



## The Integration of Social Work Values and Principles in Police Work

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*Persisting social inequities and injustices were spotlighted in the United States in 2020 after the murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. A particular focus on the interactions of police officers and non-violent community members rallied a call to reallocate funds to social services better equipped to handle such situations, aptly named #defundthepolice. Many called for the need and placement of social workers in police agencies to curtail the negative interactions witnessed between police officers and communities of color, specifically with Black Americans. Across the nation, social workers are not always employed or readily available in police organizations. Therefore, instilling social work practices in police work can supplement the need for an alternate police response when resources are limited or nonexistent. This article examines the potential integration of social work values and principles as a complement to policing and delineates the identities and challenges of each profession through the lens of social identity theory. Suggestions are made to overcome the challenges by providing insight for future implications. The integration of the values and principles of social workers with the practices of police officers could promote a shift in policing toward restorative justice for community enrichment. These shifts could bring about resolution in the tumultuous relationship between communities of color and police departments across the United States and are worth consideration.*

Keywords: Police Social Work; Social Identity Theory; Social Movements

## INTRODUCTION

The tumultuous year of 2020 disrupted daily living with a global pandemic that killed millions and caused many countries to implement stay-at-home orders to protect citizens and reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Longstanding injustices and inequalities were exacerbated during the time of sheltering in place including racism, classism, unequal healthcare access, unemployment, and housing insecurity (McNeely & Schintler, 2020). Particularly, in the United States (U.S.), racial injustices were notable, with a surge in the #BlackLivesMatter social movement that confronted and called for dismantling institutional and systemic racism concerning police brutality. The profound #BlackLivesMatter movement in 2020 garnered support and increased scrutiny of racism in policing (Parker et al., 2020) across the nation and around the globe because of the police-involved murders of Black Americans Breonna Taylor (Oppel & Taylor, 2020) and George Floyd (Hill et al., 2020).

To eradicate the longstanding history of unjust killings, particularly among Black people, several American communities called for the defunding of police (#defundthepolice) as a response to the racist and discriminatory policing practices in Black communities (Desilver et al., 2020). The call to #defundthepolice does not explicitly argue for the total disbandment of police departments but rather for the reallocation of funds to support citizens who call the police for situations other than violent crimes. A driving factor of the #defundthepolice movement was the fact that officers are often dispatched to address non-violent incidents (Ray, 2020) and perform various duties outside of crime detection and prevention (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2018). Advocates for the movement propose that some of the police funds be moved to support social services and agencies that are more equipped to address non-violent incidents that include but are not limited to incidents of mental health, substance use and treatment, and homelessness (Andrew, 2020; Ray, 2020).

Contrary to popular belief, 80 percent of police work provides social welfare services. Crime control and prevention comprise approximately 20 percent of police officers' job duties (Lamin & Teboh, 2016; Patterson, 2008). Despite this, many officers claim their primary job duty is to enforce the law (Hsieh et al., 2012; Huey & Ricciardelli, 2015). The discrepancy between what officers believe their role will consist of and the reality of daily policing creates professional dissonance among police officers—a concept defined as the divergence between professional values and the job performance required (Taylor & Bentley, 2005). Despite the knowledge of actual police duties, national police training continues to focus more on crime fighting and prevention with limited training on other relative police interactions that include social welfare concerns, and mental and public health systems (Cordner, 2019; Hsieh et al., 2012). Officers have reduced exposure to service-oriented interventions, such as resource referrals and mediation, when compared to all other training topics in police academies across the U.S. (Beuhler, 2021). According to the U.S. Department of Justice, community outreach training regarding referral sources is not directly mentioned. However, academies across the nation offered an average of 13 hours of mediation/conflict training, and 15-16 hours of domestic violence and mental health training, compared to 172 hours of various topics regarding weapons and defense tactics, including 18 hours of de-escalation training (Beuhler, 2021). Given the limited training on welfare concerns, some agencies have moved toward a problem-solving approach that includes partnering with or hiring other professionals better equipped for situational interventions (Lamin & Teboh, 2016), such as social workers and psychiatrists (Sestoft et al., 2017).

