



Critical Incident Stress Management Foundation Australia Newsletter

Editor: Sonia Zyntek

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) holds a Congress every two years. It gives a snapshot of changes in the field. At the 2007 Congress I saw significant developments in the CISM model. The robustness of the model is apparent, with clearer guidelines in applying CISM to different workplace contexts.

Crisis Management Briefings (CMB's) are being utilised more frequently, in a greater diversity of situations and with much success. CMB's are information sessions utilised under conditions where it is important to address large numbers of people soon after a significant event. Developments in the model are a healthy sign and reflect understanding that comes from both research and experience.

I was also impressed with a course that has been developed by Professor Jeffrey Mitchell. It is called Strategic Response to Crisis. It is the thinking and planning component of all that we do in providing support services to others. The course, through a series of brief exercises, sharpens the skills of participants in planning responses: beginning with smaller events through to large scale incidents. It is both the frustration and challenge of working in the field of crisis intervention that our responses to others cannot be prescribed and known in advance, because individual reactions to incidents vary. This makes it essential that we have a framework and principles through which it is possible to assess each situation on its own merit and ensure that the appropriate support (if any) is given to the right people at the right time. This course is being offered by Professor Mitchell in Sydney this coming



August (see our web-site for more details). At that time a trainer program in the course will also be run so that we can continue to schedule this course in the future.

Congratulations to Bill Clifford who was awarded the Australian Fire Service medal. This very well deserved honour recognises the years of tireless work that Bill has put in to assist his fellow workers and to develop staff support programs in emergency services. We are very proud of you Bill.

You will see that there have been changes to the staff and Management Committee of CISMFA. These include Christine Ellingworth taking on the role of Executive Officer (following my resignation from this position). Christine has grasped this role quickly and is doing an excellent job. I shall continue on in the role of President.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SOMEONE YOU LOVE DOESN'T COME HOME ONE DAY? - *DEALING WITH GRIEF AND LOSS AFTER SUDDEN DEATH*

"How do we all make sense of the mindless shooting of a decent bloke who helps a woman in trouble in Melbourne's CBD? Or the horror train crash near Kerang in northern Victoria?"

"Stages of grief that were once in vogue have been found to be inadequate. Most people need to be supported, listened to, and shown acts of kindness over a long period of time."

At some level, we all feel the sickening thud of a sudden fatal accident or sickness and horror for those left behind. How do we all make sense of the mindless shooting of a decent bloke who helps a woman in trouble in Melbourne's CBD? Or the horror train crash near Kerang in northern Victoria?

Part of the horror is that there is no fix at all – someone who is loved is not coming back. We imagine how devastated we would feel in the same situation. If we know the victim's family, we might wonder what we can possibly say when words sound shallow and there is no going back? How do we support those grieving and in trauma?

Of course the answers to these questions are always excruciatingly difficult, and made more so because death and horror are taboo subjects. However, a starting point is to understand grief and trauma and what happens to those close to a victim and those not so close but affected over time.

Loss is powerful and stems from our personal bonds of loving, bonds to places and things. It makes sense that the more powerful the bond, the greater the losses, so we can understand how people close to a victim are grief stricken and traumatized. But what of those who witness a death? Sudden violence leaves people overwhelmed and anxious because it undermines their sense of safety and order in the world. Sudden violent death is even more shocking and more traumatic so we can't expect bystanders not to be affected.

Initially anyone even hearing of the tragedy is likely to feel shocked and numb. Those who witness the violence or those close to the victim may experience anxiety, sleeplessness, go over and over the event in their minds, be suddenly irritable and super vigilant to another possible future traumatic event.

Even though grief after loss is largely hidden by the individuals trying to move on

after an acceptable time, it often leaves a more indelible mark than if they were physically attacked.

People can never be replaced and the strong bond a close relationship brings means there will always be a sense of loss just under the surface. None of us should be surprised or unsympathetic if even though the intensity of the loss abates over time, the strong bond still stays. The claim that people should have closure is unrealistic.

