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Philosophy into practice? Community policing units and domestic violence victim participation

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Abstract: Much research has focused on the police response to domestic violence; however, relatively little research has considered performance differences of various types of police officers. Although there has been widespread adoption of community policing by police departments across the country, it is not conclusive as to whether units with a specific community policing philosophy perform better than traditional units when handling domestic violence calls. The current study addresses this issue by analyzing the factors associated with victim participation; specifically, do officers and detectives operating under a specific community policing mandate produce higher rates of victim participation? Bivariate and multivariate analyses indicate that victim participation rates did not differ by a community policing orientation; rather, situational factors exert the strongest effect on victim participation.

Keywords: Community policing, Domestic violence, Victim participation, Detectives

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Introduction

Although historically the police response to domestic violence has been one of underenforcement (Pleck, 1987; Roy, 1977; Stark, 1993; Walker, 1985), a dramatic change in the way the police respond to domestic violence has occurred during the last two decades. The literature identifies several factors that have influenced the formulation of current policies regarding domestic violence (Buzawa and Buzawa, 1993; Feder, 1997; Klinger, 1995; Parnas, 1993; Sherman, 1992; Steinman, 1991). First, beginning in the 1970s, the women's movement and various advocate groups brought domestic violence to the forefront of the US public's attention. These groups argued for an increase in the use and severity of criminal sanctions against domestic offenders. In 1982, due to the extensive lobbying efforts of these groups, 27 state legislatures repealed "the common law ban on police making warrantless arrests for domestic assaults they did not witness" (Sherman, 1992, p. 53). The mobilization of numerous public resources to help deal with the domestic violence problem also occurred during this time. Battered women's shelters were opened and soon filled to capacity (Okun, 1986). In addition, the availability and use of restraining orders increased, and numerous counseling and preventive programs were developed.

Second, several court cases helped define the appropriate role of the police in combating domestic violence. More specifically, these cases demonstrated that the police could be held liable for their failure to intervene in domestic assaults. *Bruno v. Codd* (1974) and *Scott v. Hart* (1976) held the police liable for "inadequate protection." In 1984, Tracy Thurman was awarded \$2.6 million in a judgment against the Torrington, Connecticut Police Department for its failure to protect her from her abusive husband on repeated occasions (*Thurman v. City of Torrington*). Subsequently, police policies and training regarding domestic violence were reformed with the objective of reducing departments' liability.

Finally, research investigating the police response to domestic violence had a profound and long-lasting impact on police

policy. The results of the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment suggested that arrest, compared to separation or mediation, was the most effective police response for deterring future incidents of domestic violence (Sherman and Berk, 1984). Although subsequent replications revealed this to be a hasty conclusion (Berk *et al.*, 1992; Berk and Newton, 1985; Pate and Hamilton, 1992; Sherman *et al.*, 1991), the highly publicized nature of this study led many departments across the nation to adopt preferred or mandatory arrest policies.

Primarily as a result of the above three factors – the women's movement, legal decisions, and research – most departments' policies favor arrest over other police tactics when handling domestic violence incidents. Recent research indicates that the majority (84 percent) of police departments now have either mandatory or preferred arrest policies for misdemeanor domestic violence cases (Monk, 1993). These domestic violence reform efforts occurred within the context of large-scale changes in police philosophy and practice as a result of the community policing movement.

The philosophy and practice of community policing

In the last two decades, community policing has emerged as the preeminent philosophy or dominant strategy of current policing (Cordner, 1998); it is widespread and embraced by the political establishment. For example, the 1994 Crime Act authorized \$8.8 billion for community policing programs, and currently almost 90 percent of Americans are served by community policing officers (CPOs) (US Department of Justice, 1999). Despite this acceptance, academics have yet to agree on a singular, all-encompassing definition of community policing. Instead, this term is a philosophical concept that covers a broad range of programs and tactics; it is best understood as a "... conceptual circus tent housing different and changing acts" (Wycoff, 1991, p. 104). At its core, community policing is a philosophy that includes all efforts of the police to achieve the goal of a closer relationship with the public.

While the precise definition of community policing remains the subject of considerable debate, most would agree that there are several elements of the community policing philosophy. The most basic element is the assumption that the public has something to contribute to policing; the police and the community should work

together to solve community problems and reduce crime to improve the quality of life. Historical events (e.g. civil disturbances) and technological advances (e.g. patrol car, radio dispatch) served to isolate the police from the public (Walker, 1999). Community policing attempts to change police-community relations from “hierarchical, distant and authoritarian” to “equalitarian, intimate, and communal” (Manning, 1984, p. 222) because it is believed that “together, police and public are more effective and more humane coproducers of safety and public order than are the police alone” (Skolnick and Bayley, 1988, p. 1). Partnerships between police and various individuals, agencies, or organizations can be used to both identify and find means of addressing community problems. Because this partnership “lies at the heart” (Jolin and Moose, 1997, p. 285) of the community policing philosophy, it is vital that the police and the public become coproducers of crime reduction in practice (Skolnick and Bayley, 1988).