With a particular focus on social workers, practitioners receive extensive training on diverse topics that engage people with various needs and those in crises. Social workers can utilize their skills to address the discrepancy found between police training and likely police daily duties by filling this void. Some police departments have begun hiring social workers to compensate for this demand to eliminate the training to practice disconnect among officers. However, the integration of social workers is not yet ubiquitous among departments. As police departments slowly involve social workers in their culture, it is essential to consider integrating social work ethical practice into police training and methods.

This article argues that the ethical values and principles found in social work can serve as a component to enhance police training, practice, and community engagement. The auspices of social identity theory are used to discuss the benefits and challenges of professional identity between both occupations, followed by suggestions for future implications.

## BACKGROUND

### History of Policing

The established police structure of England influenced the early development of policing in the United States. English colonists commissioned authority roles they were familiar with from the 17th and 18th centuries in the U.S., for example, constables, sheriffs, and the justice of the peace (Roberg et al., 2015). In the U.S. southern region, night-watchers and slave patrols also emerged during the early period and are linked to modern policing practices among people of color, particularly Black Americans (Adedoyin et al., 2019; Chaney & Robertson, 2015; Rose, 2017). Slave patrols engaged in targeted and aggressive behaviors toward both freed Black people and enslaved Africans (Robinson, 2017) by chasing, apprehending, punishing, and terrorizing individuals to prevent slave revolts and to gain social control (Brooks et al., 2016). These policing modalities began with volunteers until the passing of an ordinance in Philadelphia in 1833 and in Boston in 1838, where the first formal developments of a police department employed individuals for the roles (Roberg et al., 2015). Officers then received payment for their services, while maltreatment continued for Black individuals and extended to immigrants (McLeod et al., 2020).

Before the centralization of police work, between the 1920s and 1960s, police focused on protecting property and politicians' interests (Waxman, 2017). In 1919, August Vollmer, the father of American policing known for implementing innovative policing practices, delivered a revolutionary speech (Wilson, 1953). In his remarks, Vollmer described how police officers were often tasked with responding to social factors of crime, such as poverty, alcohol and substance abuse, unemployment, illness, and inadequate living environments or social relationships (Patterson & Swan, 2019). Although Vollmer's concepts began shifting the roles of policing towards community outreach, police work later developed into a professional occupation that offered job security with a focus on fighting and controlling crime. Even with a focus on crime control, there were increased crime rates among Black and Hispanic communities (Roberg et al., 2015), which led to increased surveillance. As a result, the relationship between the police and communities of color was tarnished by the racist and discriminatory treatment that often led to race riots, with police brutality and violence as the focal cause (Blain, 2018; Walsh, 2017).

Reverting to Vollmer's earlier notions, policing shifted toward a "people-centered" model that focused on "providing services to community members from a partnership perspective" to repair the police and community relationship (Lamin & Teboh, 2016, p.3). Police departments moved to hire more Black officers (Kuykendall & Burns, 1980) and engaged in community policing in the 1970s until it gained popularity by the 1990s (Seigel, 2017). Other police measures included problem-oriented policing to prevent and control crime by identifying and analyzing the problem, seeking alternative solutions, and implementing and assessing effective practices specific to the community's issues (Weisburd et al., 2008). Problem-oriented policing utilizes universal problem-solving techniques across police ranks and includes collecting empirical evidence, collaboration with outside agencies and institutions, and community input when applicable (Roberg et al., 2015). These methods are still effective approaches in modern policing (Braga, 2014).

### Police Social Workers

Social workers who perform their duties within a police department are known as police social workers (Giwa, 2018; Patterson, 2008; Wilson & Wilson, 2020). In the early 1900s, police social workers were synonymous with women officers who offered social services in the department for women and children, while mostly male officers patrolled the streets (Roberts, 1976). During the police reform era that included transformed modalities, social workers were active in the departments until their duties were perceived as

minimal. Unfortunately, the federally funded program, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, which supported states for research and local police crime-fighting programs that included social services in police departments, was eliminated by the 1980s (Goshko, 1977; Powers, 1982). After his review, Attorney General, Griffin B. Bell, was dissatisfied with the use of funds and ineffective projects (Goshko, 1977). Therefore, Congress refused to provide additional funding to the federal law enforcement program and other social programs that employed social workers (Goshko, 1977; Lamin & Teboh, 2016). Furthermore, the literature regarding police social work concurrently diminished between the mid-1970s and 1980s, resulting in limited content for the current review.

