (2003) identified 10 types of exposure regarding children and domestic violence incidents. These include:

1. Exposed prenatally: real or imagined effects of domestic violence on the developing fetus;
2. Intervenes: the child verbally or physically attempts to stop the assault;
3. Victimized: the child is verbally or physically assaulted during an incident;
4. Participates: the child is forced or “voluntarily” joins in the assaults;
5. Eyewitness: the child directly observes the assault;
6. Overhears: the child hears, though does not see, the assault;

7. Observes the initial effects: the child sees some of the immediate consequences of the assault;
8. Experiences the aftermath: the child faces changes in his/her life as a consequence of the assault;
9. Hears about it: the child is told or overhears conversations about the assault; and
10. Ostensibly unaware: the child does not know of the assault, according to the source. (Holden, 2003, p. 152)

Although multiple forms of exposure have been identified, the four most commonly recognized types of exposure include seeing the violent act, hearing the incident occur, seeing the injuries that resulted, and being told about the violence after the fact (Hamby, Finkelhor, Turner, & Ormrod, 2011). These types of exposure are often categorized in a hierarchical fashion, with seeing the incident occur as the most direct form of exposure (Hamby et al., 2011).

Prevalence of Domestic Violence and Children's Exposure

In order to fully understand the issue of childhood exposure to domestic violence, it is important to examine prevalence rates of both domestic violence and childhood exposure. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, approximately 907,000 individuals were victims of intimate partner violence in 2010 (Catalano, 2012). Research by the Center for Disease Control further estimates that more than 42 million women (32.9%) have experienced physical violence from an intimate partner and nearly 10% of women have been raped or stalked by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Eigenberg, Kappeler, & McGuffee, 2012). Furthermore, in 2007, more than 2,300 persons were

victims of intimate partner homicide in the United States, of which 70% were females (Catalano, 2009). In fact, approximately 39% of all female homicide cases in 2010 were committed by an intimate partner (Catalano, 2013).

In addition to the frequency of domestic violence in the United States, the prevalence of children's exposure to such incidents is also widespread. Approximately 15.5 million children witness domestic violence in their homes each year (McDonald et al., 2006). Research indicates that nearly 18% of children have been exposed to DV in their lifetime (Hamby et al., 2011). In 2010 alone, more than 5 million children (6.6%) were exposed to domestic violence (Hamby et al., 2011; Futures Without Violence, 2014). Further research examining lifetime exposure suggests that more than 16% of children have witnessed a parental assault (Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, & Hamby, 2009). Among children age 14-17 years, the lifetime rate peaked at 27 percent (Finkelhor et al., 2009). Numerous studies have established that children are present at nearly half of domestic violence incidents (Edleson et al., 2007; Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007; Burton, 2000). If a broad definition of 'child present' is used to include children who witnessed the violence and those who were simply in the house, the percentage increases to 69 percent (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012).

Not only are children frequently present at domestic violence incidents, but they are often directly exposed to the violence. Research by Fantuzzo and Fusco (2007) concluded that, of all domestic violence incidents examined where children were present, 92% of the children were exposed and 80% were directly exposed (heard, witnessed, or injured during the incident) to the violent altercation. This is supported by more recent research which found that 90% of children exposed to domestic violence saw the incident

as opposed to overhearing it or experiencing a different form of indirect exposure (Hamby et al., 2011). Further data indicates that of the children directly exposed to the violence, approximately 50% are under the age of six (Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007). Empirical evidence consistently illustrates that children under the age of six are disproportionately exposed to domestic violence incidents (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012; Fantuzzo, Boruch, Beriama, Atkins, & Marcus, 1997; Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007).

The Effects of Children's Exposure to Domestic Violence

The frequent exposure and involvement of children in domestic violence incidents is critical to understand because of the vast array of adverse effects that can result in response to such traumatic experiences. The stressful experience of witnessing domestic violence can have numerous negative consequences for children. Research suggests that the immediate effects of exposure to domestic violence on children vary based on age (National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health, 2012). Children under the age of four tend to exhibit sleep and eating disturbances, fearfulness, separation anxiety, inhibited play and exploration, as well as regression resulting in the loss of recently acquired developmental skills such as walking or talking. School age children may begin participating in posttraumatic play (e.g., consistent reenactment of the traumatic experience), experience specific fears, feelings of guilt, impaired ability to concentrate, sleep disturbances, somatic symptoms (e.g., headaches and stomach aches), aggressive behavior, anxiety, and withdrawal. Lastly, adolescents exposed to domestic violence may feel shame and guilt, begin acting out, express the desire for revenge, exhibit significant changes in attitude, prematurely enter adulthood, and/or engage in

self-harming behaviors such as cutting or substance abuse (National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health, 2012).

In addition to the immediately noticeable effects that children face, exposure to domestic violence can also result in a multitude of long-term consequences. Research has consistently noted a correlation between childhood exposure to domestic violence and a wide array of physical, behavioral, social, psychological, emotional, developmental, and school-related problems (Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt, & Kenny, 2003; Kolbo, Blakely, & Engelman, 1996; Margolin & Gordis, 2000; Hornor, 2005). Some of the developmental problems observed include negative influences on peer relationships, social skills, and decreased interest in extracurricular activities (Margolin & Gordis, 2000). Research has also suggested an increase in psychiatric disorders, including anxiety and depression, among children who have witnessed domestic violence (Pelcovitz, Kaplan, DeRosa, Mandel, & Salzinger, 2000). Various researchers have further noted a link between exposure to domestic violence and an increased risk of developing PTSD (Hornor, 2005; Anderson & Bang, 2012; Carlson, 2000). Witnessing DV has been identified as a significant predictor of PTSD in children (Anderson & Bang, 2012). The symptoms of PTSD can be serious including flashbacks of the traumatic event(s), intense psychological distress, and irritability (Hornor, 2005).

In addition to the developmental impact of childhood exposure to domestic violence, there is also considerable research indicating an influence on aggression, criminal behavior, and development of psychopathy. Younger children who witness domestic violence are particularly susceptible to self-blame, resulting in strong feelings of guilt and shame (Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008). According to Holt et al. (2008), in

order to cope with these unpleasant feelings, they may begin to rationalize their father's behavior and abuse towards their mother, which increases the risk of adopting justifications for potential abusive behavior as an adult. This is just one example of the intergenerational nature of domestic violence and how exposure to such violence as a child can perpetuate the cycle by increasing the risk of the child abusing his/her partner as an adult.

A study conducted by Lundy and Grossman (2005) demonstrated that approximately 40% of children who were exposed to domestic violence were frequently aggressive and acted out in school. They further noted that 41.6% of children witnessing domestic violence evidenced behavioral problems, 46.3% exhibited one or more social problems, and over 50% displayed emotional difficulties (Lundy & Grossman, 2005). Furthermore, Bauer et al. (2006) observed that children exposed to domestic violence showed heightened levels of generalized aggression. Children witnessing domestic violence involving a weapon are also more likely to exhibit externalized behavior problems including aggression and oppositional behavior (Jouriles et al., 1998). Research also indicates that exposure to domestic violence increases the risk of developing psychopathy (Honor, 2005; Fantuzzo et al., 1997).

One explanation for the heightened risk of aggressive behavior among children exposed to domestic violence is the influence of adverse childhood experiences on the brain (Walsh, 2009; Anda et al., 2006). Specifically, the consistent stress experienced by children exposed to frequent domestic violence can result in alterations in the child's stress response system. If the child's body responds with an overproduction of cortisol, over time, it can result in a physiological set point that is hypersensitive to stressful

environments, increasing risk of developing anxiety and depressive disorders. Conversely, if the child's body responds with the underproduction of cortisol, over time, the physiological set point may become significantly less sensitive to stressful environments, resulting in a high risk for antisocial behavior. In fact, research has shown that individuals with four or more adverse childhood experiences are more than twice as likely to have high perceived stress levels, four times more likely to have difficulty controlling anger, and exhibit more than five times the risk of perpetrating domestic violence (Walsh, 2009; Anda et al., 2006).

Lastly, and arguably the most detrimental influence of living in violent homes, is the likelihood that the child will also be physically abused. There is overall agreement among researchers that domestic abuse in the home is a risk factor for child physical abuse (Holt et al., 2008). In fact, research suggests that children exposed to domestic violence are 15 times more likely to be neglected and physically abused compared to unexposed children (Osofsky, 1999). The overlap between domestic violence and child physical abuse ranges from 45 percent to 70 percent (Holt et al., 2008), although most research establishes a co-occurrence in 40% of cases (Edleson et al., 2007; Hornor, 2005; Appel & Holden, 1998). The method of measurement may contribute to the inconsistencies in empirical research, specifically, rates of abuse limited to a specific time period compared to lifetime prevalence. For example, a study conducted by Hamby and colleagues in 2010 found that 33.9% of children who witnessed domestic violence had also been maltreated in the past year; however, 56.8% had been maltreated in their lifetime. Nonetheless, it is evident that children exposed to domestic violence are at an increased risk of being physically abused themselves.

Police Response to Domestic Violence

The National Institute of Justice suggests that police receive more calls regarding domestic violence incidents than any other issue (Klein, 2009). Considering the frequency in which they occur and the influence of adequate police intervention on children present, a discussion of police response is warranted. In order to provide a holistic understanding of police response to children, it is important to first discuss police response to domestic violence in general.

