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## From Violence-Prone to Violence-Prepared Organizations Assessing the Role of Human Resources Management in Preventing Workplace Violence in American City Governments

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FROM VIOLENCE-PRONE TO VIOLENCE-PREPARED ORGANIZATIONS:  
ASSESSING THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN  
PREVENTING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE IN AMERICAN CITY  
GOVERNMENTS

by

Saleh Abdel Rahman Ahmed

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Faculty of The Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
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ADVISOR : **Dr. MATTHEW S. MINGUS**

Western Michigan University  
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Saleh Abdel Rahman Ahmed

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background of Workplace Violence

Workplace violence is a significant occupational hazard in the American workplace. Research clearly indicates that it is a growing problem in both public and private sectors (Nigro & Waugh, 1998a; McGovern, 1999; Gray, Myers, & Myers, 1999; Liou, 1999). According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), workplace homicide is the second leading cause of fatal occupational injuries in the U.S., exceeded only by motor vehicle-related deaths (Jenkins, 1996), and the leading cause of traumatic workplace death among women (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998; Warchol, 1998).

Data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) for 1993-1999 indicated that in the United States, an annual average of 1.7 million people experienced violent victimizations while working or on duty. In addition to the nonfatal violence measured by the NCVS, about 900 work-related homicides occurred annually. Workplace violence accounted for 18 percent of all violent crime during the 6-year period (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2001).

The trends indicate that violence will continue to increase in the workplace, just as it has in healthcare sector and schools. A 2001 survey conducted by Pinkerton

Consulting and Investigations asked executives to rank the top security threats to their organizations. Workplace violence topped the list for the third consecutive year (Atkinson, 2001).

In addition to human loss, workplace violence has cost the U.S. billions of dollars. The National Safe Workplace Institute estimated in the early 1990s that physical assaults and murders at work cost the American economy \$4.2 billion (Kinney, 1995). A more recent estimate in 1998 by the Workplace Violence Research Institute identified the cost of workplace violence to be closer to \$36 billion based on such variables as loss of productivity due to absenteeism, employee turnover, work disruptions, litigation, and incident-related costs such as increased security expenditures and higher insurance premiums (Mattman & Kaufer, 1998; Dobbs, 2000). Both victims and those exposed to such violence pay in terms of lost job satisfaction, low staff morale, impaired well being, and emotional scarring that often goes undetected for months and years (Martin, 1994).

While the true value of a lost life can never be expressed in mere economic terms, one study by the U.S. Department of Labor estimated the dollar value of the life of an employee at seven million dollars (Kinney, 1995). Certainly, such figures should be cautiously interpreted due to variations in fundamental assumptions and the imprecise nature of much financial data (Kennedy, 2003). Nevertheless, the enormity of the estimates alone attests to the contemporary significance of the problem.

The issue of workplace violence is especially important for public organizations and public employees because they are at higher risk than their

counterparts in the private sector, and they are more frequently targets of politically motivated violence (Taylor, 1995; Nigro & Waugh, 1996). The Department of Justice reports that government employees (federal, state and local) have a higher rate of violence than private sector workers. Government workers make up 18 percent of the U.S. workforce, but 31 percent of the victims of workplace violence (“Tips on stopping”, 1998).

Certain public employees such as health care workers, correctional officers or law enforcement personnel, social service workers and teachers, are affected by workplace violence more than others (Taylor, 1995). The concern for public employee safety relates not only to violent incidents that happen among public employees in some workplaces such as the Postal Service, but also to growing public cynicism toward government (Liou, 1999). The target of violent acts may be people, buildings, structures, or institutions that symbolizes authority. Random victims often are wounded and/or killed during the assault as a result of their actual or perceived association with the authority figure or institution under attack (Burgess, Burgess & Douglas, 1994; Johnson & Indvik, 1996b). The bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City, as well as the terror attacks on the twin towers in New York City and the pentagon on September 11, 2001, serve as the most terrifying examples of public employees being attacked in the workplace (Nigro & Waugh, 1998a). While it is hard to imagine a repetition of workplace events of this magnitude, the probability of violent incidents at work resulting in death or serious injury to employees has risen dramatically in the past decade (Foulke, 2004). These tragic events have attracted the

attention of government organizations and public management researchers in addressing this problem, they have found some methods to help public organizations and public employees establish safer workplaces (Nigro & Waugh, 1996; Johnson & Indvik, 1996a).

This study assumes that workplace violence in public organizations is a manageable risk and controllable to some extent. Public organizations can never completely eliminate the threat of violence at work or ensure a totally risk-free environment. However, it is the duty of employers to minimize the risks to employees and enhance opportunities for a safe and productive workplace (Littlefield & Merrick, 1995).

Two factors help organizations in their quest to control and combat workplace violence. First, most acts of workplace violence are not the unstoppable rampages that grab headlines. Instead, while homicide does figure prominently in workplace violence, the crux of the problem consists of a broad range of more subtle forms of violence that present a far greater opportunity for intervention and prevention. Such conduct includes nonfatal assaults, verbal threats, harassment and intimidation, sexual harassment that blurs into physical bullying, and domestic violence that poses risks for on the job security (Speer, 1998). Second, whether leading to homicide or not, most acts of workplace violence do not occur spontaneously without warning. In all but rare instances, precursors are present: behaviors and events that point to possible violence. Environmental, personal and situational factors can warn of potential violence. For instance, regular interaction with the public, exchange of valuables, or

working late at night or early in the morning and working alone all generate a vulnerability to violence from third parties intent on crime. The sheer predictability of some violence and the opportunity that most violence permits for intervention render it largely preventable.

However, the preventive actions and methods adopted by city governments are fledgling at best and not developed or implemented to the degree necessary to ensure safety. According to Nigro and Waugh (1998b), until the 1990s, most public employers had been slow to adopt policies and related programs specifically addressing aspects of workplace violence, including identification of risk factors, means of prevention, and appropriate responses to incidents. Unfortunately, most exceptions to this pattern were reactions to tragic and widely reported events, such as a series of multiple murders in and around facilities of the U.S. Postal Service. Over the past ten years, however, many public employers have viewed workplace violence as a meaningful safety and liability issue, one that now requires more than a passive or reactive approach to prevention and mitigation.

This study explores the preparedness of city governments and city agencies in the most populated cities in the United States (236 cities with more than 100,000 residents each according to the 2000 Census) to combat workplace violence. Also, it examines the role of human resources management (HRM) in these public agencies in preventing workplace violence. Prior research has shown that organizational factors can be a major source of violence in the workplace (Russell, 2001; McDonald, 2001a; Racette, 2001; Capozzoli & McVey, 1996). According to the literature, organizational

factors that contribute negatively to the problem include, but are not limited to, toxic work environment, work stress, and dysfunction or malpractice by human resources management in those organizations (e.g. Flynn, 1998; Kelleher, 1997; VandenBos & Bulatao, 1996; Denenberg, Denenberg & Braverman, 1996; Myers, 1995).

Many government health and safety agencies have recognized workplace violence as an occupational safety hazard. They have instituted regulations for workplace violence protection that must be part of every employer's general occupational health and safety program. Many employers are adopting prevention methods and procedures such as written workplace violence prevention policies that prohibit violent acts and do not tolerate aggressive behaviors in the workplace. Security surveys are being conducted to identify threats to employee safety. Employee Assistance Programs have been established to make organizations more responsive to victimization prevention needs.

Human resources (HR), according to this study, can play a major role not only in igniting workplace violence but also in combating it. While human resources management errors or malpractice -such as erroneous hiring procedures- may create fertile organizational environments that enable workplace violence to breed, effective management can curb workplace violence through foresight and innovation (Elliott & Jarrett, 1994; Nigro & Waugh, 1996; Pynes, 1997). Human resources management has several methods or strategies which, if used consistently, can work toward preventing workplace violence in city governments. Well-designed jobs, thorough screening and hiring processes, effective education and training programs, fair and

equitable compensation systems, functioning communication and reporting channels, appropriate and meaningful performance evaluation, and careful layoff policies and procedures could prove essential in stopping workplace violence before it escalates.

This study creates a model for human resources managers to use as they strive to address workplace violence. The lack of an appropriate definition of workplace violence means that most human resources policies on workplace violence only reflect a more narrow definition, and not the broad-spectrum definition that this study suggests. As a result, policies are too narrowly defined and procedures fail to address the full range of issues. In order to develop a comprehensive model, current workplace violence policies, along with research both academic and applied research, are combined into an integrated, holistic plan for amelioration of the problem. Thus, this study creates a much-needed comprehensive model that can be easily adopted in its entirety by public agencies.

### Statement of the Problem

In general, the workplace traditionally has been viewed as a relatively benign and violence-free environment, "a safe haven" as Zachary (1998, p. 20) describes. It is also an environment in which confrontation and dialogue can form a part of the normal operating milieu. Employees, workers, supervisors and managers are confronted on a daily basis with their personal and work-related problems. They may have to face the anxieties and frustrations of coworkers, organizational difficulties, personal life problems, personality clashes, aggressive intruders from outside, and



problematic relations with clients and the public. Despite this, dialogue and peace usually prevail over confrontation and people manage to accomplish the daily goals of the workplace (Baron, 1993). However, this is not always the case. When relationships between employees, managers, clients and the public deteriorate, and the objectives of working efficiently and achieving productive results are negatively affected, violence may occur. With increasing frequency, violence is entering the workplace and transforming it into a hostile and hazardous setting (Chappell & Di Martino 2000).

Workplace violence has reached alarming proportions. In fact, one in six violent crimes in the U.S. occurred in the workplace, including eight percent of all rapes, seven percent of robberies, and 16 percent of assaults. Workplace violence and homicide have been identified as the fastest growing forms of violence in the United States, doubling in the past 10 years (Kennedy, 2003).

Public organizations and public employees are at higher risk. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (1998), from 1992-1996, although government employees make up approximately 16 percent of the American workforce, about 37 percent of the victims of workplace violence were employed by a federal, state, county, or city government organization (Warchol, 1998). For every 1,000 state, city, or local government employees, there were 33 workplace violent crimes experienced between 1993 and 1999. The victimization rate of these workers was the highest compared to the rate of victimization among private sector employees and the self-employed. It is imperative that government and public organizations, public employees, and

management researchers determine practical methods of creating a safer workplace (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2001).