Studies show that for every death up to two hundred people may be affected. The Melbourne shootings and rail deaths are different because they are so public - a national tragedy will awaken many losses in ordinary people, losses we all carry. Sudden death can stress some spouses and life partners so much they have died within a year of the accident. We all understand grief can be tumultuous, especially when the natural order of life and death is upset, such as when a child dies or the death is completely unexpected. Most people after close personal loss struggle on trying to put one foot in front of another daily and experience the full range of painful emotions. The ground has shifted and for many it will never return to where it was.

Grief endures. If only the pain could be fixed. Stages of grief that were once in vogue have been found to be inadequate. Most people need to be supported, listened to, and shown acts of kindness over a long period of time. Some people need professional help if it seems too hard to continue day to day. This also applies to those who may have witnessed the incident or people who have had a previous trauma and news of a new trauma makes them relive their own.

People who grieve walk a path of deep loneliness. Others don't want to know, or not for too long. Another's loss reminds us of our own fragility, physically and emotionally and we don't like to be reminded. Grieving people know that others want them to get a grip. "Feeling better now?"

What happens when someone you love doesn't come home one

is the general question. This can leave the grieving person knowing they can't talk about it or if they do, no-one will get it. The best thing anyone can do for someone who is grieving is really listen, allow people to give voice to their feelings.

Also spare a thought for those whose jobs find them in the front line – emergency workers, hospital staff, journalists – who are affected, sometimes daily, and often don't count the cost for themselves but are

involved in the trauma.

There is also the other side of the coin to consider. The impact of this type of accident can also be a force for good. People are often refocused, communities gather together to offer support. The enduring mobilizing force of humanity is the importance of kindness, of listening, giving and empathy for others which surfaces in sometimes the worst times.



STAFF AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE CHANGES

New Executive Officer Appointed

The Management Committee is delighted to announce that Christine Ellingworth is the New Executive Officer of CISMFA. Christine is a psychologist who has 25 years experience in the health and welfare fields. She co-ordinates Critical Incident Response Teams working with hospitals, corporations, government and industry in Victoria. She is a CISMFA trainer in CISM: Group Crisis Interventions and Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Support. Until Christine's appointment the role of Executive Officer was undertaken by Robyn Robinson. The Committee has sought, for some time, to staff the roles of President and Executive Officer with different people and it is pleasing that this goal has now been achieved.

Changes to the Management Committee and Staff

We are extremely pleased to welcome **Monica Kleinman** onto the Management Committee. Monica is the senior psychologist and a director of "Psychological Resources" in Sydney. She is Clinical Director of the NSW SES Critical Incident Stress Management Program. She is also a Captain with the Australian Army Reserve Psychology Corp. Monica has authored and manages the new training program in Accidental Counselling for Australian Defence Force personnel. She also co-

authored *Responding to Critical Incidents in Schools*.

We are sad to lose three committee members. **Bill Clifford** is an inaugural Committee member of CISMFA and was part of the team that created this organisation. Some of you will know him as the "bell-ringer" at our conferences. Bill has retired from his work as a fire fighter (NSW Fire Brigade) to enjoy a well-earned rest. We will miss him. **Peter Kueffer** has resigned from the Committee and the position of Treasurer after 3 years of service. Peter took on this role with enthusiasm. He has been a staunch supporter of the CISM model and an asset to CISMFA. Thank you Peter. **Jitka Jilich**, has been keenly and actively involved in CISMFA for many years, mainly on the Conference Committee. After a short term on the Management Committee she has resigned due to family reasons. We thank her for her hard work and commitment.

Finally, **Debbie Rogers** left CISMFA earlier this year. Debbie has given loyal and unstinting service to CISMFA. Many of you will know Debbie from the invaluable assistance she gave to people when they enrolled in courses and conferences or enquired about membership. She handled much of the administration of CISMFA and was always friendly and efficient. She will be missed by many and we wish her well.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The administrative office of CISMFA has moved to Caroline Springs, Victoria. Please note that the phone, fax, postal address and e-mail address remain the same.