Historical Police Response

Historically, police response to domestic violence was rare and minimal at best. Prior to the 1970s, domestic violence was still largely considered a private matter and outside the purview of police intervention (Cowan & Schwartz, 2004; Eigenberg et al., 2012; Buzawa, 2012). Victims were often ignored, abusers were rarely arrested, and police involvement remained as minimal as possible (Eigenberg et al., 2012). In some situations, police would threaten to arrest the victim and offender if they had to return to the residence the same night (Eigenberg et al., 2012). In some jurisdictions, it was common practice among police officers to implement 'stitch rules' in which the husband would only be arrested for assault and battery if the victim required a certain number of surgical stitches (Cowan & Schwartz, 2004). As a result, victims of domestic violence had to be more severely injured for an arrest to occur compared to someone assaulted by a stranger (Gelles & Pedrick, 1997). Laws during this time did not facilitate police intervention in domestic disputes, often prohibiting warrantless arrests unless the officer witnessed the abuse, which was exceedingly rare (Eigenberg et al., 2012).

Change in Police Response to Domestic Violence

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, this view of domestic violence as a private matter began to change (Buzawa, 2012). Legal pressure began to accrue from women's rights groups and battered women's advocates seeking equal protection under the law and emphasizing the liability that police departments may face if they continued to neglect domestic violence victims (Buzawa, 2012; Cowan & Schwartz, 2004). In fact, in 1974, a class action lawsuit was filed against the district attorney's office in Cleveland for failure to adequately pursue the prosecution of domestic violence offenders (Cowan & Schwartz, 2004). Subsequently, in 1984, the City of Torrington and 29 police officers were sued for failing to adequately protect an abused woman from the violent attacks she experienced by her estranged husband. These lawsuits, along with threats of similar lawsuits, prompted legislative changes in regards to police response to domestic violence incidents (Cowan & Schwartz, 2004). Simultaneously, growing skepticism regarding the effectiveness of rehabilitation was widespread, resulting in a surge of support for the increased use of criminal sanctions for numerous offenses (Buzawa, 2012). The combination of these components drastically increased legislation addressing police response to domestic violence incidents (Eigenberg et al., 2012). A large portion of this legislation addressed arrest policies and mandated a certain level of victim services such as transportation to a shelter, referrals to service agencies, and guidance with safety planning (Eigenberg et al., 2012).

Furthermore, in 1984, Sherman and Berk conducted the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment, which suggested that arrest was the best intervention at domestic violence incidents and produce the lowest recidivism rate when compared to separation

and mediation (Gover, Paul, & Dodge, 2011). Following the publication of this experiment, police departments around the country began implementing pro-arrest and mandatory arrest policies (Gover et al., 2011). However, several replication studies have since been completed, producing mixed results in regards to the effectiveness of arrest in deterring future incidents of domestic violence (Eigenberg et al., 2012).

A meta-analysis of these studies conducted by Garner and Maxwell (2000) found that arrest had a modest yet consistent deterrent effect on recidivism rates among domestic violence offenders. They noted, however, that this effect only reached statistical significance when victim interviews were used as the outcome measure (Garner & Maxwell, 2000). Additionally, the results were deemed “modest” for several reasons (p.107). First, only two of the five tests reached statistical significance (Garner & Maxwell, 2000). Second, other factors, such as the suspect’s age and criminal history, were more significantly associated with re-offending compared to arrest (Garner & Maxwell, 2000). Third, regardless of other factors, most suspects did not recidivate; however, the findings suggested that arrested offenders quit reoffending at higher rates compared to suspects who were not arrested (Garner & Maxwell, 2000). Lastly, even in cases where the suspect was arrested, approximately 30% of victims still reported at least one new offense (Garner & Maxwell, 2000). Nonetheless, the growth of pro-arrest and mandatory arrest policies following Sherman and Berk’s study was drastic.

Current Police Response to Domestic Violence

Although mandatory arrest was implemented in the majority of police departments following the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment, the prevalence of mandatory arrest has decreased in recent years. As of 2011, approximately 25 states had

policies favoring officer discretion to arrest, 19 had mandatory arrest policies, and six had pro-arrest policies (American Bar Association, 2011). Police officers' perceptions of mandatory arrest policies also indicate minimal support. In fact, of the 309 law enforcement officers surveyed in one large, urban police department, only 31.1% agreed that a mandatory arrest policy is the best approach to domestic violence incidents compared to 68.9% who disagreed (Gover et al., 2011). Similarly, 88% of officers agreed that they needed more discretion in responding to DV incidents (Gover et al., 2011).

In some regards, police officers' attitudes towards domestic violence have changed in comparison to common historical viewpoints (Gover et al., 2011). Only 13.3% of officers believed that domestic violence should be handled as a private matter, compared to 86.7% who favored police intervention. Additionally, 78.3% of officers agreed that the majority of DV incidents are the result of the abuser's desire for power and control over the victim. However, many common myths of domestic violence were still prevalent among police officers in the Western agency examined. More than 70% of officers agreed that victims of domestic violence could easily leave the violent relationship but choose to stay. Furthermore, more than 80% of officers agreed that substance abuse is the main cause of domestic violence. Lastly, more than 80% of officers agreed that women are just as likely to engage in domestic violence as men. Although this only represents a relatively small segment of the police force (n=309) within one large and urban department in the West, it illustrates the existence of common myths regarding domestic violence among a portion of law enforcement officials (Gover et al., 2011). Considering the vast amount of discretion that police officers' possess,

belief in these myths could influence how officers respond to domestic violence incidents and specifically how they respond to victims.

Although attitudes towards domestic violence illustrate room for improvement, police officers have continued to develop awareness of victims' issues and new training programs have been implemented as a result (Berkman & Esserman, 2004). Many departments have also created specialized units for domestic violence and sexual assault cases or have investigative specialists (Berkman & Esserman, 2004). Research indicates that specialized units improve the likelihood of the victim separating from the abuser sooner (an average of four months compared to 14 months), increase victim reporting, and result in more victims securing a protection order (Klein, 2009). Moreover, the growth of community-oriented policing has helped improve officers' relationships with community advocacy and support organizations available to assist domestic violence and sexual assault victims (Berkman & Esserman, 2004).

Additionally, ideas for best practices regarding police response to family violence incidents have been recently developed based on recommendations from empirical sources examining police-advocacy partnerships following the initial report, most commonly provided services, and interventions that realistically can be provided by law enforcement officers or advocates (Hamby, Finkelhor, & Turner, 2014). Although the research emphasized family violence, 83.9% of the sample involved children witnessing physical or non-physical intimate partner violence; therefore, the recommendations are relevant to the present discussion. The ten best practices include:

1. Explained orders of protection and court procedures;
2. Helped the victim feel safe;

3. Provided information about services available;
4. Discussed the effects of family violence on children;
5. Assessed the needs of the child(ren);
6. Assisted in creating a safety plan;
7. Provided information on shelters and emergency housing options;
8. Connected the victim with other services;
9. Followed-up after the initial contact; and
10. Provided a 911 phone or equivalent.

Research examining the use and effectiveness of these best practices in incidents witnessed by children found that police utilized a portion of these practices in 13-58% of cases (Hamby et al., 2014). For the cases that resulted in arrest, more than 85% of officers utilized six or more best practices. Providing information about shelters/emergency housing, connecting victims' to services, following up after the initial incident, and engaging in six or more best practices were all significantly associated with victim-perpetrator separation. Therefore, police use of evidence-based practices when responding to domestic violence incidents has been shown to increase the likelihood of arrest and victim-offender separation (for one day or more). Although the use of these practices is not universal, they are beginning to be utilized more frequently, which is a positive improvement (Hamby et al., 2014).

Overall, police response to domestic violence has improved tremendously since the 1970s. Most recently, awareness of victims' issues is improving, specialized units have been created, and best practices have been developed and are beginning to be utilized. The effectiveness of these practices is also being established. Although there is

still marked room for improvement in regards to dispelling common myths of domestic violence and increasing the use of best practices, police response is clearly moving in the right direction. With police officers as the gatekeepers of the criminal justice system (Tasca, Rodriguez, Spohn, & Koss, 2012), increased willingness to arrest, intervene, and engage in best practices at domestic violence incidents opens the door for more cases to be prosecuted and more offenders to be held accountable for their actions.

Police Response to Children at Domestic Violence Incidents

Although research on the impact of exposure to domestic violence on children is widespread, there is limited research on police response to children present at DV incidents. However, one thorough study of police response to children at domestic violence incidents in England provided interesting and useful results regarding the importance of focusing on police response to children. First and foremost, Richardson-Foster et al. (2012) highlight that the police are often the first public service agency contacted in regards to a domestic violence situation, which presents an important opportunity for police officers to enhance the welfare and safety of the children present at these incidents. It was evident from the qualitative and quantitative research conducted that children felt the need for police officers to include them in the process and desired explanations about what would happen next (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). Research with children emphasizes the need for them to be listened to and included in the decisions impacting their lives (Holt et al., 2008). Furthermore, children who were spoken to directly and offered support expressed more positive attitudes about their experience with the police (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012).