Unfortunately, there are numerous examples of workplace violence resulting in homicide of city employees and city officials. Perhaps one of the most alarming violent incidents was the killing of James Davis. On July 23, 2003, James E. Davis, an ex-police officer and New York City councilman was shot seven times inside the City Hall by his political rival for the councilman's position ("Councilman shot", 2003). City Hall security had been increased since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. In addition to the installation of metal detectors, a uniformed police officer was posted at the gate. However, employees and police officers were not required to pass through metal detectors. Davis had escorted his murderer, Othniel Askew, past the building's metal detectors. Ironically, Davis was about to submit legislation on workplace violence. After his death, the New York City Council passed Davis' resolution calling for greater efforts to prevent violence in the workplace (Lamb, 2003). Notably, in 1990, Davis Founded "Love Yourself Stop the Violence," a not-for-profit organization dedicated to stopping violence in American cities ("Love yourself, 2003).

Another incident of workplace violence against public employees was the killing of Connecticut State Lottery Corporation President and three other city employees by Matthew Beck, a 35 year-old accountant at one of the city departments after a pay dispute on March 6, 1998 (Piturro, 2001).

A similar incident occurred two years earlier. In February 1996, a city maintenance employee who had been fired a year earlier, returned to his old workplace at a City of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida crew trailer and shot five of his former coworkers to death before killing himself (Albrecht, 1997). Upon his dismissal, this employee stated he would be back for revenge (Moffatt, 1998).

In 1992, four employees of the county social service department in rural Watkins Glen, New York, were shot to death by a county resident who was enraged about garnishment of his wages (DiLorenzo & Carroll, 1995).

Another tragic incident took place in California, when Robbyn Panitch, a psychiatric social worker for Los Angeles County was killed on January 27, 1990. A former client attacked and killed her in a county building that did not have any security system. The case attracted considerable public attention when her parents attempted to sue the county, charging negligence driven by the administrators' desire to save money. In another terrible example, a supervisor actually instigated a physical confrontation with a disgruntled sanitation department employee in LaPorte City, Indiana. The employee eventually was terminated and sought help from the mayor to get his job back. The mayor refused to help, and the ex-employee killed the mayor and his wife in their home (Herr, 1996; Capozzoli & McVey, 1996).

In December 1987, David Burke, 35, an airline ticket taker fired from USAir for allegedly stealing, boarded a plane at Los Angeles International Airport with a concealed .44-caliber gun. He waited until the plane was aloft, then shot his former boss, Raymond Thomson who was on the plane, and fired his gun at others.

Investigators believe he also shot or otherwise attacked the pilots. The plane plowed into a hillside near Paso Robles, California, killing all 43 on board. Burke had been able to move unchallenged through the airport because his employer had never confiscated all of his work identification. Family members who sued the airline company received more than \$20 million in out-of-court settlements (Armour, 2004).

The number of nonfatal workplace violence incidents (such as threats or harassment) that confront city employees is greater than the fatal ones. In a recent study conducted by the State of North Carolina, 22 percent of the public employees at the state and local levels had faced at least one type of nonfatal violent incident during the last decade (1990-2000) (North Carolina Department of Labor, 2001).

A substantial body of literature (e.g. Capozzoli & McVey, 1996) and surveys have questioned organizational preparedness to stop workplace violence. Most employers -65 percent, according to the American Management Association (AMA) survey- lack policies specifically designed to deal with actual or potential violence originating within or outside of the workplace (Denenberg, Schneider, Denenberg, & Braverman, 1996). A 1998 joint survey of 299 risk managers by the Risk and Insurance Management Society (RIMS) and American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) showed that 70 percent had not undergone a formal risk assessment of the potential for workplace violence (ASSE, 1999; Piturro, 2001; McDonald, 2001). In 1999, another survey of employers by the American Society of Industrial Security found that 65 percent of organizations have no policy on dealing with incidents of workplace violence (Podmolik, 1999). According to a recent survey conducted by the

Employment Law Alliance, 27 percent of employees surveyed said their employers are not sufficiently prepared to deal with threats of violence in the workplace (“Employees concerned”, 2001).

Human resources or personnel directors and managers are obligated to understand some of the reasons commonly cited as associated with violent workplace incidents. They need to become more aware of profiles of potential assailants and warning signs of violence. They should examine the human resources system to highlight vulnerabilities and prevent violent incidents. This study asserts that the human resources department in any organization is the front line in preventing workplace violence. If those departments effectively and successfully perform their functions, workplace violence incidents will be affected. For example, screening can be used as a method of preventing workplace violence since it can prevent the “bad guys” from joining the organization and harming its employees later on. Also, training not only the supervisors but also new and current employees about what to do to prevent violent behaviors, can create safer organizations.

### Significance of the Study

Workplace violence has become one of the most complex and difficult problems facing public entities at local, state, and federal levels. It must be addressed. By its nature, violent episodes have received considerable attention from the general public as well as the media (Marks, 1993). However, empirical studies of workplace violence are limited (Nigro & Waugh, 1999). After their review of the existing

workplace violence research, Peek-Asa, Runyan and Zwerling (2001) raised a variety of concerns with a large proportion of the research, including sample sizes that were too small, a lack of appropriate control groups, publication without peer review, and other problems. In performing the literature review, the researcher noted a tremendous number of publications, including books, articles and studies, on workplace violence during the past decade. However, in trying to provide a comprehensive literature review, it was discovered that the number of recent studies has declined considerably. This lack of good research severely hampers efforts to address the problem of violence in the workplace. The problem is even bigger regarding to the workplace violence against government employees -at all levels- and the role of city governments and human resources departments in fighting this problem.

To increase awareness of the workplace violence problem and the search for applicable prevention methods, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recommended the following:

1. Prevention strategies based on available information should be developed and implemented. Risk factors in the workplace should be identified and steps taken to minimize or remove them.
2. Research designed to "evaluate existing or proposed prevention strategies" should be conducted. NIOSH notes that few such studies have been done and "such evaluation research is critical to homicide prevention efforts."
3. There is a need for research into the specific factors associated with occupational homicide because this information is basic to the design of prevention strategies (NIOSH, 1993, 5-6).

In compliance with the NIOSH's recommendations concerning occupational homicides, which apply to all forms of workplace violence, this study has been

conducted to examine the perceived level of workplace violence in city governments from the human resources directors' perspective, as well as preparation and preventive steps already in place. With an understanding of the readiness of city governments and human resources departments, a model can be developed to help them anticipate, defuse, and deal with violent acts.

This study is significant at two levels -- operational and academic. At the operational level, the results of this study have the potential to guide human resources directors and managers at all levels within both the public and private sectors. This study provides human resources and personnel professionals, city officials and top managers a practical plan to combat and prevent workplace violence. It is designed to help human resources departments in particular, and organizations in general, play more effective roles in managing, reducing and preventing workplace violence.

The workplace violence prevention model suggested by the current study differs from other models. First, due to the lack of readily available and reliable statistics about incidents of workplace violence, another method was used to examine and provide more insight into the nature and causes of workplace violence. Second, although the model was developed from current literature and the contributions of previous researchers, it does not arbitrarily decide what the organization should and should not do to prevent workplace violence. Rather, this model builds upon the preventative methods some city governments and agencies already have in place. Third, the degree to which human resources departments explicitly are addressing workplace violence in practical terms has not been systematically explored. The

current model focuses in depth on the gap between the significant role that human resources can play in preventing workplace violence and current practice. Fourth, although the current model focuses primarily on preventing “worker-on-worker” workplace violence, it does not ignore the importance of preventing other types of workplace violence.

At the academic level, this study lies at the heart of the public administration arena. Workplace violence is a public policy issue that has seen a significant increase in public awareness. As incidences increase to alarming numbers, human resources directors find themselves on the front lines with little guidance and few strategies or prevention methods. Public organizations at federal, state and city levels have been forced to take legal and operational steps to curb this problem. Workplace violence as a public policy issue intertwines with other public policies issues as the world becomes increasingly security conscious. Workplace violence has been recognized as an organizational hazard and it is important that it be studied from the organizational behavior perspective.

Since this study focuses on the role of human resources management in preventing workplace violence, public personnel management is also considered. The study relates specifically to local government since the population of the study is human resources departments in cities with more than 100,000 residents.

The study benefited from the contributions of all those fields. In turn, they enhance the theoretical and academic integration of those branches (public policy;



organization behavior; public personnel; and local government) and their mother field of public administration.

### Organization of the Study

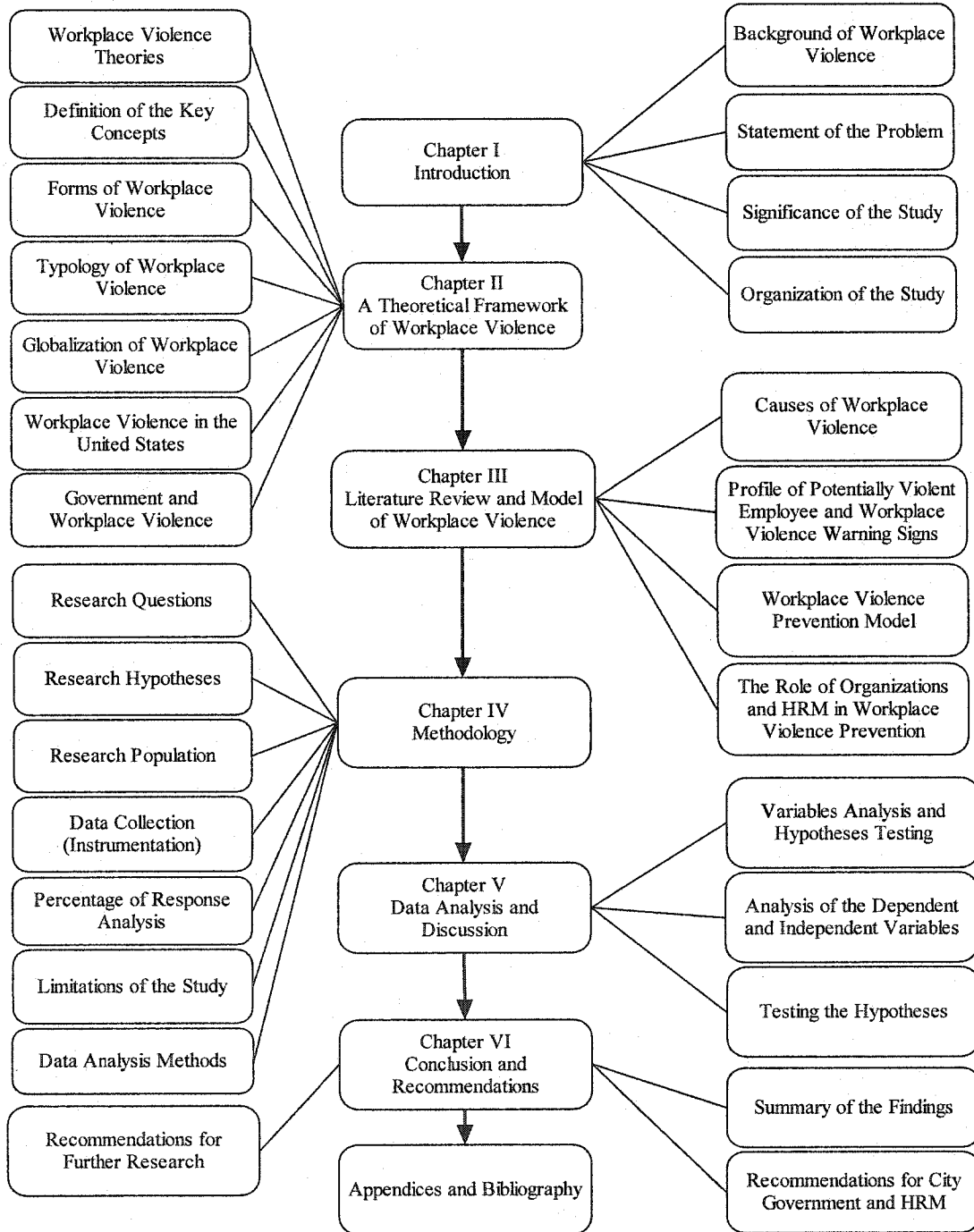
The study is organized in six chapters with the addition of an appendix and the references as shown in the following Figure 1. Chapter 1 is an introduction to the topic and presents the statement of the problem and the significance of the study. Chapter 2, “A Theoretical Framework of Workplace Violence”, examines the theories, definitions, forms, and typology of workplace violence. It also introduces a new definition of workplace violence and reviews the scope of the problem nationally and globally. Finally, it examines the governments’ efforts to prevent this problem.