In recent years, collaborative work between police and social workers has become a trending partnership, with an increasing number of departments hiring or partnering with social workers (Ghelani, 2021). According to Patterson (2022), the evolution of police social workers is now categorized into three domains to account for (1) the collaboration between police and social workers, (2) the police social worker identity, and (3) social service partnerships. For instance, social workers serve as members of a police crisis intervention team who provide mental health services alongside officers for individuals experiencing a crisis (Cacciatore et al., 2011). Social workers are also sought after through external agencies to respond to incidents that involve domestic and partner violence, juvenile delinquency, child and elder abuse, and other distressing events (Phipps, 2020).

## **PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY**

### **Social Workers' Identity**

The social work profession takes various forms, with practitioners ranging in their field of knowledge from micro, mezzo, and macro practice. The professional identity among social workers does not have a universally supported role definition since practitioners interpret their job responsibilities differently and often link their identity to their employer. The roles of social workers vary and include clinical practitioners, educators, community activists, policymakers, owners of non-profit organizations, medical social workers, case workers, case managers, and many more. Despite social workers' various roles, there is a general understanding of the profession that most can agree with, regardless of their personal beliefs and different job responsibilities. Many concur that social work is a helping profession that supports individuals, families, groups, and communities by assisting in the prevention or coping with daily challenges while aiming to improve individuals' lives (Forenza & Eckert, 2018; National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2022; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). Social workers are advocates for oppressed groups and those who may be economically, socially, and politically disadvantaged by promoting equity and equality while combating institutional, systemic, and structural racism.

The social work profession has unique talents and skills essential for effective job performance and professional well-being (Patterson, 2008). As a result, social workers are equipped to work with various groups and are guided by the core values set by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics. Globally, social workers learn the six core values—service, social justice, dignity and worth of a person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. These values form the foundation of their work regardless of their field or title (Mackay & Zufferey, 2015; NASW, 2021). With core values established, social workers aim to uplift the voiceless, support and empower the underprivileged, and provide tools and resources to equip individuals and communities for an improved outcome.

### **Police Officers' Identity**

Police professional identity refers to the shared professional roles that unify individuals within an occupation despite individualistic differences in personal backgrounds, demographics, and experiences (Headley, 2022). There is a global commonality of police identity; however, professional identity is specific to

each agency as responsibilities, internal cultures, and histories differ for each department (du Plessis et al., 2021). Such identity includes officers as protectors and crime fighters. Despite what officers may believe, they are not exclusively public safety officials. Police work requires officers to be knowledgeable in various fields to perform their duties adequately (Lumsden, 2017). Part of self-conception from the social identity of a chosen profession includes an individual's worldview and sense of self in the workforce (Bar Tal, 1998). An identity conflict occurs among officers with their perception of what officers say they do (discursive) versus what officers actually do (practical) (Courpasson & Monties, 2017; du Plessis et al., 2021).

Research indicates that U.S. police officers identify their primary job function as law enforcers or crime fighters (Hsieh et al., 2012; Huey & Ricciardelli, 2015). In nations of the Eastern hemisphere, the job function of officers expands to include roles such as helpers, protectors of civil rights, community relationship builders, and crime informants (Bayerl et al., 2014; Bayerl et al., 2018). There is a shift within the U.S. that is adapting this extended role of an officer due to police departments being social institutions that operate 24-hours a day and are called on to address situations beyond crime alone (Huey & Ricciardelli, 2015; Patterson & Swan, 2019). Unfortunately, some officers reject the fact that their responsibilities include social welfare duties, a concept that creates conflict between their social and professional identities.

## **SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY**

Social Identity Theory helps understand the collaborative and conflictive potential between police and social workers and the acceptance of social work values and principles in police work. Social Identity Theory asserts that the cognitions and behaviors that comprise identity occur through cyclical processes of social categorization, comparison, and identification (Tajfel, 1978). Each aspect of social identity is subjective to perception and time. Thus, identity salience and self-esteem can constantly fluctuate (Oakes et al., 1991). These concepts apply to the identities of social workers, police officers, and the communities they serve. Social categorization is the process of sorting oneself and others into categories based on perceived or observed characteristics (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Trepte, 2006). This is evident in the conceptual separation between police officers and social workers. Social categorization groups are based on people's shared identities (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Trepte, 2006). It is essential to understand that people can simultaneously exist within many social categories (Oakes et al., 1991; Hogg, 2001). Police officers can be social workers, and social workers can be police officers, just as both are community members. Each group has values, traditions, and norms that individuals will either align with or reject. The process of assessing these aspects is the process of social categorization.