Despite the need for children to be involved, interviews with police officers illustrated rather limited interactions between the police and children at domestic violence incidents (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). In fact, police officers expressed reservations about speaking with the children due to a lack of confidence and training on the matter (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). Children at these incidents were often viewed as observers on the sidelines rather than primary or secondary victims of violence (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). This type of response is typical in the United States as well, where children are often afforded little attention unless they are the direct victims or perpetrators of violence (Berkman & Esserman, 2004). A retrospective study analyzing PTSD and resilience among children exposed to domestic violence found that 94.1% of the participants did not receive any services during childhood. In 52.9% of these incidents, the police responded and therefore had the opportunity to recommend that the child be referred to a service provider.

Furthermore, many police departments do not provide or require training or even expect officers to attend to children as potential victims in need. Training police officers about how children experience domestic violence and the negative consequences associated with such exposure is also uncommon (Berkman & Esserman, 2004). Although children are continually considered victims of domestic violence in the field of social care, it appears that police practice and legislative initiatives have yet to grant them this status (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). In fact, fewer than 25 states have statutes directly addressing the matter of children witnessing domestic violence (Zink et al., 2004). Even fewer states have codes containing specific language that includes children

witnessing domestic violence in the definition of childhood maltreatment (Zink et al., 2004).

Despite the lack of police intervention with children at domestic violence incidents, research demonstrates that it may provide benefits in regards to reporting and victim satisfaction. Victims of domestic violence are more likely to seek help when they perceive that their children are in danger or witnessed the event (Meyer, 2010; Nitu, 2012). Police involvement with children at DV incidents has been shown to increase victim satisfaction with police and the likelihood of contacting the police in the future (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). As a result, police interaction with children at the scene may serve as a powerful message to the abused parent that the situation is negatively influencing their children, subsequently increasing the likelihood that the victim will seek additional help. Lastly, low prosecution rates for domestic violence cases is a common frustration (Garner & Maxwell, 2009) that could potentially be improved by refining police response to children at domestic violence incidents. Increased interaction between children and police officers at such incidents could potentially improve the quantity and quality of information gathered, therefore enhancing the strength of evidence available to the prosecution (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012).

In order to improve police response to children exposed to domestic violence incidents, some practicing frameworks have been developed. Research by Berkman and Esserman (2004) presented several recommendations for police intervention in domestic violence incidents with children present. First is the importance of limiting chaos, re-establishing order, and restoring a sense of safety. This includes stopping the violence, acquiring medical care for any injured parties, and identifying and containing the primary

aggressor. When police officers are able to reduce the chaos and provide a safe, calm, understanding, and non-judgmental manner, it assists the victim and children involved with regaining a sense of safety (Berkman & Esserman, 2004).

Second, it is important that officers have a general awareness regarding the child's presence at the incident (Berkman & Esserman, 2004). Assuming the child is sleeping or did not notice or understand what was happening can be a barrier to maximizing the child's safety. There are a variety of reasons for reporting the presence and location of the child(ren) including ensuring that they are not physically injured, documenting evidence that may contribute to the investigation, determining if the child witnessed the incident or if a referral to child protective services is necessary, and facilitating the coordination of services. If children are a witness to the incident, police should refrain from interviewing them at the scene, if possible, and should focus on addressing their immediate needs. Interviewing children can produce anxiety, especially if they feel as though they have to choose sides between parents, and therefore should be conducted by trained professionals whenever possible (Berkman & Esserman, 2004).

Third is the realization that the child(ren) will need continued care that police simply are not able to provide (Berkman & Esserman, 2004). One of the best ways to increase the safety and security for the child is to assist the non-offending parent with comforting the child and making them feel safe. Helping the non-offending parent to feel safe, assisting them with exercising parental responsibility, and directing them to resources in the community can be one of the best things for the child(ren). If the non-offending parent is too distraught or otherwise unfit to look after the children, then the

officer should assist him/her with identifying a trusted friend or family member that is close with the children (Berkman & Esserman, 2004).

Fourth, recognizing how children respond to violence and trauma is important for police officers in their approach to domestic violence situations (Berkman & Esserman, 2004). For example, handcuffing the abusive parent in front of the child(ren) may result in further unnecessary trauma. Awareness that children's response may differ based on age is also critical to understand. For young children under the age of two, the primary focus should be on ensuring the child(ren)'s safety and making sure they are in the care of a trusted adult. For older children, a simple explanation of what is going on is beneficial. It is important that the child(ren) are afforded the opportunity to ask questions and officers' response should be as simple and honest as possible. Addressing the child(ren) directly helps them feel like the police care about their concerns and provides them the opportunity to be heard. Lastly, appropriate coordination with child protective services and community agencies is helpful when handling domestic violence incidents with children present. Increased coordination of services can help both the non-offending parent and the children recover from the trauma they have experienced and access services available to help increase safety (Berkman & Esserman, 2004).

Research addressing promising practices in London presents similar suggestions such as the importance of asking about the presence of children, ensuring that they are safe, determining if they have been harmed or injured, and remembering that children may be experiencing consequences associated with ongoing violence and are coping with the trauma of what they have experienced (Centre for Children and Families, 2004). Additionally, when talking with children at domestic violence incidents, best methods

consist of selecting a safe location to talk, sitting at the child's eye level, using the child's name, using direct and age appropriate language, respecting that the child may exhibit loyalty to the abusive parent, informing them that they are not required to speak and refraining from coercing them into speaking if they are uncomfortable doing so, and reassuring the child of one's concern about their safety (Centre for Children and Families, 2004).

The substantial lack of research conducted on police response to children at domestic violence incidents warrants further investigation of the matter. The potential benefits of investigating and improving the nature of police response to children at such events are extensive and include enhancing the welfare of the children involved, increasing victim reporting and satisfaction, and improving evidence collection and prosecution of domestic violence cases. There is a developing movement towards the enactment of legislation relating to domestic violence incidents that occur in the presence of a child (Zink et al., 2004) and police response to such incidents will undoubtedly be affected by these changes. The number of states implementing enhancements or upgrades to the offender's sentence if the domestic violence is committed in the presence of a child is notably expanding (19 as of 2003) (Zink et al., 2004). Therefore, it is critical to further examine current police practices in regards to children witnessing domestic violence incidents in order to initiate changes that better protect and serve the citizens involved. Since police officers are often the first responders to domestic violence incidents, they are likely to also be the first public service agents to become aware of the child's need for services, providing them an important and unique opportunity for early intervention and referrals (Shields, 2008). Since law enforcement officers play a crucial role in the

identification of families suffering from domestic violence by their role as first responders, it is imperative that these policies and practices are examined within the context of what is known about the frequency and impact of domestic violence on children (Shields, 2008).

Overall, it is evident that children exposed to domestic violence experience a multitude of negative consequences as a result. Police officers are on the front line of this problem and are placed in a unique position to protect the children present at domestic violence incidents. Despite the magnitude of risk factors associated with childhood exposure to domestic violence, children can recover from their experience and demonstrate strong resilience (Anderson & Bang, 2012). Police officers have an important opportunity to positively influence the lives of children at domestic violence incidents through early intervention and referrals for services.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Considering the significant impact of domestic violence on children and noticeable lack of research on police response to children at such incidents, further examination of the matter is necessary. The present study reviewed police reports from a municipal police department in the Northwest in order to determine how police respond to children present at domestic violence incidents. It began by determining if risk assessment, age of the child, number of children present, exposure, and victim-offender relationship influenced police response or interaction with the child(ren) present. It further examined if child presence influenced police response, arrest, or follow up. The frequency of child presence, police response, police-child interaction, and exposure was also considered.

Conceptual Definitions

In order to properly answer the question of how police respond to children present at DV incidents and assess the prevalence of their exposure, a few terms must first be defined. In the following discussion, variables included in the study are italicized. For the purposes of the present research, domestic violence was conceptualized using the classification provided in Title 18, Chapter 9 of the Idaho criminal code as the assault¹ or

¹Defined in the state statute as “(a) An unlawful attempt, coupled with apparent ability, to commit a violent injury on the person of another; or (b) An intentional, unlawful threat by word or act to do violence to the person of another, coupled with an apparent ability to do so, and doing some act which creates a well-founded fear in such other person that such violence is imminent.”

battery² of a household member. Within the state of Idaho, household member is defined as

a person who is a spouse, former spouse, or a person who has a child in common regardless of whether they have been married or a person with whom a person is cohabiting, whether or not they have married or have held themselves out to be husband or wife. (Idaho legislature, 2013, p. 1)

As a result, only incidents in which the parties are married, formerly married, have a child in common, or cohabit together are considered domestic violence under Idaho's code.

For the purposes of this study, police response included any intervention on behalf of the direct victim or child present that addressed his/her needs or serves to increase safety, healing, or victim satisfaction. Exposure to domestic violence was defined as intervening, seeing, or hearing the incident occur. This conceptualization of exposure is consistent with common types of exposure identified in previous research (Hamby et al., 2011; Holden, 2003). Child was defined as anyone between the ages of 0-17 who was not directly involved in the domestic violence incident. This age range has been utilized by previous researchers (McDonald et al., 2006) in the examination of childhood exposure to domestic violence. Lastly, if the child was within close proximity to the dwelling in which the incident occurred, they were considered present. Specifically, this study considered close proximity as being within the room, house, or curtilage of the dwelling in which the incident occurred.