Chapter 3, “Literature Review and Model of Workplace Violence”, suggests a model for the causes and prevention of workplace violence to assist organizations in moving from violence-prone to violence-prepared. Chapter 4 describes the methodology followed and includes descriptions of the study population, research hypotheses, and instrumentation or data collection and analysis.

Chapter 5 contains an analysis of the data collected. In addition to analysis of the individual variables, this chapter includes an analysis of the relationships between the variables and hypotheses tests. Chapter 6 presents the major findings of the study, recommendations for governments and human resources departments to improve their capabilities to combat workplace violence, as well as recommendations for further research.

Figure 1

Organization of the Study



## CHAPTER II

### A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

This chapter presents a theoretical framework for the study of workplace violence. This framework begins with a discussion of nine theories that offer different perspectives on the issues of violence in general and workplace violence in particular. An important gap in workplace violence literature is the failure of a single, agreed upon definition of the concept. It is almost impossible for city governments and human resources management to solve a problem that is not clearly defined. A definition of workplace violence will be suggested and serve as the foundation of this study. To expand the understanding of the concept of workplace violence, some aspects of it (forms and typologies) also will be discussed.

From this theoretical base, the discussion lays out the scope of the problem through a review of the real world issues at the global and national level. No framework regarding the serious issue of workplace violence would be complete without a discussion of government efforts to address this problem.

#### Workplace Violence Theories

Because circumstances and targets of workplace violence vary widely, so do the motivations of perpetrators. Due to the wide range of workplace violence incident types, no single etiological theory will generalize broadly enough to be universally

applicable (Kennedy, 2003). Nevertheless, several theoretical approaches have proven useful in understanding the multifaceted nature of violence in general and workplace violence in particular. To be effective, top management and human resources directors should have some knowledge about these theories.

### Criminology Theories

Workplace violence crimes are generally explained according to conventional social process and social structure theories of criminality such as *Containment Theory* and *Strain Theory*. *Routine Activities Theory* and the *General Theory of Crime* (self-control theory) are also representative of current criminological thinking applied to workplace violence (Siegel, 2001).

The Containment Theory distinguishes between two forms of containment that provide defense, protection, or insulation against delinquency or criminality. Outer containment is the structural buffer that holds a person within social bounds. It consists of a variety of factors including 1) a set of reasonable limitations and responsibilities, 2) a social role that guides the person's activities, 3) an opportunity for the individual to achieve status, 4) a sense of belonging and identification with the members of the group, and 5) provisions for alternative ways of satisfaction when one or more of the typical means is closed. Inner containment is personal control that is ensured by such factors as 1) a good self-concept, 2) self-control, 3) a strong ego, 4) a well-developed conscience, 5) a high frustration tolerance, and 6) a high sense of responsibility. According to this theory, workplace violence could happen when internal and external forces push an individual toward crime and these forces fail to

be controlled by his/her inner and outer containment. Workplace violence incidents often seem to reflect a breakdown in the outer containment, along with internal pushes of anger and external pressure of job loss, blocked opportunity for promotion, or a feeling of being wronged by the organization or its employees (Southerland, Collins & Scarborough, 1997).

Many cases of workplace violence between coworkers could be explained by using Agnew's General Strain Theory. It discusses how anger may develop as a consequence of failure to achieve positively valued goals, removal of positively valued stimuli, and the actual or anticipated presentation of negatively valued stimuli (Agnew, 1992). It is about disparity between goals and the means to achieve them. Thus, according to this theory, people are law-abiding. But, when under great pressure, they will resort to crime. This theory could be used to explain many organizational/individual conflicts and disputes in the workplace.

For instance, organizations and individuals might have different goals and priorities. Organizations might focus more on profitability, productivity and competition issues rather than individuals. Likewise, individuals might give more weight to their income (salaries, wages) and their families rather than the organizational needs, missions or goals. In that case, organizations and individuals would try to get the most out of the other, instead of working together and cooperating to achieve each other's goals.

Under the Scientific Management approach, established by Henry Taylor in 1911, individuals are simply a cog in the organizational wheel. They are

interchangeable. Yet, the first step in cutting costs often means eliminating employees. However, workers are the organization's most valuable asset. Under the General Strain theory, the organization's lack of insight into the workers' needs, can lead to work dissatisfaction. Layoffs, downsizing, long work hours, unfair treatment, underpayment for skilled labor, can be a precursor to workplace violence.

The Routine Activities Theory argues that there are three criminal elements of direct contact predatory violations (violence on another person). The lack of any one is sufficient to prevent an occurrence of the crime. They include, 1) motivated offenders, 2) suitable targets, and 3) the absence of capable guardians against a violation (Cohen & Felson, 1993). Workplace violence fits the assumptions of this theory. There are motivated offenders, and easy targets perceived as enemies by the perpetrators. Their workplaces are well known to the offenders, and the offenders believe no one will be able to stop them from committing the violent act. Indeed, almost all of the offenders who kill in the workplace either kill themselves or turn themselves into the police after committing the act (Southerland, Collins & Scarborough, 1997). This theory could be used to explain why incidents of domestic violence occur in the workplace. The offender knows where his/her intended victim can be found and seeks him/her out at the workplace. The organization also could be considered a contributing factor. When the organization has taken no appropriate steps to protect its employees, the violent act can more easily occur.

General Theory or Self-control Theory assumes that offenders have little control over their own behaviors and desires. Thus, crime is a function of poor self-

control. Based on Associated Press and United Press International databases, Drs. Mittie Southerland, Pamela Collins and Kathryn Scarborough examined all cases of workplace violence incidents, excluding incidents that may have been committed by persons who were not employees and occurred in conjunction with a crime, such as robbery. They found that offenders of workplace violence were not “criminals,” but the pressure to resolve the problem as they saw it overrode their self-control. The offender’s long-term interests reached a low enough priority to allow his/her immediate gratification to take over (1997).

#### The Nature or Innate Theory

The nature or innate theory considers violence to be a part of every human, as it is a part of every animal on earth. This theory suggests that as human beings, we must be the most aggressive of all animals because we have successfully destroyed our competitors to achieve the dominant species position. The desire to dominate one another continues. Human history is filled with warfare (Allcorn, 1994). We are the only species on earth who fight over an idea, a belief or a religion. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), in his book *The Leviathan*, concluded that the natural condition of humans is a state of perpetual war of all against all, where no morality exists and everyone lives in constant fear.

David Krus, Edward Nelsen, and James Webb compared the observed Western war cycle with that observed in China for the period between 215 BC and 1945. They counted 15 major wars in China that lasted about 450 years over a total of 2,160 years. The average time of peace would be about 115 years. This is compared

with the estimated average time of peace intervals of about 50 years for Western civilization (Krus, Nelsen & Webb, 1998).

No doubt separating organizations from their surroundings is impossible, simply because organizations are just a small segments of our society. What happens in society affects organizations and vice versa. Violence breeds violence. Unstable and troubled societies produce troubled people and troubled employees. Wars create massive pressure and stress that, in turn, greatly influence individual behaviors and performance. Studies show that men with a military background, or those who are fascinated by the military or paramilitary life commit a great percentage of workplace violence incidents. By definition, they have access to weapons and know how to use them (Baron, 1993, Davis, 1997).

### Stress Theories

Stress theories argue that people become violent when their needs are not met. Aggression and violence are ways of relieving the stress generated within the body (Brief, Schuler & Sell, 1981; Morgan, 1998). Some of the workplace violence cases clearly indicate that stress from managerial practices within the organization can lead to violent acts within the organization (Di Martino, 2000). Capozzoli and McVey (1996) mentioned that people who feel high levels of stress on the job are two times more likely to become violent than unstressed workers.

Along with work settings which are a high risk for violence based on the nature of the employment, other workplace characteristics may predispose to stress and conflict leading to aggression. These can be divided into operational stressors and



employment security stressors. Operational stressors include unrealistic demands on workers, lack of regard for worker's needs, overly authoritarian management, insufficient attention to physical environment and security, inconsistent application of policies and procedures, chronic labor management conflicts, preferential treatment of some employees, ineffective employee grievance procedures, lack of consistency by management, and monotonous and unfulfilling work. Employment security stressors include no opportunity for advancement, layoffs and down-sizing, loss of benefits, reprimands, and fear of termination. In an era where re-engineering of the workplace has become popular, the employee often feels dispensable and powerless. When constructive options no longer exist, violence may be a perceived remedy (Drukteinis, 2003).

Job stress has become a common and costly problem in the American workplace, leaving few workers untouched. For example, a recent study by the Families and Work Institute found that 26 percent of workers surveyed reported they are often or very often burned out or stressed by their work. Another study by Yale University found that three-fourths of employees believe the worker has more on-the-job stress than a generation ago. The Northwestern National Life study found that 40 percent of employees view their jobs as the number one stressor in their lives (Northwestern National Life, 1993; NIOSH, 1999).

In 2000, a study using a random telephone survey of 1,305 American working adults found that workplace stress and long hours are creating a growing phenomenon of desk rage, with increased numbers of employees having arguments and breaking

down under pressure. One of 10 said they work in an atmosphere where physical violence has occurred because of stress. Forty-two percent said yelling and verbal abuse happens in the workplace. While only two percent of workers surveyed said workplace stress has caused them personally to strike a coworker, 29 percent admitted to yelling at coworkers because of stress. Eleven percent said workplace stress is a major problem for them and two-thirds (65 percent) said workplace stress is a problem for them at least occasionally.