Community policing is also based on the tenet that the reform era too narrowly defined the role or mission of the police as one of “crime responsible professional work” (Manning, 1997, p. 92). Conversely, the community policing movement emphasizes a broad, social role for the police. Officers should, therefore, view their primary function as dealing with community problems (Goldstein, 1987) and reinforcing the community’s own informal control mechanisms (Wilson and Kelling, 1982; for criticisms, see Manning, 1984). A community policing role includes activities usually shunned by traditional patrol officers, such as order maintenance, problem-solving and service-oriented activities (Goldstein, 1990; Kelling and Coles, 1997; Wilson and Kelling, 1982). Battling incivilities and disorder is now considered as important as – if not more important than – the traditional crime fighting mandate of the police.

The manner in which community policing officers deal with crime and disorder may also be radically different. As opposed to traditional law enforcement, which is primarily reactive in nature, community policing officers are encouraged to look beyond the immediate situation at hand in an attempt to discover the underlying causes of community problems (Goldstein, 1990). This strategy, called a problem-solving approach, involves police officers collecting information from many sources, including those inside the department as well as outside (e.g. individuals, public agencies,

and private organizations) (Eck and Spelman, 1987). Problem solving can thus be considered a “necessary component of community policing even if one does not consider it a sufficient one ... community policing without problem solving is not community policing” (Jolin and Moose, 1997, p. 291).

Scholars advocate several types of organizational restructuring to accomplish the goals associated with this new paradigm of policing:

1. (1) decentralization of authority and responsibility;
2. (2) flattening or reducing the number of layers in the hierarchy;
3. (3) de-specialization of policing by allowing officers to be generalists;
4. (4) using teams to improve police performance; and
5. (5) civilianization or reclassifying some police duties to be performed by non-sworn personnel (Cordner, 1998, p. 56).

Decentralization has been especially instrumental in modeling the formal organization of a department with the everyday realities of police work (Skogan, 1998); this change has been critical in increasing the responsiveness of officers and enabling them to create specific solutions to problems they encounter on the beat.

In short, the traditional paradigm of policing has been replaced by a community policing model in most police departments across the country (Pelfrey, 1998). The philosophy of community policing encourages a more productive police-community partnership, a broader police role, the use of a problem-solving strategy, and a reorganization of police departments. One example of how police can translate the community policing philosophy into innovative practices regarding their response to domestic violence victims is discussed below.

A community policing response to domestic violence

The community policing era of reform dovetails with domestic violence reform to produce many attempts at improving the criminal justice response to this crime. In 1994, the Michigan legislature passed an act mandating that all law enforcement agencies develop and implement a domestic violence policy (Michigan Public Act 69, 1994). Legislation was passed also mandating that police perform certain procedures when responding

to incidents of domestic violence (Michigan Public Act 418, 1994) such as investigation, arrest, documentation, providing assistance to victims, and enforcing restraining orders. In response to this legislation, the Midwestern Police Department (MPD)[1] instituted a preferred arrest domestic violence policy. This policy established arrest as the preferred response to domestic violence when there was probable cause to believe a felony or misdemeanor had occurred, regardless of whether police witnessed the act.

Reaching the conclusion that their response to domestic violence was limited, in 1996 the MPD applied for and received a Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant to combat domestic violence. Few domestic violence complaints resulted in an arrest or the issuance of a warrant against the suspect; this was attributed primarily to victims being unwilling or unable to cooperate with the criminal justice response to their cases. The COPS grant funded the establishment of a special team of detectives, the Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART), to be organized within the MPD. DART was charged with finding methods of increasing domestic violence victim participation with the MPD. Those involved were operating under the assumption that a criminal justice intervention was the most effective way of ensuring victim safety; therefore, victims should cooperate with criminal justice personnel in order to stop the abuse. Although we know this assumption to be flawed (e.g. see Sherman's (1992) summary of the problems associated with arresting domestic offenders), the criminal justice system still has primary responsibility for handling the domestic violence problem.

The development of DART is the embodiment of a community-oriented approach to domestic violence. Through community partnerships with the district attorney, health department, various advocate groups, and referral services, the MPD gained the input necessary to identify domestic violence as a problem in need of serious attention. Using a problem-solving orientation allowed the police department to work with these outside groups to devise means of improving the criminal justice response to domestic violence. For example, DART detectives established a positive working relationship with a court advocate so that victims wanting to obtain a Personal Protection Order (PPO) could do so with greater ease. As a result, the current response to

domestic violence represents a broader and more comprehensive approach than existed in the past.

Community policing detectives

At the time of this research, DART comprised three detectives (one black female, one white female, and one black male). As a result of their exclusive focus on domestic violence, DART detectives are assigned the majority of domestic violence cases that come to police attention. This approach increases the uniformity of the police response and allows DART detectives to work as a team to address the domestic violence problem. DART detectives volunteered for this assignment. This self-selection differentiates them from other detectives; their goal is to concentrate their efforts on one particular crime in an attempt to make a noticeable impact. Also, some of the detectives either had personal experience with domestic violence, or for other reasons (e.g. religious) were particularly devoted to trying to improve the police response to domestic violence victims.