² Defined in the state statute as “(a) Willful and unlawful use of force or violence upon the person of another; or (b) Actual, intentional and unlawful touching or striking of another person against the will of the other; or (c) Unlawfully and intentionally causing bodily harm to an individual.”

Dependent Variable and Measures

Police response was measured using the narrative and the Domestic Violence Supplement form contained in the police report (see Appendix). Specifically, it was measured using five categories: referred for services, contacted a victim-witness coordinator, referred for services and contacted a victim witness coordinator, no indicated response, and other response/intervention. *Offender arrest at initial incident* was also incorporated under police response as a nominal level variable categorized as yes, no, and both parties arrested.

In order to measure referral for services, the Information/Assistance and Community Referral section of the Domestic Violence Supplement form as well as the narrative were examined. Commonly utilized services available in the area are Children at Risk Evaluation Services (CARES), the Women's and Children's Alliance (WCA), FACES, and Child Protective Services (CPS). CARES is an organization that aims to reduce further emotional trauma by treating children in an age-sensitive manner ("Cares: Children at risk," 2013). The services they provide incorporate medical examinations, legal documentation, and follow-up referrals ("Cares: Children at risk," 2013). The WCA also provides a variety of services such as play therapy, counseling, emergency and transitional housing, group therapy, case management, court advocacy, and safety planning (Women's and Children's Alliance, 2013). FACES is a family justice center that houses victim-witness coordinators, child protection services, victim advocates, detectives, and more. Lastly, CPS has the ability to enroll children into a variety of services such as counseling and mental health therapy. Referrals to any of these agencies, or additional service organizations noted in the narrative section of the report, were

measured under the category of ‘referred for services.’ Specific services referred to were also documented. This method of measurement was chosen because most of the organizations are explicitly identified on the Domestic Violence Supplement form, which is completed by the officer whenever a domestic violence report is filed. CARES (which is not included in the supplemental form) was incorporated because it is the primary child centered referral agency in the area. The specific documentation on the supplemental form increases the likelihood of the officer noting it in his/her report, therefore improving the validity and reliability of the results. However, the form lacks specificity in regards to whether the referral was aimed to assist the non-abusive parent or the child(ren). Considering the importance of a supportive, stable, and non-abusive parent in helping children regain safety and limit anxiety (Berkman & Esserman, 2004; Futures Without Violence, 2014), the ‘referred for services’ category contained both direct referrals intended for the child(ren) and indirect referrals meant to assist the non-abusive parent.

Contact with a victim witness coordinator, no indicated response, and/or other response/intervention were measured using the narrative portion of the police report. If an officer noted the presence of a child on the supplemental form without identifying their location in regards to the incident and/or did not note in the report any further intervention on behalf of the child(ren) and/or non-abusive parent, it was classified as no indicated response. This definition was deemed appropriate because it suggests that the officer was aware of the child’s presence at the incident but did not initiate any further action. If the officer suggested or initiated additional intervention by a victim witness coordinator at the initial incident, it was categorized as contacted a victim-witness coordinator. If the officer indicated a form of intervention or response that was not

included in the other categories (e.g., checked the child for injuries, removed the child from the dangerous situation and into a safe place, etc.), it was classified as other response/intervention and the type of response was documented.

Considering that support may also be provided after the initial incident, *follow-up* was also examined as a yes/no dichotomous variable. A ‘yes’ for follow-up was documented if the report included a note to forward the case for further review (DV unit, persons unit, detective, etc.) or if a follow up report was present indicating that the victim was contacted following the initial police response for additional support (medical attention, services, interview, etc.). For cases in which follow-up was conducted, the detective’s follow-up report was examined to determine if services were provided. Specifically, *follow-up response* was categorized as referred/received services, victim witness coordinator assigned, both, other, and not indicated. If services were referred or received, a list of the specific services was documented. Lastly, *police-child interaction* was defined as speaking directly with the child(ren), and was measured as a yes/no variable. If there were multiple children present, speaking to one or more of the children was documented as ‘yes’ for police child interaction.

Independent Variables and Measures

In order to explain potential variance in the dependent variables, further analyses were completed in order to determine if child presence, level of child exposure to the incident, victim-offender relationship, and overall risk assessment were associated with police response to children at domestic violence incidents. Data on all of these variables were included in the supplemental form or the narrative of the police report. Specifically, *child present* was measured as a dichotomous yes/no variable. *Exposure* was categorized

as an ordinal variable in accordance with definitions of exposure identified by Holden (2003) as intervened (attempted to verbally or physically stop the assault or was directly involved in the altercation), witnessed (directly observed the assault), overheard (heard, but did not see the assault), other, and not indicated in the report.

Victim-offender relationship was measured using seven categories provided in the Domestic Violence Supplemental form, including spouse, former spouse, cohabitants, former cohabitants, dating/engaged, formerly dated/engaged, and other. If multiple relationships were indicated in the report, such as cohabiting and spouse, only the most intimate relationship was measured. Child in common and same sex relationships were coded separately as dichotomous yes/no variables. Considering the potential influence that belief in domestic violence myths may have on police response, victim-blaming statements were also considered. However, the data was not included in the analyses due to the small number of reports that included victim-blaming statements. The presence of a current no contact order or civil protection order was also documented, but was not included in the analyses due to the small number of cases that met this classification.

Age of the child(ren) present was also examined. *Age* was measured as a ratio level variable and therefore the specific age of each child present was documented. If multiple children were present, age was documented for all of the children. Sex of each child present was also documented, but was not incorporated in the analyses for feasibility reasons. The *number of children present* was measured at the ratio level by writing in the specific number associated with each case. Lastly, overall *risk assessment* was categorized as 1-3 different factors, 4-5 different factors, and 6-7 different factors, with 1-3 factors representing standard risk of subsequent abuse and higher numbers

illustrating a heightened level of risk. The presence of *italicized factors*, which designates risk of intimate partner homicide, was also measured in relation to overall risk assessment as a dichotomous yes/no variable.

Control Variables and Measures

In order to accurately measure police response to children present at domestic violence incidents, a few variables must be controlled. The present study controlled for a variety of variables including type of offense, number of domestic violence charges, time of day, location of the incident, and the level of offense. A domestic violence incident was defined as any disturbance that was documented in a police report as domestic violence. Seven specific offenses were examined in the present study including: attempted strangulation; domestic assault; domestic assault in the presence of a child; domestic battery; domestic battery in the presence of a child; domestic disturbance; and domestic verbal. All of the reports incorporated within these categories of offenses were reviewed with the exception of attempted strangulation. Only attempted strangulations involving domestic disputes were included. These cases were determined by the indication of the victim-offender relationship and the presence of a domestic violence supplemental form in the police report. If an offender was charged with multiple domestic violence offenses, the police report for the most serious offense was reviewed in order to avoid duplication. The *number of domestic violence charges* was also considered and measured at the ratio level. Additionally, *time of day* was measured as a continuous variable by documenting the time the officer(s) were dispatched to the scene. *Location of the incident* was classified as residence, vehicle, public area, and other. Lastly, *level of offense* was measured as felony, misdemeanor, and information report.

These variables are important for several reasons. First, the type and number of domestic violence offenses provides insight into the severity of the crime committed, which may have an effect on police response. Second, the time of the incident is significant in regards to the amount of time the officer can dedicate to investigating the situation. If an officer is working during a shift that is consistently busy, he/she may have less time to devote to locating and speaking with the children present at the scene. Third, the location of the incident may have an effect on an officer's perception of severity and/or danger and may also influence whether or not the officer is able to locate the child(ren). Fourth, the level of offense is a strong indicator of the severity of the offense and also denotes whether or not the police officer used the felony enhancement if a child was present. All of these variables have the potential to influence police response to children at domestic violence incidents in a variety of ways and were thus controlled for in the present study.

Unit of Analysis and Sampling Procedure

Considering that the present study is comparing police reports in order to measure police response to children at domestic violence incidents, the unit of analysis was social artifacts, specifically, police reports. Consequently, the target population and the sampling frame were also police reports. Specifically, the target population was police reports from domestic violence incidents occurring between July 1, 2013 and December 31, 2013 from a municipal police department in Idaho. A census of all domestic violence cases occurring within this time period was selected for observation. This time frame was chosen because it is recent, allows adequate time for follow up response to be

documented, and is believed to incorporate a representative sample of domestic violence incidents within the jurisdiction of the police agency.

Study Design and Implementation

Once the census of police reports was performed, each report was reviewed in order to collect the necessary data. The police agency provided complete access to the reports that occurred during the designated time frame. This method of examining archival data was selected for a variety of reasons. First, it allowed for the analysis of substantiated cases of domestic violence rather than relying on self-reports or retrospective data. Other methods, such as surveys of police officers, would have relied on retrospective accounts and therefore would not have been able to compensate for limitations in previous research. Second, it permitted the use of a census for collecting reports rather than convenience samples, which also improves upon the limitations of prior research. Third, as previously mentioned, police officers are often the first public service agents to be notified of domestic violence situations and are required to file reports on cases in which there is evidence that a crime has occurred. Therefore, police reports included a vast array of information relevant to the proposed study that other methods would not provide. For example, solely observational techniques would not have incorporated information on necessary variables, such as victim-offender relationship, risk assessment, and existence of a protection order just to name a few. Overall, it offered the most practical and realistic way of accurately measuring how police respond to children present at domestic violence incidents as well as how often children are present at such incidents.