One of the major causes of work stress, according to the study, is an unrealistic deadline. One-third of people surveyed said unreasonable deadlines added to their stress (30 percent), with 33 percent blaming an excessive personal workload. Indeed, 52 percent of those surveyed said they had to work more than 12 hours a day to get their job done, and 50 percent of them said they commonly skip lunch to complete their workload (Integra Realty Resources, 2000).

### Behavioral Theories

Behavioral theories indicate that violence is a learned process and will flourish when circumstances reward the behavior. These theories describe violent acts as based on past experience and the consequences derived from those experiences (Kelleher, 1997). If the aggressor achieves his/her goals by using verbal or physical force or its threat, the behavior is reinforced. From the perception of the aggressor, there is no incentive to change. These theories would correspond with sexual harassment incidents in the workplace, especially in organizations which suffer from a hostile work environment.

### Ecological Theory

Ecological theory argues that behavior is affected by the conditions in which people live. Experiments have shown that people will fight each other if food, air, or space are scarce (Greenberg & Baron, 1997). This theory indicates that the environment can influence human behavior and can cause violent behavior (Myers, 1995).

According to the aforementioned survey conducted by Integra Realty Resources in 2000, one of eight American workers surveyed said that overcrowded physical conditions have contributed to their workplace stress. Over 12 percent of them said they work in a cubicle, “like the cartoon character Dilbert”, with that figure rising to 16 percent for white-collar workers (Integra Realty Resources, 2000).

### Sociological Theories

Sociological theories identify the causes of violence as noted in the cultures, roles and stereotypes created by and within society (Flannery, 1995). The being populist ideas that some segments of society are more aggressive or somehow less intelligent than others, can place minority people under pressure. As a result, the potential for conflict in society is increased and organizations will suffer from the consequences.

One theory that might explain workplace violence from a sociological perspective is the “Broken Window” theory. According to this theory, tolerating lesser acts of violence in a community creates an environment where more violent behavior is free to take place. Petty crime in a neighborhood is a signal of social

disorder and criminals sense little resistance to their illicit activities. The same explanation can be applied to workplace settings such as hospitals. "If coworkers are abusing each other and that is seen as okay, patients are more likely to commit violent acts" (Rickers, 2003, p. 3).

The Social Identity theory may be helpful in explaining workplace violence from both behavioral and sociological perspectives. This theory argues that social cooperation is a product of the salience (or activation) of a social identity. A social identity can be thought of as the psychological link between the self and the collective, in this case the workplace community. Through social identification, the organization becomes a positive reference group for the employee. When an employee identifies with the organizational community, he or she will see him or herself as interdependent with this community and behave cooperatively, upholding the organization rules and values (Morrison, 2001). Tyler (1998) made a similar point. He argues that there are two inter-related aspects to self-worth: collective and individual. In the context of the public organization, the collective aspect is reflected in pride in being a member of a department or an organizational community. The individual aspect is reflected in having respect within that community. As self-worth within a community increases in terms of pride and respect, social cooperation within that community also increases. Individuals strive for a sense of belonging and significance. Thus being a member of a positive reference group is also important to them.

For those who perpetrate violence, the evidence suggests that the organizational community is not seen as a positive reference group. Indeed, the workplace may even become a negative reference group as an employee drifts toward a deviant identity. Unfortunately, building a positive identity within the workplace is not a simple and straightforward means to an end. There may be barriers to the process of identifying with the organizational community (Morrison, 2001).

In addition, social disenfranchisement and alienation theories are used to explain workplace violence and aggression. Social stressors and demographic factors in this rapidly changing society are also implicated. In a complex and uncaring world, family and houses of worship no longer provide the same level of support as these previous pillars of social stability once did (Bloom, 2001).

### Psychodynamic Theories

Psychodynamic theories indicate that people are influenced by their past and ways others related to them. These theories look at early childhood experiences including abuse and/or reinforcement of violence (Drukteinis, 2003). Individuals who are abused in their childhood tend to replicate patterns of abuse in their interactions with others as the “victimized-by-victims” theory suggests. Anger may be bottled up until it explodes in violent actions (Flannery, 1995). In the workplace, this violence is redirected toward individuals who remind people of a childhood protagonist. A group of individuals collectively may have some significance as classic authority figures.

Diamond and Furbacher (1997) examined the psychological nature of the relationship between aggressive behavior at work, management practices and

organizational culture from a psychodynamic perspective. They concluded that workplace violence is the result of some real world trauma or top-down action or set of actions within public organizations. Hence, it is typically externally driven. An example would be cases of homicide and suicide following by layoffs. The oppressive organizational culture promotes persecutory organizational identities among employees who feel abused, mistreated, and disrespected. Understanding these emotions and feelings is essential for interpretation of violent behaviors.

### Interactive Theory

Interactive theory suggests that violent or aggressive behavior is a process influenced by others. The theory proposes that if we are hostile toward other people, this can create aggression within them, which in turn leads to aggressive acts, therefore validating the initial hostility. It becomes a vicious circle. In this way, for instance, hostile acts by a service user or aggressive manager may lead to a hostile response by an employee and vice versa.

The researcher reviewed several cases of workplace homicide and found that, in some cases, the motive behind committing this horrible act was the desire to enact revenge from the person (s) who were perceived by the perpetrator to have caused the troubles and problems. In some cases, the perpetrators stated clearly that killing was simply pay back. Also, in some cases, perpetrators let the people whom they thought were nice to them escape the shooting scene without harm. Again, this relates to the General Strain theory and Self-control theory -- the amount of pressure a person is capable of handling and their ability to control and properly manage emotions.

### Chemically Induced Theories

Chemically induced theories propose that chemicals change behavior and some can induce aggression. Chemicals may be introduced externally in such forms as alcohol and drugs, or internally during physical illness or at a time of hormonal imbalance. The chemical change can be induced within individuals by circumstances or situations. During times of trauma and stress, the body experiences a surge of chemicals such as adrenaline, noradrenaline, cortisone, and endomorphs from the adrenal gland. This is often referred to as the “adrenaline buzz”. Some workers have been found to act aggressively in order to stimulate the adrenaline rush within themselves (Flannery, 1995).

One of the newest developing theories that connects the ecology theory with the chemically induced theories is the neurotoxicity theory. The theory argues that murder, rape and other crimes are often rooted in heavily polluted soil and water. Research shows correlations between lead, manganese levels and high crime rates. A comparison study of crime rates and pollution levels for 573 counties in eight states (New York, Florida, California, Illinois, Alabama, Mississippi, Wisconsin and Minnesota) concluded that counties with the highest rates of violent crime also had unusually high pollution levels. The 19 counties with the largest releases of manganese -up to 33,000 pounds- topped the crime statistics. Crime rates in those counties were more than double that of low-manganese counties, with 680 crimes per 100,000 residents (Pearce, 2003). This theory could be used to explain some workplace violence cases, since pollution’s effect on employees and workers may

theoretically be a key to spark dangerously erratic behavior such as homicide and fuel violent incidents in the workplace violence.

## Definitions of the Key Concepts

### Violence

One of the significant challenges to studying workplace violence arises from a lack of agreement regarding the definitions of violence, work or workplace, and workplace violence (Fisher, 2001). Here, “violence” and “aggression” are used interchangeably.

Violence is an act committed or caused by one or more persons that in some way harms another or oneself. Violence may also result from a condition that injures or causes damage to a person’s body, emotions or spirit. The definition of violence in *Webster New World Dictionary of the American Language* adopted by Pease (1995, p. 33) includes both physical and mental injury (“violating another’s rights or sensibilities”) that results from physical force, or “extreme roughness of action.”

Typically violence is thought of as a physical act of brutality, characterized by intense and incensed emotions. Perpetrators of violence are described as “pathologically ignorant of compassion, loving kindness, joy in the joy of others and equanimity” (Spretank, 1991, p. 46). If someone says, “the workplace is becoming violent,” people will tend to think that “someone has been pushed around, hit, stabbed, shot, raped, or in some other way made the object of physical abuse” (Brown, 1987, p. 6). Workplace statistics on violence are about these clear-cut,



physical actions, which can be empirically observed and counted (Chappell & Di Martino, 2000). Nigro and Waugh (1996, p.327) defined workplace violence as “intentional battery, rape, or homicide during the course of employment.”

However, the definition of violence is more complex than a single, physical act of brutality. It includes any covert deed that violates or coerces another in any way. Thus, whatever “violates another, in the sense of infringing upon or disregarding or abusing or denying that other, whether physical harm is involved or not, can be understood as an act of violence” (Brown, 1987, p. 7). Based on that, “violence is physical, mental, emotional, and intellectual coercion, which violates the personhood of anyone who falls victim to it” (Bruce, 1999, 308).

#### Workplace Violence

No doubt assessing the true extent of work-related violence is made difficult by the fact that the available research studies and statistical indices often utilize different criteria for 1) what constitutes violence, 2) who is to be involved and 3) where an incident must take place for it to be considered “work-related”. As a result, a well-documented and generally accepted definition for workplace violence has not yet been articulated yet.

Criteria for definition have never been established because workplace violence is still a new area of study (Nigro & Waugh, 1998a). Defining workplace violence has generated considerable discussion (NIOSH, 2002). Some would include in this definition any language or action that makes one person uncomfortable in the workplace and define it as any form of behavior that is intended to harm current or

previous coworkers or their organization (Folger & Barron, 1996). While others (e.g. Karus, Blander & McArthur, 1995) would include threats and harassment (Keashley, 2002), and all would include any bodily injury inflicted by one person on another.

As a result of the lack of consensus about the definition of what constitutes workplace violence, human resources policies may not account for the wide spectrum of “violent” behaviors. Therefore, one must question the value of human resources policies and how effective they really are. For instance, manifestation of the behaviors may go undetected because managers and supervisors are not educated and trained regarding what “signals” to look for, and how to respond to what they do see.

Capozzoli and McVey (1996) noticed that too often, employers do not consider something violent unless there is physical contact. However, “if an employee is even threatened, that’s an act of violence that needs to be addressed before it turns into something much more serious like homicide (p.77).” One researcher defined workplace violence as a “violent act, including physical assaults and threats of assault, directed toward persons at work or on duty” (Albrecht, 1997, p.9). Based on this definition, workplace violence includes any threats, threatening behavior, acts of violence, or any related conduct which disrupts another’s work performance or the organization’s ability to execute its mission.