The DART detectives try to make contact with every domestic violence victim (by phone, mail, or in person) in an attempt to provide some measure of assistance to all victims coming into contact with the MPD. This assistance can take many forms. First and foremost, detectives provide victims with information necessary to participate successfully in the prosecution of their cases (e.g. whether they need to sign a warrant, the location and time of court appearances). Second, detectives go beyond a “just the facts, ma’am” approach in many cases to provide victims with emotional support (e.g. informal counseling, attending court with victims). Finally, DART detectives are knowledgeable of other agencies that offer victim assistance (e.g. shelters, PPO office, counseling programs) and often provide referrals to these agencies. In short, the overall mission of DART is to make the victim’s navigation through the criminal justice system less traumatic and difficult while simultaneously increasing the proportion of cases ending in arrest and prosecution.

Community policing officers

Within the MPD, a community policing orientation is not restricted solely to DART. DART’s partners on the front-line are community policing officers (CPOs). These 49 officers are stationed in a special precinct located in the poorest area of the city. Patrol officers

working out of downtown headquarters are dispatched to calls throughout the city, whereas CPOs respond solely to calls originating in their precinct. As a result of this decentralization, it is hoped that CPOs will have a greater opportunity to practice the philosophical tenet of co-production by forming bonds with community members and organizations. These officers have other community policing duties as well, such as arranging and attending community meetings, speaking at schools, and manning mini-stations. Supervisors in this precinct were instrumental in creating a cultural context supportive of community policing. For example, the precinct lieutenant researched and wrote the grant that funded DART, evidencing a high commitment to community policing. The support of middle management is considered to be critical to the success of community policing because of the instrumental role these individuals play in creating a climate that is receptive to change (Alpert and Dunham, 1989; Bayley, 1994; Geller and Swanger, 1995; Goldstein, 1990; Skogan and Hartnett, 1997; Wycoff and Skogan, 1994).

CPOs are a special assignment in the MPD; qualified candidates are recruited from the existing pool of employees. Upon assignment to the position of CPO, an individual receives training on the philosophy of community policing, as well as the specific tactics and strategies utilized by the department toward this end. CPOs also receive regular, in-service training dedicated to the principles of problem solving. Compared to regular patrol officers, therefore, CPOs might respond to domestic violence victims in a different way. For example, CPOs have a greater likelihood of dealing with citizens whom they know, in contrast to patrol officers who respond only after being dispatched over the radio. Miller (1999) found that as a result of “being recognized in the neighborhood as the residents’ “personal representative or ambassador” (p. 187), many CPOs believed they were more successful at handling domestic disputes because the citizens knew and trusted them.

Progression of domestic violence cases through the MPD

To provide an understanding of how domestic violence cases progress through the MPD, we provide the following background. Virtually all cases of domestic violence are brought to the attention of the police by a call into a centralized dispatch center. Depending

on the location of the incident, the call is assigned to an officer operating out of the downtown headquarters (a 911-responder), or a CPO working in the community policing precinct. In this study, 12 percent of cases were handled by CPOs; the remaining 88 percent were handled by officers working under a traditional model of policing.

After this initial police response, all domestic violence cases are referred to detectives for follow-up, regardless of whether arrests were made at the scene. All detectives are located in downtown headquarters, and work out of the Criminal Investigations Bureau (CIB). The captain of the CIB begins by assigning as many cases as possible to members of DART. When the caseload exceeds what DART can handle, the remaining cases are assigned to other detectives working in the CIB. In our study, 72 percent of domestic violence cases were handled by DART detectives.

Statement of the problem

Much research has focused on the police response to domestic violence (Belknap, 1995; Berk and Loseke, 1980; Black, 1971; Buzawa and Austin, 1993; Buzawa and Buzawa, 1993; Davis, 1983; Eigenberg *et al.*, 1996; Feder, 1996; Ferraro, 1989; Robinson and Chandek, 2000a; Sherman, 1992; Smith, 1987; Worden and Pollitz, 1984). The potential for performance to vary among different types of police officers responding to this crime, however, remains an under-researched issue. Although there has been widespread adoption of community policing by police departments across the country, limited research addresses whether units with a specific community policing philosophy perform differently (let alone better) than traditional units. Unfortunately, the available evidence suggests a limited transference of philosophy to practice (see Mastrofski *et al.*, 1995).

For domestic violence calls, however, research suggests that a community policing philosophy might have a positive impact on police practice. For example, in the UK, special community-policing style domestic violence units have had success because victims were able to explain their individual needs and officers were given the discretion necessary to address the unique aspects of each case (Sheptycki, 1991). In the USA, Davis and Taylor (1997) found that specialized units increased victims' willingness to report violence,

and suggest that this may be attributed to improved confidence in police operating with a community policing philosophy. Regardless of whether the effectiveness of special domestic violence units can be empirically demonstrated, they receive substantial community support. Martin (1997), for example, found that most domestic violence victims rated the police response in a community policing department positively, and the most important predictor of victim satisfaction was the level of police assistance offered. Moreover, being part of a specialized unit can improve officer morale and satisfaction (Jolin and Moose, 1997).

We have only scratched the surface in terms of understanding the impact of community policing on domestic violence, a crime that can be characterized as both widespread and intractable in many communities. Furthermore, conclusions regarding if and how this policing philosophy influences the response to domestic violence victims have yet to be established. Reflecting DART's goal of increasing the proportion of cases ending in arrest, our outcome of interest is victim participation. Our global hypothesis is that officers and detectives working in community policing units will be more successful in encouraging victims to participate with the criminal justice response to their cases. We empirically test this hypothesis by comparing traditional versus community policing officers at two levels – responding officers and detectives – in order to provide some preliminary findings about an area little researched.