Validity and Reliability

Although there are limitations, the chosen method of measurement best suits the purposes of this study. First and foremost, the selected measure contributes new methods that have rarely been utilized in previous research. A considerable amount of prior research examining childhood exposure to domestic violence relies on convenience samples (typically from domestic violence shelters), parents' reports of childhood exposure, and retrospective data of victims' experiences (Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007). Using police reports to measure childhood exposure to domestic violence supplements findings from previous studies by incorporating a census design and examining a third party viewpoint that includes current observations rather than retrospective accounts.

Additionally, previous research designs have primarily focused on surveys, secondary data analysis, and qualitative interviews of unreported cases of domestic violence. The research design contributes to current research by investigating reported cases of domestic violence, using analysis of existing data (as opposed to other methods already used), and incorporating police response into children's exposure to domestic violence, which has not been thoroughly examined in existing research. Furthermore, the demographics of this particular police agency are unique compared to many police departments commonly examined, such as New York Police Department, Cincinnati Police Department, and Los Angeles Police Department. Most notably, it is a medium sized department which better represents police departments across the United States, therefore increasing external validity.

Second, considering the potential enhancements that accompany a domestic violence incident with children present in this particular state, police officers are likely to

be consistent and accurate in their recording of whether or not a child was present. If the presence of a child is noted in the police report, the offender can be charged with domestic assault or battery in the presence of a child, which serves as an enhancement to the original offense. This enhancement can subsequently be used by the prosecutor as a bargaining tool when/if charges are filed. Therefore, officers are likely to note in the report if a child was present at the incident, increasing the consistency of the results.

Lastly, research illustrates that police protocol requiring the completion of supplemental forms in cases of domestic violence has improved the rate of police officers identifying the presence of children at the scene (Shields, 2008). Using the Domestic Violence Supplement form as the primary method of data collection reduces dependence on the narrative section of the report and increases the internal validity of the information considering the greater likelihood that the information was completed consistently and accurately across officers³.

Limitations

Despite the contributions of the present study, there are also notable limitations. First, this study only reviewed reports from one municipal police department in the Northwest. Additionally, the area that the police department serves lacks the racial/ethnic diversity that comprises many other cities in the United States. The population of the area studied consists of nearly 90% Whites, 1.5% African Americans, and 7.1% Hispanics or

³ For feasibility purposes, two researchers used the same set of reports to answer separate research questions. Using a coding sheet with the variables for both research questions, each researcher examined a portion of the reports until all reports within the designated time frame had been examined. Both researchers coded the first 5% of reports and compared results to check for consistency. Results are not included due to the small number of reports that were utilized for the inter-rater reliability test.

Latinos in 2010 (United States Census Bureau, 2014). Second, as a result of the definition of household member in the state of Idaho the incidents examined were limited to those involving individuals who were married, formerly married, or cohabitating. Furthermore, the present study only analyzed reported cases of domestic violence, which represent only a small proportion of total incidents and often consist of the more severe domestic violence cases (Nitu, 2012). National surveys indicate that only around 55% of domestic violence incidents are reported to the police (Truman, Langton, & Planty, 2013). Of the incidents reported to police, even fewer may actually lead to a written report due to an officer's discretion in determining if sufficient evidence exists to warrant writing a report. Therefore, reviewing police reports limits the ability to generalize the results to all domestic violence incidents. Third, the measure of child present may also be limited considering that victims are more likely to seek formal help when children witness the incident (Meyer, 2010). Thus, police reports may indicate a larger prevalence of children present at scenes of domestic violence compared to other measures, which would reduce the generalizability of the findings. Fourth, the ability to distinguish between referrals intended for the non-abusive parent and those intended for the child(ren) is limited. Lastly, as with any methodology using analysis of existing records, the information included in the reports cannot be altered or made more complete. Therefore, information regarding the socioeconomic status or race/ethnicity of the child(ren) present at the domestic violence incidents was not collected because such information is unlikely to be consistently included in the reports.

In addition to limitations of the research design, there were also statistical limitations regarding data collection and analysis. First, only 10.46% of cases included

some form of police response, which may have reduced the accuracy of the logistic regression. A second limitation is that arrest only included arrest at the initial incident; as a result, cases in which the offender was arrested following the initial incident were not counted as an arrest. Furthermore, the number of cases fitting this criterion was not documented. Third, level of exposure and age of children present were often not indicated in the report, resulting in a large number of missing data for those variables. Fourth, several variables such as victim blaming and presence of an NCO or CPO were not analyzed due to the limited number of cases meeting those criteria. Incidents classified as a domestic disturbance or domestic verbal were also excluded from several analyses due to limited sample sizes. Lastly, referrals for services and other responses may not have been documented in the report by the officer, resulting in an underestimation of police response.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Sample Characteristics

As illustrated in Table 1, 10.7% of the police reports in the sample were classified as attempted strangulation, 1.7% domestic assault, 3.2% domestic assault in the presence of a child, 65.8% domestic battery, 17.1% domestic battery in the presence of a child, 0.9% domestic disturbance, and 0.6% domestic verbal. The vast majority (83.2%) of cases were misdemeanors while 15.1% were felonies. In 90.1% of incidents, there was one domestic violence related charge, 8.4% had two DV charges, and 1.4% had three DV charges. In regards to sex of the offender, 18% of cases involved a female offender. Among the reports examined, the most common victim offender relationships included spouse (44%) and cohabitants (42.6%) with half (50%) of the domestic partners having children in common.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

		N	Valid %
Type of Offense	Attempted strangulation	37	10.7
	Domestic assault (DA)	6	1.7
	DA in the presence of a child	11	3.2
	Domestic battery (DB)	227	65.8
	DB in the presence of a child	59	17.1
	Domestic disturbance	3	0.9

	Domestic verbal	2	0.6
Level of Offense	Felony	52	15.1
	Misdemeanor	287	83.2
	Info report	6	1.7
Number of DV Charges	1	311	90.1
	2	29	8.4
	3	5	1.4
Victim-Offender Relationship	Spouse	151	44
	Former spouse	16	4.7
	Cohabitants	146	42.6
	Former cohabitants	8	2.3
	Dating/engaged	9	2.6
	Former dates/engaged	13	3.8
Child in Common	Yes	172	50
	No	172	50
Same Sex Relationship	Yes	10	2.9
	No	333	97.1

Table 2. Child Presence

		N	Valid %
Child Present	Yes	162	47
	No	183	53
Number of Children Present	1	76	52.4
	2	44	30.0
	3	14	9.7

	4	7	4.8
	5	3	2.1
	7	1	0.7
	Not indicated in report	17	
Exposure	Intervened/involved	41	25.3
	Witnessed	40	24.7
	Overheard	16	9.9
	Not indicated in report	43	26.5
	Other	22	13.6

Child Presence

Similar to findings from previous research (Edleson et al., 2007; Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007; Burton, 2000), a child was present in 47% of domestic violence incidents examined (see Table 2). Of the children present at domestic violence incidents, 57.7% were under the age of six. A total of 272 children were present during the incidents, of which, 49% were male and 51% were female when excluding cases in which the sex of the child present was not indicated. In regards to exposure, 50% of children present intervened, were directly involved, or witnessed the altercation. When excluding cases in which the level of exposure was not indicated, the rate of children directly exposed to the violence increases to 68.1%. The number of children present ranged from one to seven, with one child present in 52.4% of incidents and two children present in 30.3% (see Table 2). When child presence was examined based on type of offense, results indicated that children were present in 43.2% of attempted strangulations, 31.8% of domestic assault or batteries, and 100% of domestic assaults or batteries in the presence of a child (see Table 3).

Table 3. Child Present and Type of Offense

	Attempted strangulation	Domestic assault or battery	Domestic assault or battery in the presence of a child	Total
No child present	21 (11.7%) (56.8)	159 (88.3%) (68.2%)	0 (0%) (0%)	180 (100%) (52.9)
Child present	16 (10%) (43.2%)	74 (46.3%) (31.8%)	70 (43.8%) (100%)	160 (100%) (47.1%)
Total	37 (10.9%) (100%)	233 (68.5%) (100%)	70 (20.6%) (100%)	340 (100%) (100%)

Although children were present in 47% (160) of the cases examined, only 20.6% (70) of incidents were charged with the enhancement of domestic assault or battery in the presence of a child (see Table 3). When considering only cases in which a child was present, 46.3% were charged as domestic assault or battery without the enhancement. A portion of this discrepancy is due to differences in definitions. The state of Idaho defines child as an individual under the age of 16 while the present study defines child as under the age of 18. Another portion of the discrepancy is due to the method of data collection considering that only the most serious offense was documented. As a result, cases that were charged with attempted strangulation and domestic assault or battery in the presence of a child were counted solely as attempted strangulations. There were six reports that fit this criterion. However, even when taking these limitations into consideration, there is still a notable discrepancy between the number of cases in which a child was present and

the number that were charged with the enhancement. When considering only cases involving children under the age of 16 and accounting for the hierarchy rule, the enhancement was not utilized in 47.8% (66) of cases (see Table 4). Furthermore, in some of the cases in which the enhancement was not utilized, the child(ren) were directly exposed to the incident. As illustrated in Table 5, when examining cases in which the level of exposure is indicated and at least one of the children present is under the age of 16, 50% (19) of domestic assault or battery cases had a child present who was directly exposed to the violence and the enhancement was not used.