The European Commission Experts on Work-Related Violence offered the following definition: “incidents where persons are abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances related to their work, involving an explicit or implicit challenge to their safety, well-being or health” (Wynne, Clarkin, Cox, & Griffiths, 1997). Similarly, the

United Kingdom Health and Safety Executive (HSE) -the government agency responsible for securing health and safety at work- defines workplace violence as “any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted by a member of the public in circumstances arising out of the course of his/her employment” (Pantry, 1996, p.8). While the European Commission definition does not indicate the sources of violence, the latter definition by HSE limits the spectrum of workplace violence. It excludes all types of internal workplace violence by coworkers. Also, all these definitions disregard the types of violence against the organizations’ property.

Chappell and Di Martino (2000) in *the International Labor Organization’s Report on Violence at Work* stated that: “the new profile of violence at work which emerges is one which gives equal emphasis to physical and psychological behavior, and one which gives full recognition to the significance of minor acts of violence” (p.12). This quote confirms that workplace violence is not just physical. Indeed, evidence is accumulating that nonphysical or more psychological forms of aggressive behaviors are more frequent than, and equally if not more devastating for, employees (both as targets and witnesses), their supporters (family, friends) and organizations, than physical assaults (Baron & Neuman, 1996). Evidence from medical science demonstrates that threats and harassment can leave people emotionally injured. Emotional or psychological injury in the eyes of medicine is tantamount to physical injury since both forms of injury require treatment. Psychological ailments may even require more treatment than some physical injuries. The expression that “sticks and

stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me” is no longer literally true “if it ever was” (Kinney, 1995, 108).

The most difficult part of this definition is how to recognize emotional impact and measure it. It is difficult to identify and report the emotional impact of any behavior. People may not report the emotional impact of violence for fear of appearing weak or unable to manage their emotions. Nor is there a coordinated data-collection system to process this type of violence (Loveless, 2001). However, this definition also excludes violence directed against organizations and individual property, although it represents a significant issue in the workplace.

In 1995, Myers defined workplace violence as “an extreme behavior intended to (1) abuse, injure, or murder a person in the workplace and/or (2) damage or destroy property in the workplace” (Myers, 1995).

This study defines workplace violence as “any act or behavior explicitly or implicitly that causes or intends to harm -directly or indirectly- and by any means, an organization or its employees physically or psychologically by other people -whether those people are employed by the organization or not- in circumstances arising out of their employment or work, while at work or on duty.”

The following additional definitions help to clarify this statement.

- **Intentional Act or Behavior:** A violent act is an act or behavior explicitly or implicitly intended or premeditated to harm other people or other employee (s). It is important to have the intention to harm. Unplanned and unintentional acts or accidental behavior that left some damage are not

considered acts of violence in the workplace. In other words, a worker might be pushed by a coworker with no intention to harm. The word “any” at the beginning of the definition of workplace violence indicates comprehensiveness of the definition. It does not exclude any harmful acts or behaviors in the workplace whether these behaviors are threats or assaults.

- Harmful Behavior: The word “harm” in the definition means the violent acts are harmful by nature, regardless of what kind of damage they might cause. Also, the harm could be direct or indirect. Workplace homicide victims certainly suffer direct harm. However, witnesses of workplace violence may experience indirect harm, as may their families.
- Means: Violent acts require means or methods to be carried out. In the definition “by any means” implies the variety of the available methods that the perpetrator can use to carry out the harmful act. For example, workplace perpetrators may use their body parts such as hands, legs or feet and even eyes, or they may use any technological methods such as weapons, emails or phones to execute their violent behaviors.
- Target (s): The two objects or targets of violence according to this definition are employees and organizations. Perpetrators of workplace violence might intend to harm the organization’s reputation or damage its properties. It is important to mention at this point that although violence against organization’s property can lead to a wide range of impacts and

reactions, the survey focuses only on violence against employees. Simply, because mostly the violence against persons is more damaging than violence against properties.

- Impact or effect: The violent acts in the workplace may leave the victims physically or psychologically injured. The physical injury or harm could be fatal -as in terror attacks and homicide- or nonfatal as in hitting or pushing. The psychological impact may leave the victims and the witnesses of violent acts emotionally damaged. this definition gives equal weight to psychological as well as physical violence or harm.
- Perpetrator (s): The definition determines clearly that perpetrators of workplace violence can be current employees or ex-employees. Also they can be other people who are not employed by the organization and come to the workplace such as customers or employees' relatives, acquaintances, or friends. This definition focuses only on the wrongdoing against employees or workers, although violent acts might harm people who are not employed by the organization, such as customers. However, it is important to have an effective reporting system that classifies victims of the violent acts in the organization and an efficient compensation system to recompense them.
- Work-Related: This definition includes all incidents or acts related to the victim's work, irrespective of where it takes place. It allows for a full range of circumstances in which employees might be attacked while in the

workplace, or on duty, or in any circumstance relating to their job. That concurs with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) definition of workplace. Workplace may be any location, either permanent or temporary, where an employee performs any work-related duty. This includes, but is not limited to, the buildings and the surrounding perimeters, including the parking lots, field locations, clients' homes (such as social or health services recipients' places of residence), and traveling to and from work assignments.

#### Forms of Workplace Violence

People tend to place all workplace violence into a generic category. However, it is not limited to bodily harm. Violence includes less overt but equally unacceptable behaviors such as verbal intimidation, psychological abuse, and stalking. Also, harassment (sexual, racial, religious, etc.) is a form of violence. Threats, belligerence, and verbal conflicts (such as shouting matches), are all types of violence. About 111,000 acts of workplace violence occur nationwide each year or about 435 per workday (Dunkel, 1994; Johnson & Indvik, 1996b).

As shown in Table 1, researchers do not agree upon one classification for different forms of violence. For example, while Loveless (2001) divided workplace violence into three forms: intimidation, threat of violence, and act of violence, Kinney (1995) suggested three different forms: attack, threat, and harassment. Nigro and Waugh (1996) and Perrone separated homicide from other physical types of violence.

Table 1  
Forms of Workplace Violence

Author (s)	Forms of Workplace Violence		
Kinney (1995)	Attack: to use force against someone in order to harm.	Threat: involves an expression of one's intention to inflict injury.	Harassment: involves behaviors that are designed to trouble or worry victim.
Nigro & Waugh (1996)	Homicide		Other forms of OVC* are rape and sexual harassment.
Perrone (2001)	Fatal assault (homicide)	Nonfatal occupational violence	
Chappell & Di Martino (2000)	Physical such as homicide and other physical attacks.	Nonphysical or psychological like sexual harassment, bullying and mobbing.	
Loveless (2001)	Act of violence: exercise of physical force against another person or property.	Threat of violence: a communicated intent to inflict physical or other harm on any person or on property.	Intimidation: an act toward another person that involves coercion and causes the other person to fear for his or her safety or others' safety.
Rogers (1998) & Keashley (2002)	Physical	Sexual harassment	Emotional
WHO (2002)**	Physical violence	Psychological	
NIOSH (1993)		(emotional abuse)	

\* OVC: Occupational Violent Crime.

\*\* WHO: World Health Organization, United Nation.

This study classifies workplace violence into two categories: violence against the organization and violence against individuals. Workplace violence against the organization can take two forms: physical, such as damaging work or private property, vandalism, sabotage, and theft and psychological as in damaging the organization's reputation. In terms of the violence directed against individuals, this study proposes that a classification of workplace violence against individuals



(workers or employees) should include five major forms of violence: 1) terror attack and threat of terror attack, 2) fatal physical assault (homicide), 3) nonfatal physical assault, 4) psychological or emotional, and 5) harassment.

Although, as some might think, the possibility of being attacked by terrorists or murdered on the job is remote, other nonlethal forms of violence are very damaging and need to be addressed and prevented. Most workplace violence studies focus primarily on physical forms of violence -aggravated or simple assault- directed against employees (e.g., Braverman, 1999; Keashley, 2002). Table 2 shows examples of the last three forms of workplace violence. In terms of other forms of workplace violence, harassment, particularly sexual harassment, has been the focus of much research, policy, and legislative attention (e.g., Fitzgerald, 1997).

Sexual harassment is not easy to classify. Sometimes it takes place physically (e.g. touching), while other times it takes on a psychological form such as sexual comments. That explains why harassment is viewed as a separate form of violence.

Sexual harassment violations can be categorized into two types. The first is "quid pro quo," which arises when there is a sexual advance or a request for sexual favors as a condition of employment. It happens when supervisors and managers use their authority to coerce employees -either with threats or rewards- into having a sexual relationship. The second is the "hostile work environment," which occurs when conduct or communication of a sexual nature creates an intimidating or offensive work environment. Therefore, the former requires a supervisor's knowledge or participation, while the latter does not (Segal, 1997; Wenk, 1998; Muhl, 1998).

Table 2

## Examples of Workplace Violent Behaviors Against Individuals

Physical Acts	Psychological (Emotional)	Harassment (Sexual)
Shooting and stabbing	Threat (by any means of communication)	Rape (actual or attempt unwanted intercourse)
Rape	Bullying	Suggestive/offensive stories or jokes
Kidnapping	Mobbing	Sexual proposition and sexual assault
Robbery	Intimidation	Subject to terms of endearment
Battering	Ostracism or isolation	Intrusive or personal questions
Wounding	Targeting for rumors, slander, or ridicule	A forceful attempt to touch, fondle, kiss or grab
Burning	Aggressive posturing	Pornographic materials or objects
Kicking	Hostile behavior	Verbal abuse
Biting	Glaring	Offering money for sex
Scratching	Staring or leering	Forcible sex offenses
Stalking	Leaving offensive messages (by any means of communication)	Inappropriate discussions or comments about someone's body or sexuality
Slapping	Rude gestures	Intimidating presence
Striking	Yelling or shouting	Obscene phone calls or emails
Punching	Attacking verbally with insulting or harsh statements	Threat of dismissal, demotion, or transfer unless you comply with certain demands (quid pro quo).
Hitting (by object)	Abusing (verbally or not)	Pressure to engage in sexual activity by threats or rewards
Spitting	Blaming	Targeting for rumors of sexual promiscuity
Squeezing	Ignoring or deliberate silence	Hostile environment harassment
Pinching	Name-calling	Lip smacking
Grabbing	Swearing	Leaning over (entering others' personal space)
Shoving	Innuendo	Touching oneself inappropriately
Throwing	Humiliation	Talking in a flirtatious manner
Bumping into with unnecessary force	Victimizing	Exposing himself/herself.
	Criticizing in front of others	Staring at someone's body
	Harassment (Moral, Racial, Religious, and Sexual harassment)	Using terms of endearment and whistling

Needless to say, both men and women are subject to sexual harassment at work, but women experience more incidents of sexual harassment than men. Surveys administered as early as 1979 indicated that numerous women in state employment were affected by sexual harassment, with as many as 59 percent of female employees in the state of Illinois reporting a direct experience with sexual harassment. In a random survey of female state employees in Florida, 46 percent claimed that they received unwanted sexual attention from male coworkers which caused them to feel threatened or humiliated (McIntyre & Renick, 1982). In the private sector, the record is not much better. A 1991 survey taken by the American Management Association revealed that 52 percent of member companies reported one or more allegations of sexual harassment within a year of the survey (Strickland, 1995). The trends continue to the extent that 50 percent to 75 percent of employed women will experience sexual harassment on the job according to the National Organization for Women (NOW) (Wallis, 2000).