PROACTIVE PEER SUPPORT *

"Peer support is not a program in which members who have completed the training sit and wait until a colleague contacts them about some type of stress problem."

The one-day peer support review and update program started like most others, with participants introducing themselves. They had come from a range of organisations, including fire and rescue, ambulance, SES, bush fire service and marine rescue. As the introductions went around the room, it was noticeable that around a third of those attending seemed to have little in the way of peer support activity during the previous year. The comments appeared to have a striking similarity.

"I haven't used a lot of peer support in the past year."

"I haven't been called upon to act as a peer supporter yet."

"Nobody's contacted me about peer support."

At that point, it occurred to me that some of our peer supporters were waiting to be called upon to give support and may have been having some confusion about their peer support role.

Peer support is not a program in which members who have completed the training sit and wait until a colleague contacts them about some type of stress problem. Like any normal interaction between work-mates, if someone has dealt with a stressful incident, or been through a time of pressure and challenge, it's natural to enquire as to how the other person is going and offer support. This is called, "Proactive Support".

A key to proactive peer support is how the approach is made. One common mistake is

to simply ask a colleague how he or she is going. In our society, people have become accustomed to giving the socially acceptable response of "Fine thanks" or "I'm OK", when that may not be the case.

An alternative for peer supporters is to supportively offer an opinion which their colleague can consider. For example, one approach could be to say, "I heard about the incident yesterday. It sounds like it was a difficult time." I call this approach, making a statement which deserves an answer. Your colleague is likely to make a response to your statement which then allows you to engage in discussion and offer support.

This approach validates reactions the colleague may be experiencing and invites them to discuss issues further if they want to. If they have handled the incident well, or don't want to discuss the situation with you, this approach also allows them the option of not engaging in further conversation.

Peer support is not just about being available to support your colleagues, it also involves initiating support, while at the same time respecting a colleague's privacy and accepting the response you get.

Michael Tunnecliffe is a Clinical Psychologist and specialist in peer support and critical incident response training. His website is: <http://www.emergencysupport.com.au>

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CISMFA
Annual General Meeting
Saturday 3rd November, 2007
4.30 pm

Downtowner on Lydon
66 Lygon Street
Carlton Vic 3053

AGENDA

1. Welcome, apologies
2. Minutes of last AGM
3. President's report
4. Treasurer's report and financial accounts
5. Appointment of an auditor

RSVP by 7/11/07 to Christine Ellingworth: Phone: 03 9663 7999 or e-mail: cismfa@bigpond.com

THE EFFICACY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING OF POLICE OFFICERS FOR SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT PURPOSES—A COMPARATIVE REVIEW

(Does Serving as a Police Officer Impact on Personality and Performance Functioning? A Follow-up Study)

Stacey Cotton

Being dedicated to its *serve and protect* philosophy, law enforcement is one of the most unifying features of contemporary society. Without effective law enforcement, crime, danger and civil unrest would become rife. Thus, the police force is a central and necessary organisation.

In Australia, the police are among the most visible representation of the state and occupy a unique powerful position in society. They hold considerable power, ideally exercising tolerance, fairness and impartiality in their position. The nature of police work is complex, characterized by high levels of danger, unpredictability, pressure, confrontation and general occupational stress. As a result of the nature of police work it is imperative that the right type of person is selected for the job. Given this, policing is one of the many industries where pre-employment screening is used as part of the selection process.

As part of this pre-employment screening process, applicants for policing positions are required to successfully complete a number of mandatory tests. This process regularly involves written examinations, physical and medical examinations as well as psychological examinations. The ultimate goal of the selection process is to guard against and screen out all unsuitable candidates (Bannish & Ruiz, 2003; Blau, 1994).