Table 4. Type of Offense in Cases with Children Present (< 16)

	Attempted strangulation	Domestic assault or battery	Domestic assault or battery in the presence of a child	Total
Child present	16 (11.6%)	56 (40.6%)	66 (47.8%)	138 (100%)

Table 5. Exposure and Type of Offense

	Attempted strangulation	Domestic assault or battery	Domestic assault or battery in the presence of a child	Total
Directly exposed	9 (75%)	19 (50%)	47 (85.5%)	75 (71.4%)
Indirectly exposed	3 (25%)	19 (50%)	8 (14.5%)	30 (28.6%)
Total	12	38	55	105

Responses

In regards to police response, officers indicated that they referred for services, contacted a victim-witness coordinator, or both in only 6.1% of the incidents examined (see Table 5). In 4.4% of cases, officers reported a response/intervention other than referral or VWC contact (see Table 6). There is a noteworthy pattern in the types of interventions documented in the 'other' category (see Table 7). For example, several of the responses included providing information about civil protection orders and informing the victim that there were resources available. Since these responses did not include direct information about a specific agency(s), they were not included under the referred for services category. Of the cases that did include a referral(s), FACES was the most commonly cited referral and was included in eight of the 13 police referrals (see Table 6). Of the 29.6% of reports that were sent to a detective or specialized unit for follow up, 18.6% of victims were referred/received services, met with a victim-witness coordinator, or both (see Table 6). At follow-up, the most common service referred/received was FACES, which was provided to 11 of the 12 victims who were referred/received services at follow-up (see Table 6). Three additional items on the supplemental form were further examined in order to provide a more complete perspective of police response; these include providing a domestic violence packet, asking if accommodations are needed, and providing domestic violence information per Idaho's code. Of the 345 reports examined, a DV packet was given in 64.8% of cases, the officer(s) provided DV information per the state's code in 54.5%, and the victim was asked if accommodations (e.g., housing or living arrangements) were needed in 17.1 percent (see Table 6).

Table 6. Police Response

		N	Valid %
Police Response	Referred for services	11	3.2
	Contacted VWC	8	2.3
	Services and VWC	2	0.6
	No indicated response	308	89.5
	Other response/intervention	15	4.4
Services Referred by Police	CPS	3	
	FACES	6	
	FACES;WCA	1	
	FACES;WCA;CPS	1	
	Health and Welfare Follow-Up	1	
	WCA	1	
Follow-Up	Yes	102	29.6
	No	243	70.4
Follow-Up Response	Referred/received services	3	2.9
	VWC assigned	7	6.9
	Both	9	8.8
	Other	2	2.0
	Not indicated	81	79.4
Services Provided at Follow-Up	CARES	1	
	FACES	10	
	FACES;CARES	1	
Provided DV Info per Idaho Code	Yes	182	54.5
	No	152	45.5

	Yes	57	17.1
Asked if Accommodation Needed	No	277	82.9
	Yes	219	64.8
DV Packet Given	No	119	35.2
	Yes	46	28.6
Spoke Directly with Child(ren)	No	115	71.4

Table 7. Police Response “Other”

Other Responses

Counseled on available services and resources

Courtesy transport to separate location

Explained DV packet and the NCO to be issued

Explained several resources available

Explained that there were resources available

Gave mom and kids a ride to a friend’s house

Gave victim DV paperwork with resources

Had mom check on kids

Provided information about CPOs

Provided information about how to get a CPO

Made sure child had a safe place to go – waited for the child’s father to pick him up

Provided list of DV resources

Removed victim and child from harm – checked for injuries

Told her about available resources

Told her to contact the courthouse on Monday to seek CPO

In addition to police response to victims of domestic violence, arrest was also measured as a potential police response. Of the reports examined, an arrest was made at the initial incident in 38.8% of cases (see Table 8). This number may be slightly lower than the total number of cases ultimately resulting in arrest considering that only arrest at the initial incident was examined. For example, if the offender was not present when police arrived and was subsequently arrested several days after the altercation, it was not included as an arrest at the initial incident. Of the cases that did result in arrest at the initial incident, 25.5% involved female offenders (see Table 9), a disproportionate percentage considering that only 18% of all reports examined involved female offenders (see Table 8). In regards to police-child interaction, when considering only cases in which a child(ren) was present, the police officer(s) spoke directly to the child(ren) in 28.6% (46) of the incidents. Although officers did not speak to the child(ren) in 115 (71.4%) cases, this may be partially due to the fact that 57.7% of the children present were under the age of six.

Table 8. Arrest

		N	Valid %
Offender Arrest at Initial Incident	Yes	134	38.8
	No Both Parties Arrested	208	60.3
		3	0.9
Female Offender	Yes	62	18
	No	283	82

Table 9. Sex of Offender and Arrest

	No Arrest	Arrest	Total
Male Offender	181 (87%)	102 (74.5)	283
Female Offender	27 (13%)	35 (25.5%)	62
Total	208	137	345

Logistic Regression Analysis

A binary logistic regression is a type of predictive analysis that can be used when the dependent variable is dichotomous and the levels of measurement for the independent variable(s) are dichotomous, ordinal, or interval/ratio (Menard, 2002). The major assumptions for binary logistic regression analyses include lack of multicollinearity among the independent variables, a dichotomous dependent variable, inclusion of all relevant predictors, and exclusion of any irrelevant predictors (Menard, 2002). Binary logistic regression serves as an extension of traditional linear regression analyses by allowing for the use of dichotomous predictors and uses the maximum likelihood method, which requires a relatively large sample size and reasonable variation within variables for accurate results (Menard, 2002). Considering these factors, the present study utilized a binary logistic regression due to the dichotomous nature of the dependent variables, the various levels of measurement among the independent variables, and the ability to control for other relevant variables within the model.

In order to ensure accurate results, each of the independent variables included in the binary logistic regression analyses were continuous, ordinal, or recoded into dichotomous categories with at least 15% of cases in each category. The one exception was in regards to the police response variable. For this variable, a response was indicated in only 10.46% of cases, therefore not meeting the 15% minimum percentage. Additionally, chi-square analyses were conducted on several independent variables to test for multicollinearity. A statistically significant relationship was identified between risk assessment and italicized factors as well as type of offense and level of offense. As a result, only one of the variables from each group was included in each analysis. Several regression models were analyzed including full models in order to determine which model was the best fit. The best fit model was established by examining the -2 log likelihood value, Nagelkerke's R square value, and other substantive factors (Menard, 2002). Each percentage was calculated using one of two formulas $[(1-\text{Exp}(B)) \times 100$ or $(\text{Exp}(B)-1) \times 100]$ depending on if the $\text{Exp}(B)$ value was positive or negative (Menard, 2002).

Arrest

As illustrated in Table 10, regression analysis identified three statistically significant predictors of arrest. The model presented was found to be the best fit due to the lower -2 log likelihood value and higher R square value compared to other models. Child presence was a statistically significant predictor of arrest with the probability of arrest decreasing by 49% when a child is present ($\text{Exp}(B) = 0.510$; $p < .05$). The presence of italicized factors was included in the analysis over risk assessment because it was deemed to be a more immediate consideration in regards to the decision to arrest. Results

indicated that presence of italicized factors (factors indicating risk of intimate partner homicide) significantly decreased the likelihood of arrest by 55% ($\text{Exp}(B) = 0.447$, $p < .05$). In other words, if there are factors present indicating an increased risk of intimate partner homicide against the victim, the likelihood of arrest decreases by more than 50%. Conversely, sex of the offender was found to drastically increase the likelihood of arrest. Regression analyses indicated that the probability of arrest increased by 221% when the offender was female ($\text{Exp}(B) = 3.214$, $p < .05$). While there were several statistically significant variables in regards to arrest, level of offense (misdemeanor/felony), although approaching significance, was not found to be a statistically significant predictor of arrest.

Table 10. Binary Logistic Regression Analysis: Arrest⁴

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Child present*	-0.673	0.272	6.133	1	0.013	0.510
Victim offender relationship	-0.226	0.271	0.700	1	0.403	0.797
Number of DV charges	0.798	0.445	3.215	1	0.073	2.221
Location of incident	0.434	0.378	1.316	1	0.251	1.543
Level of offense	-0.826	0.465	3.152	1	0.076	0.438

⁴ A chi-square analysis was conducted between offender sex and child present with no statistically significant results

Female offender*	1.167	0.361	10.483	1	0.001	3.214
Italicized factors*	-0.805	0.377	4.567	1	0.033	0.447

-2Log likelihood = 332.830

R Square = 0.147

$p < 0.05^*$

Police Response

Throughout every regression model, child presence was consistently found to be a statistically significant predictor of police response ($p < .05$). As illustrated in Table 11, if a child was present the probability of police responding to the victim and/or child (referral for services, contacting VWC, or other response/intervention) increased by 530% percent ($\text{Exp}(B) = 6.295$, $p < .05$). For police response, risk assessment was included in the analysis over italicized factors because it was deemed to be a more important factor regarding interventions aimed at assisting the victim with acquiring resources to enhance safety and reduce dangerousness. However, no other variables in the analysis, including level of offense or risk, were found to be statistically significant predictors of police response. Therefore, although police response only occurred in 10.46% of cases examined, child presence significantly increased the probability of police response towards the victim and/or child.