Methodology

Setting

The city served by the Midwestern Police Department (MPD) has a population of approximately 140,000 residents who are primarily blue-collar unionized industrial laborers (US Bureau of the Census, 1990). The population of the city is evenly divided between whites and racial minorities, the majority of whom are black. Almost half of the city's residents are less than 24 years old. The city has been consistently ranked in the top 20 cities nationwide in overall Part I crimes per capita for several years (US Department of Justice, 1995). Domestic violence is also a serious problem for the city, with the police department reporting a 20 percent increase from 1993 to 1995.

Data for this research were collected from September 8, 1997, through January 31, 1998. Three sources of data were analyzed in this study. First, responding officers are required, by order of the Chief, to fill out a Domestic Violence Case Summary (DVCS) at the scene of every domestic violence call. The DVCS provided data on situational features of the incident, such as the use of weapons, the presence of injury, or whether an arrest was made. This form also provided data on the demographic characteristics (race, sex, and age) of the victim and suspect. Second, police records maintained on domestic violence calls provided information regarding the domestic violence history of the victim and case outcomes. Finally, responding officer and detective characteristics (race, sex, assignment) were obtained with the cooperation of a police official who maintained confidentiality.

Sample

During the five-month data collection period, a total of 1,313 domestic violence complaints were reported to the MPD. Disputes were classified as domestic when the victim and suspect were currently or formerly married, living together, had a child in common, or were currently or formerly dating. Only those cases where the responding officer filled out a tracking form[2], which served to link our data sources, could be included in this study, resulting in a sample of 471 domestic violence incidents. Although the Chief mandated filling out the tracking form as part of standard procedure when responding to domestic violence calls, officers did so in only 36 percent of the cases[3].

A series of one-sample *t*-tests was performed to compare the sample ($n = 471$) to the study population ($N = 1,313$) along several important dimensions. The arrest rates for the sample and population were not significantly different. Most of the demographic characteristics of victims and suspects, however, did differ significantly from the population. These differences should be considered when interpreting the results of this study; however, it should be noted that the same race/sex categories of victims and suspects (black female victims; black male suspects) constituted majorities in both the sample and study population.

Measures

Coding for the variables included in this study can be found in Table I. Our dependent variable, victim participation, was created by examining the progress codes ultimately assigned to the case by the detective[4]. These codes provide an indication of what eventually happened with the case, and the victim's role in this outcome. The progress codes were recoded to create a dependent variable with (initially) three categories: victim participation[5], victim non-participation[6], and other[7]. Cases were classified as "victim participation" when it was clear that victims participated (e.g. by signing warrants) or, through no fault of their own, the investigation was suspended (e.g. for lack of evidence). Cases were classified as "victim non-participation" when victims chose not to participate (e.g. by refusing to sign warrants or failing to provide police with information). Cases were classified as "other" when it was inappropriate to classify them into either of the victim participation categories (e.g. for record only or still under investigation). Cases falling into this third category were later dropped from analyses without affecting the results.

The independent variables were arranged into three categories:

1. (1) disputant characteristics;
2. (2) police characteristics; and
3. (3) situational characteristics.

Disputant characteristics included the race, sex, and age of both victims and offenders. The police characteristics included the race, sex, and assignment of both responding officers (CP versus traditional) and detectives (DART versus other). Situational characteristics included whether children were present at the scene, a weapon was used, the victim sustained injuries, the victim had prior domestic violence complaints on record with the MPD since 1992 (the year the MPD began collecting this information), the victim had an existing PPO, and an arrest was made at the scene. All variables were coded as dummies (1 = yes, 0 = no) unless otherwise noted.

[\[Table I\]](#)

Statistical procedures

A correlation matrix depicting the relationship between the independent variables is presented in the Appendix ([Table AI](#)).

Because some of the independent variables were significantly correlated, the variables were tested to determine whether multicollinearity was a statistically significant problem that could bias our results. A condition number was derived by dividing the largest characteristic root from the correlation matrix by the smallest, then taking the square root. According to Greene (1993), a condition number less than 20 indicates that the variables are not multicollinear. The condition number for this matrix (4.22) shows that we have not violated the assumption that our independent variables are linearly independent; concerns regarding multicollinearity are unwarranted.

Bivariate analyses were performed to determine the relationship among the independent variables (disputant characteristics, police characteristics, situational characteristics) and the dependent variable (victim participation). We also analyzed a multivariate model predicting victim participation in order to assess the relative influence of the independent variables while controlling for the effects of other variables. The appropriate regression analysis for models with binary dependent variables, such as victim participation (yes/no), is Binomial Logit (Long, 1997). Binomial Logit provides a better fit to the data than do other regression techniques typically used with dichotomous dependent variables, such as Ordinary Least Squares or Logistic regression.

Results

Table I presents descriptive statistics about the variables included in our model predicting victim participation. Descriptive information shows that the majority of victims (75 percent) chose not to participate in their cases. The first category of independent variables included victim and suspect demographic characteristics (sex, race, age). Approximately 90 percent of all victims in the sample were female, the majority (66 percent) were black, and over half (55 percent) were less than 30 years of age. Suspects were overwhelmingly male (89 percent), black (73 percent), and half were less than 30 years of age.