More generalized workplace harassment includes bullying, mobbing, emotional abuse, moral harassment and passive-aggressive behaviors. Actions that are intended to cause harm indirectly. This represents the focus of current research and policy attention (e.g., Neumann & Baron, 1998; Richman, 1999). Examples of these behaviors include, but are not limited to, exclusion from key work activities, silent treatment, being denigrated in front of others, and yelling or screaming (Keashley, 2002).

With regard to the impact of these different forms of violence, the range and nature of the effects are remarkably similar. In a comparative review of literature related to these three forms of violence (physical, psychological, and sexual harassment), Rogers (1998) noted that while there are outcomes unique to each form, there appear to exist a set of principle outcomes associated with all of these forms of violence. Whether physically assaulted, emotionally abused or sexually harassed, victims seem to experience 1) immediate reactions such as anger, humiliation, fear and/or tension, 2) physical symptoms such as nausea, headaches, sleep difficulties and/or weight loss/gain, 3) emotional ailments such as decreased levels of self-esteem and/or increased levels of anxiety or depression, and 4) organizational outcomes such as increased intentions to leave the job and/or decreased levels of job satisfaction and productivity, organizational commitment, and/or morale (Rogers, 1998). A similar observation has been made in the traumatic stress literature. One researcher notes that despite the differing personalities of the victims and the differing circumstances surrounding the events, victims share remarkably similar emotional reactions and psychological defenses (Keashley, 2002).

This study focuses on all forms of workplace violence. It is important to look at all the violent behaviors included under each category as a continuum, since there is a clear overlapping between the behaviors included in each one (Table 2). Workplace violence sometimes starts psychologically (such as harassment and bullying) and may continue that way with or without developing into any physical

form of violence (such as physical assault or attack or even homicide). However, the reverse may also be true.

### Typology of Workplace Violence

In an attempt to promote better understanding of workplace violence, a number of perpetrator typologies have been suggested. Such conceptual distinctions will facilitate investigation into the etiology, pattern, and control of the problem. For example, one psychologist has identified five main types of workplace violence perpetrators: the angry customer, the medically ill person, the batterer in domestic violence, the criminal, and the disgruntled employee of the organization (Flannery, 1995). Other experts, after scrutinizing numerous workplace violence case histories, have identified seven categories of workplace assailants: criminals, personal/domestic disputants, disgruntled employees, mentally ill, disgruntled customer/clients, disgruntled student/trainees, abusive supervisors (Kennedy, 2003).

Workplace violence incidents can be divided into categories depending on the relationship between the assailant or the perpetrator and the workplace. Studies have proposed a fourfold classification of violent incidents (Denenberg, Denenberg & Braverman, 1996; Loveless, 2001; Long Island Coalition for Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention, 1996).

#### Criminal Intent or Violence by Strangers

This type of incident, which accounts for the most lethal violence, results from crimes committed by an intruder or a stranger. This stranger has no legitimate

relationship or connection to the worker or workplace and enters the workplace, usually on the pretense of being a customer, to commit a robbery or other violent act. Workers also may be victimized by strangers outside the traditional workplace settings but while acting within the course and scope of their employment. For example, social workers and medical personnel may be attacked while they are conducting home visits. Strangers commit the vast majority of workplace homicides (85 percent), such as robberies of retail establishments (Kennedy, 2003). The Bureau of Labor statistics recently indicates that strangers commit 24 percent of workplace violence ("Preventing", 2004).

#### Violence by Customer/Client

This perpetrator has a legitimate relationship with the organization and becomes violent while being served by the organization. This category includes former or current customers, clients, patients, students, inmates, and any other group for which the organization provides services. The violence can be committed in the workplace or, as with service providers, outside the workplace but while the worker is performing a job-related function.

Violence of this kind is divided into two types. One type involves people who may be inherently violent, such as prison inmates, mental health service recipients, or other client populations. The other type involves people who are not known to be inherently violent, but are situationally violent. Something in the situation induces an otherwise nonviolent client or customer to become violent. Typically, provoking situations are those which are frustrating to the client or customer, such as denial of

needed or desired services or delays in receiving such services. It is believed that a large proportion of customer/client incidents occur in the health care industry. In settings such as nursing homes or psychiatric facilities, the victims are often patient caregivers. Police officers, prison staff, flight attendants, and teachers are other examples of workers who may be exposed to this kind of workplace violence. According to the Bureau of Labor statistics customers or clients commit 44 percent of workplace violence (“Preventing”, 2004).

#### Worker-on-Worker or Violence by Coworkers

In coworker incidents, the perpetrator has an employment relationship with the workplace. The perpetrator can be a current or former employee, a prospective employee, a current or former supervisor or a manager. Coworker violence that occurs outside the workplace, but which results or arises from the employment relationship would be included in this category. This type of violence can again be divided into two types; violence between supervisors and subordinates, and violence between workers. Worker-on-worker fatalities account for approximately seven percent to 11 percent of all workplace homicides. According to the Bureau of Labor statistics 22 percent of workplace violence are committed by coworkers, seven percent by bosses, and three percent by former employees (“Preventing”, 2004).

#### Violence by Personal Relationship

This type of perpetrator usually does not have a relationship with the organization but has a personal relationship with the intended victim. This category

includes victims of domestic violence who are assaulted or threatened while at work. The perpetrator can be current or former spouse or partner, a relative or a friend who has a personal dispute with the worker and enters the workplace to harass, threaten, injure or kill (Moe & Bell, 2004).

Again, these categories can be very helpful in the design of strategies to prevent workplace violence, since each type of violence requires a different approach for prevention, and some workplaces may be at higher risk for certain types of violence.

### Globalization of Workplace Violence

Violence in the workplace is not a problem confined to the United States of America. Rather, it is a global issue that transcends the boundaries of a particular country, work setting or occupational group (Chappell & Di Martino, 2000). The late 1980s and 90s saw rapidly increasing concern with the problem of workplace violence, particularly in North America, Europe and Australia (VandenBos & Bulatao, 1996; Leather, Brady, Lawrence, Beale & Cox, 1999). Along with a surge in research interest has come much published guidance at the global, national and professional or occupational levels (e.g. CA/OSHA, 1995; OSHA, 1996). Research was sparked by the realization that violence is becoming a common reality in many workplaces around the globe. For example, in the U.S., workplace violence represents a national epidemic (NIOSH, 1992), and an occupational health problem of significant proportion (Fletcher, Brakel, & Cavanaugh, 2000).



Although researchers and practitioners are undoubtedly united in their quest to “do something” to combat workplace violence, there are some major difficulties to be overcome when trying to summarize findings and experiences both from around the world and within a single country, profession or occupation. At the international level, there are widespread differences between countries in their awareness and recognition of the workplace violence problem and the meaning of workplace violence. These realities shape different conceptions of the nature of the problem, as well as ameliorative strategies. The most obvious example of this is the predominant emphasis given to “worker-on-worker” violence in American studies of the subject (VandenBos & Bulatao, 1996), compared to the client or customer-related violence focus in United Kingdom research (Leather, Brady, Lawrence, Beale, & Cox, 1999).

The data extracted from the International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS) provides one of the most complete sets of internationally comparable information on workplace violence (excluding homicide). In 1996, 130,000 employees aged 16 years and over were randomly selected from 32 countries around the world. The employees were interviewed with regard to their experiences of victimization in a number of contexts, including on the job (Chappell & Di Martino 2000).

- On average, 10 percent of all acts of victimization reported by women were experienced while they were at work. The comparable figure for males was, on average, 13 percent. In general though, women faced a higher risk of becoming victims at work than their male counterparts. The exception was nonsexual assaults recorded in formerly Eastern European countries and

Africa where males more frequently experienced these offenses than female employees.

- Victimization rates were lowest in regions where women were less frequently employed through external sources (Asia and Africa). With a few exceptions, victimization rates tended to be lowest in Eastern European countries.
- Sexual incidents constituted the highest proportion of all workplace victimizations. Industrialized nations and Latin America recorded the highest average proportion of sexual victimization (in excess of five percent). In France and Argentina, over 15 percent of women respondents revealed experiencing some form of sexual harassment at work.
- Of those subjected to sexual harassment, a significant proportion involved “serious” abuses. Approximately eight percent were raped and about 10 percent endured incidents of attempted rape and indecent assault.
- With respect to violence in general, France, Argentina, Romania, Canada and England reported the highest rates of assaults and sexual harassment on the job. French employees were most likely to believe that they have been victims of violence in the workplace (11.2 percent of males and 8.9 percent of females), followed by Argentina (6.1 percent of males and 11.8 percent of females), Romania (8.7 percent of males and 4.1 percent of females), Canada (3.9 percent of males and five percent of females), and England and Wales (3.2 percent of males and 6.3 percent of females).

The International Labor Organization (ILO), the International Council of Nurses (ICN), the World Health Organization (WHO), and Public Services International (PSI) have formed a joint program on workplace violence. The program aims to provide guidance for the development and implementation of international, national and local guidelines or policies to address and eliminate workplace violence in health care settings. A new research study conducted by this joint program shows that half of the health sector personnel surveyed in six countries (Brazil, Bulgaria, Lebanon, Portugal, South Africa, and Thailand) had experienced at least one incident of physical or psychological violence in the year prior to the study. In South Africa that figure reached 61 percent, followed by Portugal (60 percent), Thailand (54 percent), Lebanon (41 percent) and Bulgaria 37 percent (WHO, 2002).

The research found out that there were no specific workplace policies in place to prevent or respond to workplace violence in those countries. This resulted in under-reporting of violent incidents, poor follow-up of reported incidents, no sanction of the perpetrators and dissatisfied victims.

The research also highlighted the key interrelationship between stress and violence. For example, in South Africa a significant number of victims reported suffering from symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after experiencing an incidence of violence. At the same time stress can also lead to violent behavior. The data further confirmed that witnesses are often stressed by their exposure to violence (Corville & Bernardi, 1999; WHO, 2002).