Social comparison is the assessment of value among and between groups. The theory argues that people will evaluate their own group compared to the outgroup and develop a sense of esteem or depreciation based on the evaluation (Trepte, 2006). Discrimination and prejudice are formed through social comparison (Tajfel, 1978). In addition to assessing themselves as belonging to a group, others within and outside the group must accept them as a part of the group (Trepte, 2006). An example of this is the assessment of power. From the community perspective, the perception of power wielded by police officers differs from the perception of power wielded within the community. Likewise, a perceived power differential exists between social workers and the community. Thus, from a community perspective and regarding power differentials, police officers and social workers have the potential to be categorized similarly. Social comparison occurs at every level and within each group. Social workers do not carry weapons as a part of their duties, while police officers do; this is a point of differentiation between social workers and police officers from the community and professional perspectives. Through the process of social comparison, social workers and police officers differentiate themselves from one another, and the communities they serve. The contextual placement of social comparison includes the impact of history and socialization. Thus, stereotyping between groups is often a result of social comparison (Tajfel, 1978). This means that the histories of moral imposition and social control imposed by the social work and law enforcement professions, including histories of racism, classism, and ableism, are relevant to how society perceives them (Jacobs et al., 2021).

Social identity refers to a person's sense of belonging within the group they've established for themselves. Social identity can influence the development of self-esteem and is based on the process of social comparison (Stets & Burke, 2000). The theory also proposes that in-group comparison lends itself to salient social identity as people begin to see themselves in others. Alternatively, people self-differentiate as they recognize misalignment with others (Haslam et al., 1999). As it relates to both police officers and social workers, social identity can be understood as how prototypical individuals within each profession are, and how they've appraised their membership within their respective groups. Threats to social identity often result in negative self-esteem and can be countered through passing, exiting, or voicing (Rodriguez, 2016). The negative social appraisal of police, and at times social workers, is one example of a threat to social identity. Police officers impacted by negative scrutiny have three options for response: choose to quit altogether—a form of exiting, change their duties and position with the police department—a form of passing, or speak out against the judgment—a form of voicing.

## VALUES AND PRINCIPLES IN SOCIAL WORK

Codes of ethics are found in both police and social work professions. Adopted by the Internal Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) in 1957, the police code of ethics serves as a preface or preamble to their mission and commitment to the public (IACP, 2023). The NASW (2021) provides social workers with values associated with each ethical principle along with ethical standards to guide and provide instances of appropriate behavior. Service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence are the six core values that are foundational in social work ethical principles.

According to the NASW Code of Ethics (2021), service implies that social workers assist people in need and disregard their self-interest to help others, and occasionally volunteer their skills to help within the community. Service's ethical principle indicates that "social workers' primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems" (NASW, 2021). The value of social justice and its ethical principle is to challenge injustices by pursuing social change for oppressed and vulnerable groups, standing against inequality and the inaccessibility of resources and services, and advocating for the inclusion of all in decision-making matters (NASW, 2021). The value and ethical principles of dignity and worth of a person are the same. Social workers respect the innate being and worth of all individuals by considering cultural and ethnic differences, promoting client independence to address needs, and for clients to have the right to self-determination (NASW, 2021). Part of the dignity and worth of a person also includes social workers' awareness of their duality to service clients and the larger society by mediating any conflicts derived between the two entities (NASW, 2021).

The importance of human relationship value implies that social workers recognize the importance of partnerships with clients to facilitate change by supporting and empowering individuals, groups, families, communities, and organizations to reach and maintain enhanced well-being (NASW, 2021). Integrity's ethical principle requires social workers to work in a trustworthy manner that aligns with the profession's current mission, values, and ethics, and to incorporate those standards personally and within their affiliated organizations (NASW, 2021). Lastly, competence refers to social workers remaining culturally and socially relative to increase their professional knowledge when working with others as encouraged by the ethical principle to enhance their area of expertise (NASW, 2021).