The second category of independent variables included police characteristics (sex, race, assignment) for both responding officers and detectives. The majority of domestic violence incidents in this study were responded to by officers who were male (82 percent) and white (54 percent). Only a small percentage (12

percent) of cases were responded to by officers assigned to the community policing precinct. Most of the cases in this study were assigned to detectives who were male (51 percent), black (60 percent), and members of DART (72 percent).

The third category of independent variables comprised situational characteristics. Children were present at the scene in about half (48 percent) of the cases. Injuries were sustained by the victim a majority of the time (66 percent), although a weapon was used in only a small portion (17 percent) of cases. Almost half (43 percent) of the victims had at least one prior domestic violence complaint on file with the MPD. Very few victims (5 percent) had a PPO against the suspect. An arrest was made at the scene in about one-third (30 percent) of the cases.

[Table II]

Both bivariate and multivariate findings are presented in Table II. Of the disputant variables analyzed (sex, race, age), only the race of the suspect was significantly related to whether the victim participated in his or her case; specifically, when the suspect was black, victims were significantly less likely to participate. Approximately 24 percent of victims participated in their cases when the suspect was black, while 38 percent of victims participated when the suspect was of another race. None of the disputant characteristics significantly predicted victim participation in the Logit model.

Only one of the police variables examined (sex, race, and assignment for both responding officers and detectives) was significantly related to victim participation. In both the bivariate and regression analyses, the sex of the detective significantly influenced victim participation rates. Approximately one-third of the victims in this study participated when the detective conducting the follow-up investigation was male, compared to about one-fifth when the detective was female. The demographic characteristics of responding officers were unrelated to victim participation in both the bivariate and multivariate analyses. Finally, neither DART nor CPOs had any significant effect on whether victims participated.

Of the situational variables examined, most were significantly related to our dependent variable in the bivariate analyses, and every relationship was positive (i.e. they all increased rather than decreased the likelihood of victim participation). When

a weapon was used in the domestic assault, victim participation increased to a significant extent; one in three victims participated when a weapon was used compared to one in five when a weapon was not used. Similarly, participation significantly increased when the victim sustained injuries as a result of the domestic assault and when victims had previously experienced domestic violence. Victim participation also increased when the victim had an existing PPO against the suspect; the proportion of victims who participated increased from 20 percent to 50 percent. Of the bivariate findings, the arrest variable had the strongest relationship to victim participation; when an arrest was made at the scene almost twice as many victims participated (38 percent versus 19 percent).

In the multivariate model, the variable that most strongly predicted victim participation was whether children were present. Although having children present was not significantly related to victim participation in the bivariate analyses, it did emerge as the strongest predictor of victim participation when all variables were analyzed together. When children were present at the scene of a domestic call, the odds of victim participation increased to a statistically significant extent. To summarize, the presence of children, the victim being injured, the use of weapons, the victim having prior domestic violence complaints and an existing PPO, and police making an arrest at the scene were situational features that increased the likelihood of victims participating, but only the presence of children was a significant predictor in the multivariate analysis.

Discussion

Community policing and victim participation

The current study provides some preliminary research regarding a little understood phenomenon – the decision of domestic violence victims to participate in the criminal justice response to their cases. Our data enabled us to compare traditional versus community police at two levels: responding officers and detectives. Contrary to expectations, victim participation was not related to whether officers and detectives were operating under a community policing philosophy[8]. Several factors might account for this finding.

First, the officers and detectives in our study may have been responding to the preferences of victims (see Sheptycki, 1991). Although we would expect that police adopting a more proactive,

problem-oriented approach would encourage victims to participate in order to stop the cycle of violence, this assumption may be faulty. A community policing mandate encourages officers to be more responsive to the needs of community members (and in this case domestic violence victims); in so doing, police may be more likely to encourage victims to do what is in their best interests, regardless of whether this includes participating in the prosecution of their cases. Critics have warned that the influence of extra-legal variables on police behavior, such as victim preference, may increase under community policing (Bayley, 1991; Manning, 1991; Mastroski, 1991).

Another reason why a significant relationship between DART assignment and victim participation did not emerge is that we could not account for the number and type of contact(s) between detectives and victims. For example, although DART detectives were instructed to make contact with every victim, it is likely that there was variance in the number of contacts made (e.g. some victims had repeat phone calls). Furthermore, there were also differences in the types of contacts between detectives and victims. A face-to-face interaction or a home visit may be far more powerful or influential than receiving a letter or phone call; these differences should be accounted for as it is likely that they would impact on victim participation. Because we were not able to control for the exact number and nature of these interactions, future researchers may want to explore this issue in greater depth.

Additionally, there is the concern that community policing is “a conveniently elastic term which is often loosely used to accommodate virtually any policing activity” (Weatheritt, 1987, p. 7). If community policing is all things to all people, then it is difficult to ascertain just what was different between CPOs and DART detectives versus their traditional counterparts. In fact, there may have been little or no difference between the practices of these officers. Miller (1999), for example, found several similarities between community policing and patrol officers, including:

1. (1) an awareness of “problem people” or “hot spots” within their beats;
2. (2) a reliance on similar informal strategies such as counseling or mediation; and

3. (3) the use of community policing rhetoric to describe their work.