Table 11. Binary Logistic Regression Analysis: Police Response

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Child present*	1.840	0.547	11.317	1	0.001	6.295
Risk assessment	0.803	0.469	2.926	1	0.087	2.232

Number of DV charges	-0.181	0.713	0.064	1	0.800	0.835
Time of day	0.000	0.000	1.294	1	0.255	1.000
Location of incident	0.209	0.269	0.607	1	0.436	1.233
Level of offense	-0.638	0.651	0.961	1	0.327	0.528
Female offender	-0.539	0.682	0.624	1	0.430	0.584
Victim-offender relationship	0.511	0.477	1.147	1	0.284	1.667

-2Log likelihood = 146.317

R Square = 0.181

p < 0.05*

Police-Child Interaction

In order to examine police-child interaction, several binary logistic regression models were tested. In order to create an age variable for examination, the seven age columns for each child present were combined by creating an average age variable. All of the models tested resulted in a statistically significant relationship between average age of the child and police-child interaction. Even when considering six other relevant variables, average age was consistently found to be the only statistically significant variable (see Table 12). As the average age of the child(ren) present increased, the likelihood of the officer speaking to the child(ren) directly increased by 55% (Exp(B) = 1.546, p <.05). The Nagelkerke's R square value (0.656) also suggests that the independent variables

included in the regression analysis are responsible for the majority of the variance in police-child interaction indicating that the model is a good fit.

Table 12. Binary Logistic Regression Analysis: Police-Child Interaction

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Exposure	0.627	0.836	0.562	1	0.454	1.872
Average age*	0.436	0.090	23.687	1	0.000	1.546
Risk assessment	-0.836	1.006	0.691	1	0.406	0.433
Time of day	0.000	0.000	2.932	1	0.087	1.000
Level of offense	1.088	1.123	.0938	1	0.333	2.967
Location of offense	-0.666	0.739	0.811	1	0.368	0.514
Female offender	-1.743	0.975	3.195	1	0.074	0.175

-2Log likelihood = 60.510

R Square = 0.656

p < 0.05*

Follow-up

Similar to arrest, there were several statistically significant predictors of police recommended and/or completed victim-directed follow-up (see Table 13). Child presence was found to be one of the statistically significant correlates. If a child was present at the domestic violence incident, the probability of recommended/completed follow-up increased by 103% (Exp(B) = 2.039, p < .05). The presence of italicized factors also

increased the likelihood of follow-up considering that when italicized factors were present, the probability of recommended/completed follow-up increased by 113% ($\text{Exp}(B) = 2.125$, $p < .05$). In addition to correlates that increased the probability of follow-up, several variables were also identified that decreased the likelihood of recommended/completed follow-up. In regards to level of offense, if the offense was a misdemeanor, the probability of follow-up decreased by 78.1% ($\text{Exp}(B) = 0.219$, $p < .05$). In other words, recommended/completed follow-up was more likely to occur if the offense was a felony. The final predictor of follow-up was sex of the offender with the probability of follow-up decreasing by 71% when the offender was female ($\text{Exp}(B) = 0.294$, $p < .05$).

Table 13. Binary Logistic Regression Analysis: Follow-up

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Child present*	0.713	0.296	5.785	1	0.016	2.039
Italicized factors*	0.754	0.350	4.635	1	0.031	2.125
Level of offense*	-1.517	0.471	10.372	1	0.001	0.219
Female offender*	-1.225	0.514	5.671	1	0.017	0.294
Number of DV charges	-0.687	0.481	2.043	1	0.153	0.503

-2Log likelihood = 284.644

R Square = 0.184

$p < 0.05^*$

DISCUSSION

While there is an abundance of knowledge regarding the effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence, there is limited research on the influence of child presence on police response. However, in order to fully understand the influence of child presence on police response, it is imperative to also have a basic knowledge of how police respond to domestic violence incidents in general. When taking into consideration all of the reports examined (including those in which a child was not present), police referred victims for services in 3.8% of cases. Furthermore, a victim witness coordinator was contacted at the initial incident in 2.9% of cases examined. One potential explanation for the limited police response may be due to officers' not noting their response in the report. For example, the officer may have referred the victim and/or child for services without documenting it in the report. The inadequate police response may also be due to lack of knowledge about the resources available in the community. Increased police training on the matter may serve to improve police response to domestic violence incidents (see discussion in Policy Implications).

Similar to findings from previous research, children were present at nearly 50% of all domestic violence incidents and 57.5% of children present were under the age of six. Additionally, in 68.1% of cases, at least one of the children present was directly exposed to the violent incident. Another notable finding in regards to child presence is that, in 46.3% of incidents in which a child was present, the charge assigned was domestic

battery or assault without the enhancement. While a segment of the discrepancy is due to methodological limitations, there were several cases in which no reason was identified for not utilizing the enhancement. Although the enhancement could have been added by the prosecutor following the initial police response, it is concerning that police officers are not utilizing the enhancement, especially in cases in which the child was directly exposed to the violence. Utilizing the enhancement provides an advantage to the prosecutor in regards to plea bargaining and also increases the maximum sentence if the offender is tried and convicted. It also has the potential to result in more offenders being charged with domestic violence charges rather than a lesser, unrelated offense. For example, including the enhancement may permit the prosecutor to plead from domestic battery in the presence of a child to domestic battery rather than domestic battery to disturbing the peace. Furthermore, not utilizing the enhancement may limit the knowledge among prosecutors and victim-witness coordinators that a child was present. As a result, they may not be aware that the child has been directly traumatized and is in need of services, which hinders the likelihood of the child's specific needs being addressed. Additional or improved training on the use and importance of the enhancement may be beneficial for new and existing police officers.

In regards to the influence of child presence on police response, logistic regression analyses indicated that child presence was a statistically significant predictor of arrest, police response, and follow-up. However, the relationship between arrest and child presence was in the opposite direction than anticipated with child presence decreasing the likelihood of arrest. This may be due to officer discretion and the influence of the human factor. For example, officers' may be reluctant to take a parent

away from their children and impose a financial burden on the family if that parent is the primary source of income and it is a relatively low-level offense. However, it is still concerning considering the potential influence on the immediate safety of the victim and children. Arresting the perpetrator provides the non-abusive parent with the opportunity to help the child(ren) regain a sense of safety and stability. Not arresting the offender in these cases may hinder the ability of the child(ren) to regain a sense of safety and security following the initial incident, which may exacerbate the trauma. The relationship between italicized factors and arrest were also in a different direction than anticipated with the presence of italicized factors decreasing the likelihood of arrest. Considering that the police department in question utilizes electronic versions of the supplemental form that are completed after an officer leaves the scene, this finding may be the result of officers not realizing the presence of italicized factors until after they have left the scene. Providing officers with a pocket-sized card listing the various italicized factors may improve the likelihood of officers asking about such factors and subsequently their knowledge about these dynamics at the scene.

Another notable finding in regards to arrest is the drastic increase (221%) in the probability of arrest when the offender is female. Descriptive statistics corroborate this finding considering that 18% of the reports examined involved female offenders, however females represented more than 25% of all arrests. In other words, the percentage of females being arrested is disproportionate to their representation in the cases examined and the probability of arrest increases dramatically when the offender is female. According to research by Henning and Feder (2004), women accounted for 16.8% of all arrests for heterosexual intimate partner violence during the study period. This figure is

notably less than the nearly 26% identified in the present study. These figures suggest that officers in the jurisdiction examined may not be properly identifying the primary aggressor and thus arresting a potential victim that responded in self-defense. Another potential explanation for the drastic increase in the probability of arrest for female offenders is an incomplete understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence. For example, domestic violence victims commonly minimize or deny the violence perpetrated against them due to fear and other understandable reasons; conversely, offenders may highlight injuries sustained from the victim acting in self-defense in an attempt to regain control. Therefore, additional training on the dynamics of domestic violence and methods for properly identifying the primary aggressor may be beneficial.