## Benefits of Social Work Values in Police Work

Social workers practice and promote wellness, self-determination, collaboration (Blok & Hartman, 2016), and competency among diverse populations (Murray, 2021). These skills and values are utilized as police agencies interact with social workers in the field. The partnership between police and social workers or social services often occurs in situations that involve mental health crises (Ghelani, 2021), domestic violence (Piehowski, 2022; Smith Stover, 2012), juvenile justice (Ehrhard-Dietzel et al., 2017), and child welfare

(Garcia et al., 2014). Fortunately, each profession shares overlapping ethics, allowing the integration of social work values and principles to be possible in policing.

Aside from resourceful partnering with social workers to intervene in crisis situations, implementing social work values can also help officers. For instance, social work values can aid with officers' building rapport and developing trust through community policing with proper and effective methods of communication (*importance of human relationships*). Additionally, social work practitioners are culturally aware of diverse groups. They acknowledge the influence of personal socialization experiences to holistically understand when circumstances and behaviors reflect the dynamics of person-in-environment. They are specifically trained to reach the core of the matter to alleviate a problem, prevent or reduce the worsening of an issue, and provide tools for individuals to navigate their circumstances. By adopting a holistic approach, law enforcement could learn to understand the motives and behaviors of individuals, which could result in less forceful and fatal interactions while simultaneously improving the negative police image (*competence*).

Suppose police were to adopt the values and principles of social work in their practice. In doing so, officers would take on a humanistic approach where one's race, ability, mental status, gender identity, and socioeconomic status does not affect their perception of threat that officers may hold. Instead, officers would deepen their value for the *dignity and worth* of the individual. This is not to suggest that officers should minimize an apparent threat from an individual but rather address any implicit bias that may occur. Such a change in officers' outlook and behavior will promote the values of *integrity* and *social justice* while enhancing their *service* by becoming part of the solution to reduce unfavorable outcomes within the communities. Integrating social work values and principles is recommended to strengthen police current ethics and community relationships since there is overlapping ethical resemblance apart from one ethical value and principle (see Table 1). With the growing demand for officers to extend their responsibilities to reflect those of social workers, this recommendation serves as a guide when hiring or partnering with social workers is not feasible. For comparison, Table 1 summarizes each profession's code of ethics.

**Table 1: Comparison of Social Work and Police Professional Ethics**

Social work value	Social work ethical principle	Law enforcement code of ethics
Service	Social workers help people in need and address social problems.	Serve community. Cooperate with all legally authorized agencies and representatives in the pursuit of justice. Never accept gratuities. *
Social justice	Social workers challenge injustice.	Respect the constitutional rights of all to liberty, equality, and justice. Protect the weak against oppression or intimidation. Protect the innocent against deception. * Protect the peaceful against violence or disorder.
Dignity and worth of the person	Social workers respect the innate dignity and worth of individuals.	Safeguard lives and property. Protect the innocent against deception. * Be mindful of the welfare of others.
Importance of human relationships	Social workers acknowledge and honor the central importance of human relationships.	N/A
Integrity	Social workers behave in a trustworthy manner, professionally and personally.	Keep private life unsullied. Be honest in thought and deed. Obey the law. Maintain confidentiality. Never employ unnecessary violence or force. Never act officiously or have personal, political, prejudices, aspirations, animosities, or friendship influence decision-making. Enforce the law courteously and appropriately. Never accept gratuities. * Never engage in corruption or bribery nor accept such acts by other officers.
Competence	Social workers practice within competence areas and develop and enhance professional knowledge and expertise.	Enhance and improve the level of knowledge and competence. Develop self-restraint. Maintain courageous calm.

*Note.* \*Represents codes of ethics listed in multiple social work categories due to their overlapping meaning. The social work values and ethical principles were adopted from the National Association of Social Workers (2021). The law enforcement code of ethics was adopted from the Internal Association of Chiefs of Police (1957) and simplified and rearranged to align with social work values. The law enforcement code of ethics does not reflect the order of their ethical statement.