That victim participation was not dependent on whether community policing or traditional officers or detectives were involved in their cases supports the notion that police *practice* was not informed by police *philosophy*.

Finally, it should be noted that DART is part of a community-wide response to domestic violence, representing only one part of a multifaceted response to this problem. This type of response is considered ideal because it “provides a coordinated, holistic approach to ending family violence and to ensuring victim safety by facilitating information sharing and coordination among all of the different agencies that might encounter a particular family” (Ford *et al.*, 1996, p. 259; see also Edleson, 1991). The current research does not purport to be able to evaluate the other components of the response that might be impacting victims’ decisions to participate in their cases. It is possible that a victim’s decision not to participate may be based on frustration or disappointment with another criminal justice or social service agency, independent of their dealings with the police. Our measurement of victim participation could not account for these issues, nor could it address other ways that victims might have participated that might be revealed with victim interviews or longitudinal data. Consequently, it seems unfair to judge the efficacy of special community policing efforts, such as DART, based solely on victim participation rates.

Other factors influencing victim participation

Although our primary hypothesis that a community policing orientation would increase victim participation was not supported, the current study does provide some insight into the factors that do influence victim participation. For instance, our multivariate findings revealed that whether children witnessed the domestic assault was more important than any other factor victims took into consideration when deciding whether to participate. This may be attributed to victims’ desires to protect their children from witnessing or experiencing future violence at home (see Dobash and Dobash, 1979). Even though victims often fear repercussions from their batterers if they participate in the prosecution of their cases

(Martin, 1997; Worden, 1989), victims in our study appeared to summon the courage necessary to participate when the safety of their children was also at stake. Another explanation is that police or outside agencies such as child welfare authorities might use the presence of children to leverage cooperation from women who might otherwise be reluctant to participate.

Our findings indicated that situational variables exerted the greatest influence on victim participation. In general, whether to participate was a choice victims made in accord with the nature of the domestic incident that they experienced rather than the nature of the police involved in their cases. Bivariate analyses indicated that victims with personal protection orders (PPOs) or prior experience with domestic violence were more likely to participate. These findings are not surprising; taking the time and effort to obtain a PPO is an indication that the violence is serious and the victims are trying to protect themselves and their children from future domestic violence. Likewise, victims who have suffered previous acts of domestic violence may be caught in a cycle of escalating violence; therefore, they may be more desperate, more fearful, and more willing to turn to outside agencies such as the police for assistance. Victims who have PPOs and prior domestic violence complaints have received a higher level of outside intervention than victims who do not; consequently, they may be more familiar with and better able to navigate the system, leading to higher levels of participation.

Whether an arrest was made at the scene was another situational factor that was significantly related to victim participation in the bivariate analyses. This makes sense, as an arrest would serve to begin the “process” of victim participation. Victims who choose to participate may be taking their cue from responding officers that domestic violence is criminal behavior that should be punished. Or, they may be pressured into “doing something” by officers following their department’s preferred arrest policy. Consequently, these data lend support to the use of preferred arrest policies in domestic violence cases; to increase victim participation, it is necessary to increase the arrest rate. The current study also supports other research findings that outside institutions may play an important role in empowering women to end relationships with their batterers (Chandek and Robinson, 2000; Dobash *et al.*, 1985; Pagelow, 1981; Pahl, 1985; Roy, 1977).

Although situational variables had the strongest impact on victim participation, two significant demographic findings (suspect black and male detective) are worth discussing. Bivariate analyses indicated that victim participation significantly decreased when the suspect was black. Since 99 percent of black victims were assaulted by suspects of the same race [$\chi^2(1) = 268.65, p < 0.001$], this is an especially salient finding. Minority battered women may be vulnerable “to abuse not only from their partners, but from insensitive, ineffective institutions as well” (Richie and Kanuha, 1997, p. 121). For example, research shows that they may have little faith in the efficacy of the criminal justice system (e.g. Mann, 1993). They may also be wary of a racist police response against them or their partners (Mama, 1989), or one that may be differential in terms of quality, if not quantity (Robinson and Chandek, 2000b). In addition, minority battered women may have less access to resources which may help them remain free from abuse, such as shelters for battered women (Coley and Beckett, 1988; Donnelly *et al.*, 1999), or health-care agencies (Dobash *et al.*, 1985; Sullivan *et al.*, 1992). Finally, victims may be fearful of participating if they believe that additional harm may result (Worden, 1989). For these reasons, minority domestic violence victims may be especially reluctant to participate with the criminal justice response to their cases.

Only one of the police characteristics we examined significantly influenced victim participation; specifically, male detectives had higher rates of victim participation than did female detectives. This finding goes against previous research and conventional wisdom supporting the idea that domestic violence is a women's issue and subsequently one best handled by female officers. For example, Kennedy and Homant (1983) found that victims of domestic violence viewed the police more favorably when female rather than male officers responded to the scene, perhaps because male police officers “identify more readily with the husband than with the female victim” (Martin, 1976, p. 96). Instead, our findings regarding male detectives suggest two alternative, albeit not mutually exclusive, explanations. First, male detectives may have engendered greater victim participation because of their perceived authority or capacity to protect. As Martin (1980) suggests, “both of his statuses [male and police officer] imply superordination and lend him greater control” (p.