In the 15 countries of the European Union, a survey in 1996 revealed that four percent of workers had been victims of physical violence, two percent had suffered sexual harassment and eight percent had suffered from acts of intimidation or bullying. A 1996 European Union survey based on 15,800 interviews in its 15 member states showed that four percent of workers (six million) were subjected to physical violence in the preceding year, two percent (three million workers) to sexual harassment, and eight percent (12 million workers) to intimidation and bullying (Chappell & Di Martino 2000). French employees were the most likely to believe they had been victims of violence in the workplace, with 11.2 percent of females and 8.9 percent of males reporting assaults over the previous year. In addition, 19.8 percent of females reported sexual incidents in the same 12-month period (Rapin, 1999). The global statistics, therefore, bear out similar patterns to those of the United States. There is a global emergence of workplace violence that runs across all cultural lines.

Moving away from the global stage, an attempt to provide an exhaustive account of the existing empirical knowledge of selected national or regional data is beyond the core of the current study. Furthermore, given the inadequacy of data collections and the problems of comparative analysis, the utility of such an inventory is questionable.

However, the following review of selective published data serves to provide an indication of the more significant patterns of, and trends in, workplace violence.

In the United Kingdom, a survey conducted by the British Retail Consortium into crime in the retail sector found more than 11,000 retail workers were victims of physical violence on the job in 1994-95 fiscal year, and 350,000 reported threats and verbal abuse. The majority of physical attacks (59 percent) occurred when the employees were trying to prevent theft. This is a training issue, of course – employees would be cautioned not to approach thieves. Other causes of physical violence derive from dealing with troublemakers, 16 percent; robbery incidents, 10 percent; angry customers, five percent; drunk or drugged people, five percent. This survey found that the risk of physical violence for retail staff was 5/1,000/year, while the risk of threatened violence was 35/1,000/year, and the risk of verbal abuse was 81/1,000/year (Chappell & Di Martino, 2000).

In Germany, an extensive national survey conducted by the Federal Institute of Occupational Health and Safety in 1991, disclosed that 93 percent of the women questioned had been sexually harassed at the workplace during their working lives.

In France, domestic violence, and workplace violence as a result, is embedded in a different socio-economic political reality than in the U.S. One of the most terrifying workplace violence incidents took place on March 27, 2002, when Richard Durn opened fire at a city council meeting in suburban Paris killing eight council members and wounding 19 others before being restrained (CNN, 3/27/2002). A similar incident occurred in Switzerland on September 2001, for much the same reason. A Swiss man who had a grudge against Zug City officials went on a shooting

rampage during a session at the state legislature killing 14 people and injured 16 before killing himself.

The subjection of women to violence at the workplace is a problem currently gaining interest and attention in France. A national survey made in 2000 shows that more than two percent of the responding women had been subjected to violence of a physical or sexual nature during the past year. Various forms of psychological violence, from insults to bullying, had been experienced by 17 percent. The women who had been exposed to psychological violence tended to become more depressed or stressed. They took drugs more often and had more sick days than women who were not harassed (Karlsson, 2002).

Another report from Japan stated that corporate downsizing, because of the severe economic recession in 1996, led to increased complaints of bullying and fears of violence. In Japan, where people were virtually guaranteed lifetime employment, dealing with the idea of layoffs was very difficult. This resulted in suicides and suicide attempts. The Tokyo Managers' Union established a "bullying hot-line" that received more than 1,700 requests for consultations in two short periods in June and October of 1996, with many seeking urgent mental health treatment. It was later found that many of the calls complaining about abusive treatment and bullying came from the suicide victims' surviving family members (Chappell & Di Martino, 2000, p.17). In Australia, violence against public contact workers such as teachers, school bus drivers, police officers, flight attendants, hospital staff and workers has increased

rapidly in recent years and represents a real challenge to public employers (Swanton, 1998).

### Workplace Violence in the United States

When violence occurs in the workplace, the cost in human terms extends far beyond the immediate loss of life. The U.S. has the highest homicide rate in the industrialized world. Criminologists call the trends in workplace homicide the fastest growing form of murder in the U.S. (Elliott & Jarrett, 1994; Johnson & Indvik, 1996b). Not surprisingly, workplace violence is the fastest growing crime being tracked by the FBI (Johnson & Indvik, 1996a).

Nearly 1,000 to 1,400 workers are murdered at work every year (Piturro, 2001). Workplace violence is responsible for 14 percent of job-related deaths according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (Zachary, 1998). According to a study by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (1992), 750 people have been murdered at work each year since 1980. Northwestern National Life Insurance (1993) estimates that 2.2 million Americans are attacked each year and another 6.3 million workers are threatened while at their place of employment. During 1994, approximately one million people were victims of violent incidents at work and represented 15 percent of the victims of violent acts in the United States. Women constituted 60 percent of victims (BLS, 1996). In 1995, violent actions at workplaces resulted in 1,262 deaths, of which 10 percent were caused by fellow or former employees, (Keim, 1999), and 1,144 in 1996 (BLS, 1997).

These homicides constituted 14 percent of worker deaths (USDOL, 1996). While more men were homicide victims at work, homicide was and continues to be the leading cause of death for women in the workplace (Toscano & Windau, 1996).

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI), there were 709 workplace homicides in the U.S. in 1998 or 13 murders every week (Piturro, 2001), accounting for 12 percent of the total 6,026 fatal work injuries (OSHA, 1999). Estimates of nonfatal workplace assaults vary dramatically, but a reasonable estimate from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) is that approximately one million people are assaulted while at work or on duty each year (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2001). This figure represents 15 percent of the acts of violence experienced by U.S. residents aged 12 or older (Johnson & Indvik, 1996b; Bachman, 1994; Scott, 2001).

These figures do not include the numerous incidents that go unreported, which are estimated to be more than 50 percent (Bachman, 1994). Nor do they include threats made at work. The primary problem is that when an injury incident does not result in lost work time, it may not be reported to supervisors or public authorities (Keim, 1999). Bureau of Labor Statistics data, which is survey-based, includes incidents that result in a day or more away from work (BLS, 1996). Great numbers of daily occurrences of nonphysical forms of violence against employees go unreported and that makes it difficult to address or track. Additionally, sabotaging equipment and injuries associated with this behavior may be difficult to assign responsibility for the action and intent to harm.



Statisticians and researchers often fail to separate the violence that occurs in the course of another criminal act such as robbery, with the violence tied to the work setting, making tracking difficult (Keim, 1999). Moreover, researchers suggest that the measuring of violent acts is vastly understated in that the figures do not reflect verbal, indirect and passive-aggressive behaviors which are more pervasive (Baron & Neuman, 1996). However, perhaps more than any statistical information, the widespread use and understanding of the phrase “going postal” points out the increased awareness and prevalence of workplace violence in American society (Keim, 1999). The term “going postal” became part of the national lexicon following a series of workplace homicides at the U.S. Postal Service during the early to mid 1990s.

Violence in the workplace costs organizations and workers billion of dollars in lost wages and productivity, property damage, theft, medical expenses, and lawsuits. The cost to the employee may include death, stress, depression, anxiety, and fear for their safety in the workplace, which is immeasurable (Chenier, 1998). In 1992, violence in the workplace alone cost employers \$4.2 billion. Considering the variety of critical incidents that can affect a workplace, costs can reach as high as \$23.8 billion a year. The cost to an organization for a single critical incident can reach \$250,000 (Frolkey, 1996). Nuckols (1994) mentions that acts of violence by employees occur every day and cost American organizations an estimated \$75 billion a year. This includes property damage, physical assault, stress, and legal expenses, not including managerial time involved in addressing these incidents.

## Government and Workplace Violence

“Employer” is the most common answer to the legal question of who is liable for workplace violence. With regard to the employers’ obligation to protect workers from attacks by outsiders, courts in Louisiana, Delaware and Florida have ruled that “employees attacked at work are not limited to workers’ compensation remedies if they show that their employer was negligent in failing to provide adequate security” (Nigro & Waugh, 1996, p. 327). But the question now is, what have the federal and state governments done to prevent workplace violence?

The Federal Occupational Safety and Health Act and its state counterparts require employers to provide their employees with a workplace which is free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to employees (Chauhan, 1998). The Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has authority (under the 1970 Occupational Safety and Health Act’s general duty clause) to investigate and cite employers who fail to take feasible steps to prevent or abate a recognizable violence hazard in the workplace (Bowman & Zigmond, 1997). In 1992, OSHA issued an interpretation and compliance letter in which it noted the growing attention focused on workplace criminal violence (U.S. Department of Labor, 1992). While this letter recognized that there were no specific standards addressing criminal violence in the workplace, it did cite the general duty clause as a source of protection (Vaughn, 2001).

Subsequent to issuance of this letter, OSHA made prevention of workplace violence a priority. OSHA urged employers to undertake strategies to address

workplace violence and referred to state agency programs in the states of Washington, New Jersey, and California as providing examples to emulate (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999).

At the state level, legislation addressing the issue of workplace violence has been adopted in a few states. The Rhode Island Workplace Violence Protection Act of 2001 was enacted, permitting employers to seek a temporary restraining order and an injunction prohibiting further unlawful acts by an individual at the work site. Nevada also passed legislation allowing employers to seek court orders to prevent harassment in the workplace. California extended the time given to investigate hate crime law violations (Nelson, 2001).

In 1997, James Bowman and Christopher Jude Zigmond explored state policies to deal with workplace violence and examined whether or not adequate state policies are in place under OSHA to address the problem. They found that on a four-scale strategy (a statement of policy to prevent workplace violence, a statement of prohibited conduct, a schedule of penalties for misconduct, and procedures for making, investigating, and resolving retaliation complaints), most states are at risk since their approaches do not fulfill the requirements of a comprehensive policy (the four-scale strategy). Just one, California, has an adequate policy (three out of four elements), but it may be insufficient to withstand legal challenge since not all four standards are addressed (Bowman & Zigmond, 1997).

In 1999, Nigro and Waugh conducted an exploratory study of 38 cities and counties with populations of 50,000 or more in Georgia. Their study revealed that

only four (10.5 percent) had workplace violence policies and related programs in place. Almost 75 percent of the respondents (chief executive officers) indicated that there had never been workplace violence problems in their jurisdictions and about 50 percent expressed the belief that existing personnel policies on employee conduct and discipline were sufficient. In the four cases where policies of some sort existed, they had originated in and were administered by the human resources office or department. Policy coverage typically included violence by clients, by employees and their families, against women, and related to drug and alcohol abuse. These policies were not comprehensive, dealing with a limited range of topics such as reporting and handling of complaints, documentation of cases, conflict management training, and a zone tolerance statement (Nigro & Waugh, 1999).

It is important to mention that since September 11, 2001, additional legislations have been proposed that will effect the safety protection requirements in some industries, and provide guidelines to others. Terrorism, as well as biological and chemical exposure in the workplace take violence to a whole new level. Governments are expected be prepared to face such acts.