## CHALLENGES

Although the thought of integrating the two professions—policing and social work—to enhance police-community relations and reduce the need for unnecessary force is ideal, several challenges remain. The challenges that impede the collaboration of social work practice and police work are due to the discrepancies in social identity among officers, and the negative engagement and perception of each profession that communities of color may hold. Social identity theory does not propose a directional prediction of social interactions or dynamics; therefore, it can only be used to explain how social workers and police have



differentiated themselves and how that differentiation leads to potentially harmful stereotyping. Although there is support for police and social work collaboration (Patterson & Swan, 2019), some scholars believe that the multidisciplinary approach will compound racist and unjust practices that both disciplines collectively engage in (Brock-Petroshius et al., 2022; Stevenson & Blakey, 2021).

There is reason to believe that the collaboration of these two professions will not alleviate anxiety or stress among Black community members, given the tumultuous histories that social workers and police have exclusively engaged in with Black communities. Jacobs et al. (2021) attribute a growing lack of trust between community members and service providers to the historically racialized assimilation and social control tactics utilized by police and social work agencies. Moreover, the complacency within social work that some practitioners adopt regarding systemic injustice could lead social workers not to identify and understand the issues perpetuated by police, especially in communities of color. Such complacency may derive from a lack of social justice advocacy for communities of color due to fear and discomfort in conservative societies and may result in a neutral stance in the face of opposition and adversity (Morgaine, 2014). Mutual suspicion between social workers and community members has developed into a considerable issue that stems from hostility and distrust experienced in contemporary mandated or involuntary relationships, as seen in many child-welfare cases (Ferguson et al., 2021). Therefore, it is vital for both professions to adjust their practice to ensure that they reflect their core values of serving and helping others to mend the mistrust established over the years.

Unfortunately, the lack of partnership and continued growth between the two professions appertains to each occupation's conflicting ideologies and beliefs (Parkinson, 1980). Polarizing societal ties further cause a hindrance between effective collaboration due to the stereotype and typecast of political views aligned with each profession, although individuals may not align with the perceived professional ideologies. Police institutions are perceived as conservative with anti-Black racism sentiments (Bowleg et al., 2022; Italiano et al., 2021; Waldron, 2021; Zoorob, 2019), while social workers are perceived as left-leaning liberals and democratic (Italiano et al., 2021; Ringstad, 2014). The U.S. public attitude towards law enforcement is divided between two contending ideas—pro-law enforcement and anti-law enforcement (Italiano et al., 2021), with neoliberalism and abolitionism as respective radical viewpoints of each (Jacobs et al., 2021). Those identifying as pro-law enforcement tend to be more conservative in their political ideology, focus on strengthening law and order, and have positive regard for law enforcement accomplishments (Italiano et al., 2021). Alternatively, those identifying as anti-law enforcement tend to hold liberal political ideals centered around reformative justice and minimizing the harmful impacts policing has on Black, Indigenous, and other oppressed people of color (Italiano et al., 2021). In a collaborative setting, these oppositional perspectives can create tension and the refusal to accept elements of either profession.

Further, professional training differences also contribute to discordant attitudes toward social problems between the disciplines (Patterson, 2022). Officers tend to view crime as individually motivated and utilize punitive interventions. In contrast, social workers often consider the environmental factors involved to identify therapeutic interventions for remedying maladaptive behavior and crime (Patterson, 2022). Additionally, community resources and training lag behind the new demands of police departments (Langdon, 2020). As social and economic stressors have drastically increased for those seeking social resources, the physical safety of social workers has become a significant concern. Social workers engaging in diverse, complex, and innovative settings with limited safety training have been increasingly victimized by verbal and physical assaults (NASW, 2003). Further challenges derive from police often being unaware or rejecting the notion that society knowingly and unknowingly expects them to be a 24-hour entity to serve as counselors, mediators, social workers, and mental health workers in addition to policing (Patterson, 2022).

Throughout the years, police work has shifted to include aspects of the profession that did not exist when the official organizations were created. Problems arise when officers do not understand this shift. For example, training topics do not adequately focus on social and community issues afflicting officers' patrol beats (Buehler, 2021). As a result, officers may fall short of their job performance and have an increased likelihood of arresting individuals or using unnecessary force (Magee et al., 2021). This is especially likely

when officers do not feel it is their responsibility to engage with issues that are not crime related. In such situations under-trained officers may defer to what they think is the best way to approach encounters including use-of-force. For instance, a family member may call the police to assist an irrational loved one due to a mental illness. The officer(s) may or may not receive information regarding the mental health status of the irrational individual, and when the officer(s) arrives on the scene, the situation is misinterpreted, leading to an arrest or excessive or deadly use-of-force (see Burke, 2021). Currently, individuals with mental illness are disproportionately represented in U.S. jails (Mulvey & Schubert, 2017) and comprise nearly 60% of non-life-threatening events that lead to police-involved killings (Mapping Police Violence, 2021).