168). Another view is that male detectives may have appropriated, similar to the community policing movement itself, more “feminine” skills that were historically rejected by traditional policing (e.g. communication, caring, connection, empathy, etc.) (see Miller, 1999). Owing to either of these reasons or a combination thereof, male detectives were more successful at getting victims to cooperate than were female detectives. Research should further explore the relationship between the sex of police (both officer and detective) and victim satisfaction and participation in order to understand why this demographic characteristic might make a difference.

Conclusion

Victim participation must be understood from the point of view of the victim. One major assumption of the present research is that victim participation is a good outcome; an outcome that benefits the victim and therefore one the police should try to increase. This may not necessarily be the case. Although this study provided important information regarding a relatively unknown phenomenon, the decision-making processes of victims and the goals they desire are not necessarily equivalent to those of the police. A drawback of the present research is that it is based solely on data representing one point of view – the police perspective. A qualitative approach may be necessary to yield greater insight into the decisions of domestic violence victims. Talking with victims of domestic violence may be the best way for the police and other social service agencies to learn what factors are important in their decisions to participate, and ultimately learn how to best assist them. In short, future researchers should attempt to solicit information about the complex decision to participate from those who are actually making it – the victims. Their insights may be seen as valuable tools with which to improve the police response to domestic violence (Bowman, 1992; Robinson, 1996). Victims have far more at stake than increasing a department’s participation rates, and currently little is done to help or protect them, should they choose to participate.

Notes

1. Midwestern Police Department is a pseudonym. The police department is medium-sized, with 324 full-time sworn officers and approximately 55 civilians on the payroll.

2. This tracking form was a questionnaire that officers filled out at the scene about the victim. Data from these forms are analyzed elsewhere (Robinson and Chandek, 2000a; 2000b).
3. Information about the officers who chose to participate with this research was available for 336 cases. Analyses revealed that those officers had a demographic breakdown similar to that of the department with respect to race, sex, and tenure.
4. The captain in charge of the Criminal Investigations Bureau provided advice for the collapsing of progress codes into a victim participation variable.
5. Progress codes included in the “victim participation” category included: complainant contacted, no additional information available, investigation to continue; subject arrested, felony warrant issued; subject arrested, misdemeanor warrant issued; subject arrested, PFI'd, insufficient evidence to obtain warrant; misdemeanor warrant issued, on file with us; complainant and witness gave conflicting stories, unable to obtain warrant at this time; there is insufficient evidence to pursue a warrant; insufficient evidence to conduct investigation, inactive status; complainant contacted, for record only, wanted subject contacted and advised.
6. Progress codes included in the “victim non-participation” category included: several attempts have been made to contact victim, no response, unable to proceed with investigation; complainant contacted, wishes to drop complaint, for record only; complainant dropped charges; complainant contacted, failed to keep appointments with investigator or cooperate with investigation, complaint exceptionally cleared due to lack of interest by complainant; complaint investigated; misdemeanor warrant obtained, victim failed to sign warrant; complainant has failed to cooperate in the investigation and no evidence is available to indicate that a crime was committed; complainant contacted, does not wish to pursue complaint at this time, for record only.
7. Progress codes included in the other category included: not a criminal matter, for record only, and case still under investigation.
8. Although a statistically significant relationship was not found to exist between detectives with a community-oriented philosophy and victim participation rates, we also analyzed whether DART significantly influenced clearance rates. Clearance rates are an important indicator of whether there was a “successful” outcome to the case in criminal justice terms (i.e. arrest, prosecution, etc.). Findings demonstrated that there were significant differences between DART detectives compared to other detectives; for example, they did clear a significantly higher proportion of cases (91 percent) compared to non-DART detectives (84 percent) [$\chi^2 (1) = 11.73, p < 0.01$]. Stated another way, non-DART detectives had more case outcomes that were inactive or unfounded (16 percent) compared to DART detectives (9percent). Because non-DART detectives were more likely to be assigned felony domestic violence incidents compared to DART detectives [$\chi^2 (1) = 8.65, p < 0.01$], it was also important to determine whether this was affecting the outcomes of cases. Results

indicated that the two types of detectives only differed significantly in their outcomes for misdemeanor domestic violence incidents [$\chi^2 (1) = 14.41, p < 0.01$]; DART detectives cleared significantly more misdemeanor domestic violence incidents (90 percent) compared to non-DART detectives (84 percent). These findings suggest that the case outcomes of DART and non-DART detectives do differ from each other and point to a need for further research to address this issue.