Various forms of psychological tests have been used as part of the recruitment process in an effort to improve the selection of police officers (Spielberger, Spaulding, Jolley & Ward, 1979). The use of psychological testing in police officer selection is well-established in the United States (Guller, 1993). In Australia, this practice has been more recent (Lough & Ryan, 2004). The most widely used psychological test is the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-I/II). The major problem associated with using

the MMPI, as is the case with many other primarily clinical tests used in police selection, is that they exclusively assess for psychopathology (abnormalities in personality and mental health). The aim is to screen out (i.e., eliminate candidates on a basis of having a mental disorder or undesirable personality traits) rather than screen in (select on the basis of desirable personality traits or skills) police candidates (Blau, 1994). Other personal factors which are central to any job success such as motivation, self-discipline, work attitudes or socialised adjustment are thus often overlooked (Beutler, Nussbaum & Meredith, 1988).

Attempts to identify profiles of outstanding and typically problematic officers (e.g., neurotic or psychotic individuals) have been met with varying degrees of success (e.g., Bartol, 1982, 1991; Costello, Schoenfeld & Kobos, 1982; Inwald & Shusman, 1984; Roe & Roe, 1982; Saxe & Reiser, 1976; Schoenfeld, Phinney & Kobos, 1980) with instruments such as the MMPI-I, MMPI-II and, to a lesser extent, the California Personality Inventory (CPI) and the Inwald Personality Inventory (IPI). Other tests which have been used for this purpose are the Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI) and the Good Cop/Bad Cop Profile (GCBC), both of which have also been met with varying degrees of success (Kay, 1992; Blau, Super & Brady, 1993).

Such tests are more appropriate as an adjunct test rather than the primary psychological testing instrument (Blau, 1994; Guller, 2003). For superior results in police selection, a test should screen both in and out simultaneously (Hogg & Wilson, 1995; Meier, Farmer & Maxwell, 1988) and contain questions which relate to the type of personal attributes and skills required to undertake successful police work (e.g., motivation, self-discipline, socialised adjustment, work attitudes

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The Efficacy of Psychological Testing of Police Officers for Selection and Recruitment Purposes—A Comparative Review (Cont).

"the majority of tests employed (e.g., MMPI, CPI, PAI) for the purpose of police officer selection and recruitment are either devised for the detection to screen out psychopathology or screen in specific 'normal' personality traits."

"no study to date in the area of police selection has attempted to examine whether work and demographic factors mediate the changes, if any, in officers' psychological profile, after time on the job. Examples of such questions that might be worth asking include whether officers' current rank, years worked in general duties, level of education and marital status impacts on their psychological profile."

together with personality problems).

Despite the widespread use of psychological tests such as the MMPI in police selection, research on the predictive utility of such tests is sparse and studies which have attempted to examine this are limited due to a number of methodological limitations (e.g., Bartol, 1982; Carpenter & Raza, 1987; Costello & Schoenfeld, 1981; Costello et al., 1982; Dralle & Baybrook, 1995; Kleiman & Gordon, 1986; Saze & Reiser, 1976; Schoenfeld et al., 1980). Each of these studies have attempted to examine the predictive validity of the MMPI on police officer performance, yet failed to meet basic methodological requirements such as use of appropriate control group(s), large sample size (minimum of $n=100$) and a minimum of 12 months for follow-up testing. Furthermore, the nature of most studies (e.g., Bartol, 1982; Carpenter & Raza, 1987; Dralle & Baybrook, 1995) is cross-sectional, rather than longitudinal, and thus it is actually the concurrent validity of the MMPI, and not its predictive validity that is being measured. As a result, many authors have cited the need for more appropriate measures that are practical, reliable, valid and effective in the selection of police officers (e.g., Blau, 1994; Guller, 2003; Hibler & Kurke, 1995; Scrivner, 1994).