The high probability of arrest for female offenders may also be influenced by gender stereotypes. Esqueda and Harrison (2005) suggest that gender role stereotypes influence perceptions of individuals in domestic violence situations and levels of culpability assigned to the parties involved. In this study, participants with traditional gender role beliefs perceived women as more culpable for the domestic violence situation compared to participants with egalitarian gender role beliefs. Esqueda and Harrison (2005) further cite research indicating that “police officers with a traditional ideology are more likely to blame the victim and less likely to express professional concern about domestic violence” (p. 824). Conversely, research by Stolzenberg and D’Alessio (2004) supported the chivalry hypothesis, which maintains that female offenders are treated more leniently than males in the criminal justice system. The results indicated that the likelihood of arrest decreased for female offenders across several crime types including kidnapping, forcible fondling, simple assault, and intimidation. Contrary to the findings

of Stolzenberg and D'Alessio (2004), the results from the present study provide more support for the evil women hypothesis, which asserts that the criminal justice system responds more harshly to female offenders due to their deviation from traditional gender roles (Walsh & Hemmens, 2014). Considering the contradiction between the present study and previous research, additional research examining likelihood of arrest across several crimes (including domestic violence) from a gendered perspective is warranted.

In comparison to sex of the offender, level of the offense was not found to be a statistically significant correlate of arrest. Therefore, whether the incident is a felony or misdemeanor does not significantly influence the probability of an officer arresting the suspect at the initial incident. This may be due to officer's arresting based on the presence of injury rather than the extent or severity of the injury.

For police-child interaction, average age was consistently found to be the only statistically significant predictor. Although officers did not speak directly to the child(ren) present in 71.4% of the incidents examined, considering the results of the logistic regression, this is likely due to the large proportion (57.7%) of incidents that involved children under the age of six. Similar to previous research (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012), these results indicate that officers' may be reluctant to talk to children present, especially if the child(ren) is under the age of six. Additional training regarding skills and best practices when responding to children may serve to improve officers' confidence in their ability to talk with children present at domestic violence incidents. It is evident in previous research that children have the desire to be included and officers speaking directly to the child(ren) present and providing them with the opportunity to voice their concerns is critical to the child(ren)'s perception of law enforcement and overall

satisfaction with the encounter (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). However, this finding may also be due to concerns of officer safety or parents not permitting the officer to speak with the child(ren) present. For example, if there are only two officers on scene, it may not be feasible for one to take the children into another room to speak with them separately, subsequently leaving the other officer alone with both the victim and offender. Additionally, the parent(s) may refuse to allow the officer to speak with the child(ren) present.

Recommended/completed follow-up was influenced by several variables in addition to child presence including italicized factors, level of offense, and sex of offender. The decrease in likelihood of follow-up in conjunction with the increase in likelihood of arrest among female offenders illustrates a conflicted response; there is a notable tendency to arrest female offenders with limited follow-up provided to victims in such cases. Therefore, officers may be arresting female offenders even though they appear to have little concern that the victim is in enough danger to warrant follow-up. Overall, considering the association of child presence with three of the dependent variables examined, it is evident based on the current findings that child presence does have a statistically significant influence on police response to domestic violence incidents.

Policy Implications

The findings from this study provide insight into police response to domestic violence as well as officer response to children present at such incidents within a police department in Idaho. Results from the present study suggest that police officers' primary method for responding to victims of domestic violence is by providing a DV packet

(64.8%). In some cases, officers made an additional effort to explain the process for obtaining a civil protection order, provide courtesy transport to a safe location, refer the victim for services, and/or contact a victim-witness coordinator. Results also suggest that victim blaming was rarely identified in the police reports examined (5%). While these efforts represent a positive response to domestic violence, the frequency of officers utilizing such techniques was found to be especially rare. As previously mentioned, this may be due to limited documentation of such encounters and/or lack of knowledge about the resources available in the community. In order to improve this area of police response to domestic violence, additional training about the resources available and the benefit they serve would be useful. An optimal framework for this training would be an overview of resources available, descriptions of the services each agency offers, the benefits these services can provide for victims and children, along with simple and quick methods for providing referrals in a trauma-informed and client-centered manner. Local coalitions and/or domestic violence program staff would be optimal sources for providing the training. Furthermore, better collaboration between law enforcement and community service agencies may also serve to improve the number of victims being referred for services. For example, a local service agency distributes 'shoe cards,' which are small cards with information about the services they provide and the number for their 24-hour information line. The cost is minimal and could likely be absorbed into the budget of the local agency. If police officers carried these in their patrol cars, they would be readily available and would serve as an easy avenue for providing information to victims about the services available in the community. Considering that section 39 chapter 63 of Idaho's code requires law enforcement officers to inform victims of their rights and

resources in the community, this would provide a feasible way of abiding by state legislation.

In addition to improved training and collaboration, there is also a need for further research in order to expand upon some of the findings of the present study. In order to provide further insight and explanation, qualitative interviews with law enforcement officers would be valuable by providing important information regarding the factors taken into consideration when responding to domestic violence incidents. Qualitative interviews with law enforcement officers may also help explain why officers tend to be reluctant when speaking with children present at domestic violence incidents and what steps could be taken to reduce their concerns. Considering the high rates of female arrests documented in the present study, further research to help identify reasons for this observation would also be beneficial.

CONCLUSION

It is time for the criminal justice system to recognize the influence of domestic violence on children and respond appropriately. It is evident in previous literature and supported by the present study that children are frequently present at domestic violence incidents and are often directly exposed to the altercation. Although police officers are more likely to respond with service referrals, contacting a victim-witness coordinator, or another response/intervention when a child is present, it is evident that these responses remain rare. Furthermore, the likelihood of arrest actually decreases when a child is present. Taking into consideration the time and paperwork already required of officers when responding to a domestic violence call, there are plausible improvements that can be implemented. One relatively simple improvement includes the collaboration between police agencies and community organizations in order to provide materials with information about services available in the community for officers to carry in their patrol cars that can easily be offered to victims at the scene. Increasing the amount of training that officers receive on the dynamics of domestic violence as well as the influence of domestic violence on children may also serve to improve overall police response to such incidents. The influence of domestic violence on children is extensive and police officers remain in a unique position to help facilitate resiliency by responding positively to children present at such incidents.

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APPENDIX

Idaho Domestic Violence Supplement

Idaho Domestic Violence Supplement

DR # _____

Risk Assessment of Dangerousness (add # of factors that have at least 1 box marked) SAFE emergency contact number for victim/s: 1-3 Different Factors <input type="checkbox"/> 4-5 Different Factors <input type="checkbox"/> 6-7 Different Factors <input type="checkbox"/> Italicized Factor/s <input type="checkbox"/>																																																											
Appearance/Emotional State		Relationship—Check All That Apply																																																									
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Factor 1: History of Domestic Violence		Factor 2: Threat to Kill	Factor 3: Threats of Suicide																																																								
Provided by: Victim <input type="checkbox"/> Suspect <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Current Civil Protection Order <input type="checkbox"/> Current Criminal No Contact Order <input type="checkbox"/> No Contact Order or Protection Order violation today If so, by whom _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Recent escalation of violence <input type="checkbox"/> Unreported history of domestic violence <input type="checkbox"/> Does victim report threat of future harm? <input type="checkbox"/> Caused serious injury to another in prior incident <input type="checkbox"/> Stalking behaviors - Provide specific details in narrative _____ <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Has forced partner to have sex</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Previous attempt(s) of strangulation <input type="checkbox"/> Threatened abuse or allegation of abuse of animals Victim perception of future risk: Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Weapons: <input type="checkbox"/> Access to weapons <input type="checkbox"/> Prior use of weapons <input type="checkbox"/> Weapon moved <input type="checkbox"/> Type: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Seized <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Attempted Strangulation</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Breathing difficulty <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of consciousness or dizzy <input type="checkbox"/> Swallowing changes <input type="checkbox"/> Behavioral changes <input type="checkbox"/> Sore throat <input type="checkbox"/> Voice change <input type="checkbox"/> Scratchy throat Strangulation method: _____ How long: _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Specific threats to kill victim <input type="checkbox"/> Specific threats to kill children or _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Displaying weapon at time of threat	<input type="checkbox"/> Suspect suicidal. Number of attempts and date of most recent _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Depression or mental illness <input type="checkbox"/> Other stressors _____																																																								
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		Factor 6: Prior Police Contact																																																									
		<input type="checkbox"/> Prior Civil Protection Order <input type="checkbox"/> Violation <input type="checkbox"/> Prior Criminal No Contact Order <input type="checkbox"/> Violation <input type="checkbox"/> Other prior police contact <input type="checkbox"/> Reported child abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Current PO Number _____																																																									
		Factor 7: Alcohol or Drug Abuse by Suspect																																																									
		<input type="checkbox"/> Drug and/or alcohol abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Prescription Medication <input type="checkbox"/> Under the influence when current altercation started If so, what type and quantity: _____																																																									
Information/Assistance and Community Referral																																																											
Victim <input type="checkbox"/> Provided domestic violence information per Idaho Code 39-6316 <input type="checkbox"/> Asked if accommodation needed <input type="checkbox"/> DV Packet <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____		Referrals (if necessary) <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Protective Services <input type="checkbox"/> Child Protective Services <input type="checkbox"/> Humane Society <input type="checkbox"/> FACES <input type="checkbox"/> WCA																																																									
		Notified by: <input type="checkbox"/> 911 Call <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Emergency Dispatch <input type="checkbox"/> Officer Initiated <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ Officer completing form _____ Date _____ Time _____																																																									

The Domestic Violence Supplement does not take the place of a narrative. Domestic violence cases are complex. If there are additional observations or if a victim is unable or unwilling to respond to the questions, indicate such in the narrative.