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Table I. Variables and descriptive statistics

Variable	Value	n	%
<i>Dependent variable</i>			
Victim participation	0 = No	319	75
	1 = Yes	107	25
<i>Disputant characteristics</i>			
Victim black	0 = No	159	34
	1 = Yes	305	66
Victim female	0 = No	48	10
	1 = Yes	422	90
Victim age	1 = < 30 yrs	260	55
	2 = 30-49 yrs	193	41
	3 = 50+ yrs	17	4
Suspect black	0 = No	108	27
	1 = Yes	286	73
Suspect male	0 = No	44	11
	1 = Yes	355	89
Suspect age	1 = < 30 yrs	197	50
	2 = 30-49 yrs	179	46
	3 = 50+ yrs	17	4
<i>Police characteristics</i>			
Officer black	0 = No	183	55
	1 = Yes	153	46
Officer male	0 = No	60	18
	1 = Yes	280	82
CP assignment	0 = No	297	88
	1 = Yes	39	12
Detective black	0 = No	185	40
	1 = Yes	281	60
Detective male	0 = No	229	49
	1 = Yes	237	51
DART assignment	0 = No	133	28
	1 = Yes	335	72
<i>Situational characteristics</i>			
Children present	0 = No	173	52
	1 = Yes	160	48
Weapon used	0 = No	266	83
	1 = Yes	53	17
Victim injured	0 = No	118	34
	1 = Yes	226	66
Victim has prior DV complaints	0 = No	269	57
	1 = Yes	201	43
Personal protection order	0 = No	297	95
	1 = Yes	17	5
Arrest made at scene	0 = No	328	70
	1 = Yes	141	30

Note: Valid percentages are reported

Table II. Factors influencing victim participation

Variable	Chi-square			Binomial Logit	
	χ^2	df	gamma	b1	S.E.
<i>Disputant characteristics</i>					
Victim black	0.65	1	-0.09	0.12	0.98
Victim female	0.10	1	0.06	-0.77	1.63
Victim age	1.39	2	-0.02	0.51	0.49
Suspect black	7.10**	1	-0.32	-1.52	0.99
Suspect male	0.24	1	0.10	1.50	1.59
Suspect age	0.16	2	0.03	-0.22	0.51
<i>Police characteristics</i>					
Officer black	1.04	1	-0.14	-0.48	0.45
Officer male	0.02	1	0.03	-0.64	0.52
CP assignment	1.22	1	-0.25	-1.58	0.82
Detective black	3.02	1	0.20	0.18	0.60
Detective male	5.27*	1	0.25	1.17*	0.53
DART assignment	0.02	1	0.02	0.48	0.83
<i>Situational characteristics</i>					
Children present	2.14	1	0.20	1.63***	0.47
Weapon used	3.50*	1	0.31	1.05	0.55
Victim injured	3.22*	1	0.26	0.85	0.44
Victim has prior DV complaints	4.76*	1	0.24	0.51	0.43
Personal protection order	8.33**	1	0.61	1.34	0.72
Arrest made at scene	17.65***	1	0.45	0.54	0.46
Constant	-3.98				
Log-likelihood (l)	-82.67				
Chi-square (χ^2)	56.44				
Model significance	$p < 0.00001$				

Notes: N = 471; *($p < 0.05$); **($p < 0.01$); ***($p < 0.001$). One-tailed test of significance used for chi-square analyses

Table AI. Correlation matrix of independent variables

Appendix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1 Vict. black	1.00																	
2 Vict. female	-0.02	1.00																
3 Vict. age	-0.06	-0.07	1.00															
4 Susp. black	0.83**	0.01	-0.08	1.00														
5 Susp. male	0.01	0.75**	-0.14**	0.05	1.00													
6 Susp. age	-0.03	-0.13**	0.64**	-0.03	-0.07	1.00												
7 Ofc. black	0.16**	-0.09	-0.02	0.09	-0.10	0.03	1.00											
8 Ofc. male	-0.08	-0.04	0.09	-0.02	-0.02	0.11	-0.12*	1.00										
9 Ofc. CP	-0.01	-0.04	0.02	-0.01	0.03	0.01	-0.05	-0.03	1.00									
10 Det. black	-0.05	0.12**	-0.01	-0.07	0.10	-0.11*	0.08	-0.02	0.01	1.00								
11 Det. male	0.04	-0.00	-0.04	0.02	0.02	-0.01	-0.10	0.02	-0.05	-0.01	1.00							
12 Det. DART	-0.05	0.10*	0.07	-0.08	0.08	0.01	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.57**	-0.45**	1.00						
13 Children	0.19**	0.11*	-0.07	0.15**	0.08	-0.12	0.04	-0.06	-0.02	0.07	-0.01	0.03	1.00					
14 Weapon	0.04	-0.26**	0.05	0.09	-0.14*	0.09	-0.05	0.05	0.03	-0.04	0.02	0.03	-0.07	1.00				
15 Injuries	0.04	-0.05	0.09	-0.02	-0.05	0.08	0.01	0.01	0.09	0.07	-0.03	0.05	-0.05	-0.04	1.00			
16 Prior DV	0.11*	0.14**	0.00	0.09	0.10	0.01	-0.05	0.08	-0.04	0.03	-0.04	0.06	0.08	-0.04	0.02	1.00		
17 PPO	0.01	0.08	-0.08	0.00	0.04	-0.00	0.04	0.00	-0.04	-0.00	-0.10	0.04	0.09	0.01	-0.03	0.15**	1.00	
18 Arrest	-0.09	-0.06	0.19**	-0.13*	-0.07	0.13**	-0.13*	0.05	-0.05	-0.06	0.05	0.03	-0.06	0.06	-0.10	-0.02	-0.03	1.00

Notes: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$; the condition number for this matrix is 4.22