Lastly, even if agencies wanted to develop new training practices that infused social work values and principles or wanted to hire social workers for their departments, they are often met with their biggest hurdle—funding. According to Phipps (2020), department Chiefs do not have the structure, power, or finances to hire a social worker for every officer, thus, leading to social workers being overextended among an entire department. Such exertion leads to workload imbalance and causes social workers to have direct or vicarious burnout, cynicism, emotional withdrawal, and exhaustion (Wilson, 2016). When a social worker is overworked, it leaves no room to provide influential guidance within police practice. Hence, the demand for reallocating police funds for more social programming and welfare initiatives or implementing social work values and principles in police work.

## FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

To avoid and minimize the challenges presented with social workers within police departments, agencies, and governing officials should adopt social work values and ethics into their training curriculums. Integrating the curriculum does not fully address the concerns; however, it provides a foundational understanding of social work values that each officer can recall when a social worker is not present or employed by a department. Officers must embrace the shift in policing as it requires them to be multifaceted in their job responsibilities rather than only identifying with traditional crime-fighting policing. Agencies in Illinois have adopted this modality with the "blending of social work expertise with law enforcement training . . ." (Phipps, 2020, p.14). Additionally, training should be led by officers with a social work background and social workers with police work experience.

Although the budget is a concern for most agencies, re-examining funding allocation can support integrating social work values in police work by hiring practitioners. The "Invest to Protect Act of 2023" aims to establish a grant program for police departments to invest in various evidence-based safety trainings to improve their responses to vulnerable persons and populations (Invest to Protect Act, 2023). An amendment to this Act to include funds to support the integration of social workers in police departments and as first responders would address the pervasive funding deficits that preclude this collaboration and integration currently in many departments. Future research should examine the cost analysis for departments that employ social workers to determine their effectiveness and identify ways that departments and taxpayers can save money in other categories—such as money spent on arrests and imprisonment or purchasing military-style equipment. Further research is needed to understand the needs of each discipline in this field and within the collaborative capacity. Evidence-based literature is scarce regarding police social workers and social workers' impact on policing. As the trend blurs the lines with the requirements for each profession, it is important to understand each discipline's needs, what methods of intervention or training have or have not worked, and what recommendations they offer as frontline workers.

Lastly, additional consideration should be given to academic institutions for increased support and collaboration between the two professions. Although not all officers are required to obtain a 4-year degree or even specifically a criminal justice degree, education and training of some sort are needed. Having a partnership between universities' social work and criminal justice departments, as well as partnering with police academy training programs, both academic leadership and police trainers can develop curriculums that address and infuse social work values and principles into police and criminal justice coursework. This will

allow an introduction and basic understanding of the core values of social work to enhance policing and engagement with community members. Moreover, few social work programs offer certifications and specializations in forensic social work; these educational pathways will better equip social workers for work within police departments.

## CONCLUSION

Social work influence in police departments is valuable (Phipps, 2020). The values and principles of the social work profession promote a shift in police and social work practice that incorporate transformative and restorative justice, and community enrichment. Both police officers and social workers similarly experience emotional variance in their occupations that ranges from job fulfillment to immense stress. Working in sometimes unpredictable, traumatizing, and heart-wrenching settings put professionals at risk for stress, burnout, secondary trauma exposure, and compassion fatigue (Lewis & King, 2019). Establishing and adopting social work core values can assist with remaining grounded in stressful situations.

Social workers are taught and encouraged to practice self-care to maintain professional well-being, a tool that can be viable to police officers to mitigate associated risks, especially when demands are high, when there are ongoing structural changes, or when communities and media promote negative perceptions of police. The integration of social work values and principles is not meant to replace police work or their current ethical statement, but to complement their duties for enhanced performance and interactions that promote community unity, the value of life, and well-being for both patrons and officers.

### Notes

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