The recent developments of research and interest in the area of pre-employment screening in police selection have been a necessary and central one. However, these developments carry with them a number of significant limitations. For example, (1) the majority of tests employed (e.g., MMPI, CPI, PAI) for the purpose of police officer selection and recruitment are either devised for the detection to screen out psychopathology or screen in specific 'normal' personality traits. Furthermore, the tests employed have clinical utility in psychology and were specifically designed for the purpose of examining personality facets alone. These tests were not designed

specifically for the purpose of police officer selection, neglecting many factors which are central to success on the job in the police force and thus are limited in their use; (2) The majority of studies have failed to perform follow-up testing of officers after time on the job (e.g., minimum of 12 months), in order to examine the changes if any in officers' psychological profile, (3) no study to date in the area of police selection has attempted to examine whether work and demographic factors mediate the changes, if any, in officers' psychological profile, after time on the job. Examples of such questions that might be worth asking include whether officers' current rank, years worked in general duties, level of education and marital status impacts on their psychological profile. Finally, (4) existing research in the area is flawed by methodological limitations such as small sample sizes, lack of follow-up testing and control group(s). As a result of these limitations, numerous authors have cited the need for more appropriate measures for the selection of police officers (e.g., Blau, 1994; Hibler & Kurke, 1995; Scrivner, 1994).

In response to this demand for a specialized test, the Candidate and Officer Personnel Survey (COPS), which was developed and used for public service selection, with substantial success (Lough & Ryan, 2004; 2005) was reviewed. The COPS, developed by Irving Guller in 1989 in the United States, is a bio-data questionnaire which is specifically designed to assist in the area of police and public safety candidates and screens both in and out in selection. This includes applicants for positions in corrections, fire fighting and ambulance service and a range of other professions. The COPS is also used for the assessment of serving personnel for promotional purposes or as part of fitness for duty examination. The test is a 250-item inventory which is answered either true or false and consists of mainly factual, life history items and a variety of items addressing several job relevant

The Efficacy of Psychological Testing of Police Officers for Selection and Recruitment Purposes—A Comparative Review (Cont).

attitudes. The questions are based on research and clinical experience linking various life history events and personal attitudes to either positive or negative performance in public safety work.

Although limited published research exists on the COPS, the majority of this research has either been undertaken in the United States or on populations such as correctional officers. It has only been more recent that research using the COPS in police selection has had effect. In response to the more recent developments of research using the COPS in police populations and findings illustrating the utility and efficacy of the COPS as a pre-employment screening measurement, the Tasmania police force has been using the COPS as part of their operational system for police selection since 1998. Since this time, two significant research papers have been published illustrating the efficacy of the COPS as a screening measure. The results demonstrated that the COPS, as used as a pre-employment screening measure, is highly effective in discriminating between 'good' and 'poor' performers (after 1 and 2 years of on-the-job experience) on officers who were selected using the COPS and those who were not. However, the studies by Lough and Ryan are limited by three main factors: (1) The authors only examined a small number performance indicators (e.g., number of sick days, number of motor vehicle accidents, number of non-stress and stress related compensation claims) during the follow-up testing, (2) The authors did not re-administer the COPS, thus not assessing predictive validity of the COPS, (3) the authors did not obtain supervisor ratings of performance.

In response to these limitations, the current study represents a unique Australian contribution to the literature on psychological testing of police officers for selection and recruitment purposes. This research will attempt to overcome all limitations of previous research and

examine the impact of police service on performance and personality functioning with Tasmanian police officers by, (1) employing a test which was specifically designed for the purpose of selecting persons for public service jobs, which screens in and out. This test is the Candidate and Officer Personnel Survey "COPS", (2) undertaking follow-up testing (minimum of 12 months after on-the-job experience) of officers using the COPS as well as other tools of measurement such as work related and demographic questionnaires and supervisor ratings of officers performance during follow-up, (3) using work and demographic questionnaires to examine whether these factors mediate the changes, if any, in officers profile, and (4) overcoming all methodological limitations of existing literature by, (a) utilizing a control group and (b) recruiting a large sample size.

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The Efficacy of Psychological Testing of Police Officers for Selection and Recruitment Purposes—A Comparative Review

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