To summarize the major points of this chapter, while there is enrichment in the theories that attempt to explain workplace violence, there is a lack of a unified definition of this concept. As a result, the researcher suggested a new definition that incorporates the different elements of workplace violence. To enhance knowledge of these elements, different forms and types of workplace violence also were presented.

Finally, the global and national extent of the problem, as well as governmental efforts to combat it, were part of the discussion.

Based on the information in this chapter, the researcher identified 10 workplace violence forms to be measured at the city level: Terror attack or threat of terror attack, homicide, physical assault, rape, harassment, threats, and psychological forms of violence. Due to the lack of reliable empirical data on these violence types against city government employees, the researcher depended human resources or personnel directors' perception of the level of violence in their city departments on a 5-point scale from "no problem to serious problem".

There are several federal government agencies that compile data about workplace violence, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) at the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) at the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. However, most of these federal agencies depend on state and local agencies voluntarily to report workplace violence incidents. Other federal agencies use surveys to collect their data. As a result, these agencies warn against using their data without taking these limitations into consideration. Additionally, research shows most of workplace violence incidents go unreported by victims.

## CHAPTER III

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND MODEL OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

The growing problem of workplace violence has attracted attention from numerous organizations and management researchers (e.g. Mantell & Albrecht, 1994; Labig, 1995; Myers, 1995; Nigro & Waugh, 1996, 1998a&b). For these researchers, workplace violence is a complicated issue, which involves studies of origins of workplace violence, legal issues, and prevention strategies.

In addition to discussing profiles of potentially violent employee and early warning signs of workplace violence, this chapter has two major sections. The first will discuss different causes of workplace violence, and the second will present prevention methods. The study suggests a model of workplace violence prevention. This model classifies organizations into three groups: Violence-Prone Organizations, Violence-Prepared Organizations, and Violence-Free Organizations. The discussion in this chapter aims to transform Violence-Prone into Violence-Prepared Organizations and to examine the role of city governments and HRM in that regard.

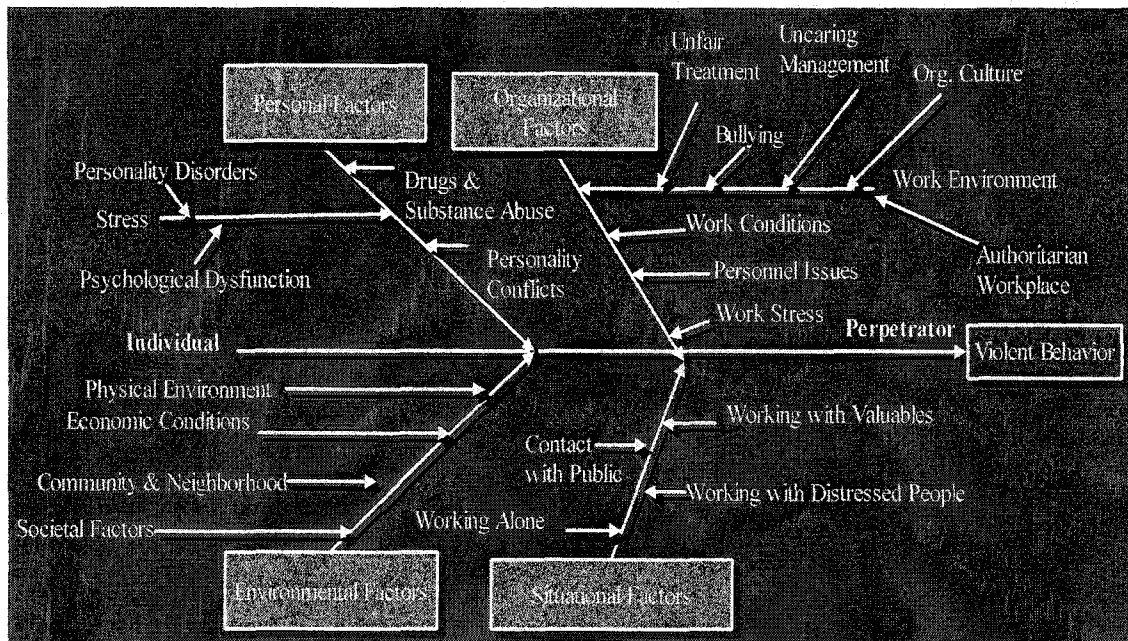
#### Causes of Workplace Violence

A review of the literature about the theories on the causal origins of workplace violence makes it patently clear that workplace violence is a very complex, multifaceted problem. Mono-causal explanations are inappropriate (Perrone, 2001).

General taxonomies of factors associated with an increased risk of violence have been offered in the literature. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine the entire spectrum of opinion. However, it is important to devote some attention to a targeted overview of the general factors -with enhanced focus on the organizational causes of the problem - as predictors of workplace violence. Any attempt to confront and stem workplace violence must begin with an understanding of the various factors that cause the problem. To simplify, the range of suggested contributory factors has been grouped according to four possible levels of analysis: individual, environmental, situational/occupational, and organizational/managerial as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Causes of Workplace Violence Model



This model shows that, based on the available literature on the origins of workplace violence and the scant literature that focuses on government workers in

particular, the levels of causal factors are embedded within each other. Bulatao and VandenBos (1996) noted that: A violent incident in a workplace is seen as the culmination of stressful interaction, aggravated by a vicious cycle of misconceptions, frustration, and anger. Thus, violent behavior, which causes an ordinary individual to become a perpetrator, is an interaction influenced by individual factors of the employee, supervisor or manager and/or client, while embedded within the organizational, and societal environments.

### Personal Factors

There are numerous well-established psychological imperatives for violence. Long periods of frustration, stress, agitated depression, and certain personality disorders are often linked with aggression and violence. Singular, traumatizing occurrences, such as separation from a partner and the death of a loved one, can operate as psychological triggering events for violence (Vaughn, 2001; Urban & Bennett, 1999). Delusional disorders, fixation, or an obsession with another individual may also lead to aggressive behavior (Kelleher, 1997; Braverman, 1999). Many perpetrators are mentally ill or troubled by one or more personal problems and may be predisposed to violence as a result of their illnesses. Psychological dysfunction is prevalent in about 25 percent of cases of workplace violence (Atkinson, 2000). Personality conflicts, alcoholism, drug and substance abuse, an abusive childhood, compulsive gambling, mental problems, family and marriage problems, financial and legal problems account for a majority of violent episodes in the workplace (Johnson & Indvik, 1996b; Zachary, 1998).



Perpetrators do not always commit workplace violence on the spur of the moment. The lethal employee is often deeply frustrated with a variety of life circumstances over a significant period of time with which he or she can no longer cope (Kinney, 1996). According to *Federal Human Resources Week* it would be faulty to consider workplace violence strictly a mental health problem rather than behavioral (Federal Human Resources Week, no. 7, 1998), since not all work crimes are committed by mentally ill employees (Kelleher, 1997). In other words, while mental illness is often associated with violence, only a minority of people with mental disorders is actually violent and most violent offenders are not suffering from mental illness. When individuals do become violent due to a mental illness, they are usually more easily recognized by their bizarre or unusual behavior and may have a documented history of treatment or hospitalization (Drukteinis, 1996).

A substantial body of research indicates that individuals differ considerably in their propensity to violence. While some respond mildly to even strong provocation, others react with strong emotions and overt aggression to even seemingly mild forms of annoyance (Baron & Richardson, 1994). Several theories can be used to explain the behavioral differences.

#### Theory of Type A Behavior Pattern

This theory classifies individuals into type A and Type B. Type A individuals are often impatient and irritable. They prefer to work alone and, when they have to work with others, desire to control the situation. Individuals classified as Type B show the opposite pattern of behavior and demonstrate a much calmer demeanor.

Furthermore, Type A's lose their tempers more frequently and demonstrate higher levels of aggression than Type B's. In work settings, Type A's report a higher frequency of conflict with subordinates than Type B's and demonstrate tendencies toward aggression and irritability on the job (Baron, 1989). Neuman and Baron (1997) found a significant relationship between Type A Behavior Pattern and workplace violence.

#### Self-Monitoring Behavior Theory

Persons classified as high in self-monitoring possess considerable social sensitivity and alter their words or deeds to produce favorable impressions on others. In contrast, persons low in self-monitoring seem less aware of others' reactions or, at least, are less concerned with them (Neuman & Baron, 1998). Accordingly, low self-monitors tend to behave in a manner consistent with their lasting attitudes and values and do not readily adjust their actions to changing situational conditions (Neuman & Baron, 1998; Snyder, 1987). This suggests that high, as opposed to low, self-monitors would be more appeasing in conflict situations and less provocative in their behavior toward others. Researchers have found some support for this hypothesis (Baron, 1989; Neuman & Baron, 1997).

#### Theory of Hostile Attributional Bias

This theory suggests that when individuals interpret another person's behavior as hostile, they are likely to feel aggrieved and retaliate. Research shows that some individuals perceive hostile intent on the part of others even when this intent is

lacking (e.g., Dodge & Coie, 1987) In fact, these individuals develop an expectancy that others will respond to them in hostile ways prior to any interaction taking place. These individuals are, therefore, more likely to behave aggressively in response to even minor provocation (Neuman & Baron, 1998).

In addition to the nine theories discussed in Chapter 2, The goal for choosing the previous three theories, was not pick and choose the best theories, but rather to start with and try to test some elements of the personal factors as a cause of violence.

One lesson to learn from this discussion about the personal causes of workplace violence is that a number of complex personal factors can cause a perpetrator to commit the violent act. In the short-run, few, if any, of these factors are controllable by the employer. For the most part, they represent the "givens" in workplace violence. However, that does not mean that employers have no alternatives available to them. While they cannot control these factors, employers can take actions to help prevent the violence that could result from them (Myers, 1995). As an example, employers or organizations may not be able to influence either the state of an employee's mental health or the internal needs motivating the employee behavior. But, they can learn to be a good observer of employees' behavior. If an employee is obviously agitated, acting differently, or not performing up to past levels, then it is time to see if the employee needs help. In general, understanding these factors can help organizations to establish prevention and intervention programs directed at addressing and defusing areas of frustration and assisting employees to cope with difficult personal or work issues -- before violence becomes an alternative.

### Environmental Factors

Many researchers have speculated about the association of larger societal factors and workplace violence (e.g. Braverman & Braverman, 1994; Caudron, 1998). These factors, however, are difficult, if not impossible to establish outside of cross-cultural, longitudinal studies. Some of the environmental factors associated with workplace violence and noted in the literature include the following: the economic, political, and societal conditions that influence human behavior (Myers, 1995); community or neighborhood factors (Chenier, 1998); changing norms surrounding the acceptance of aggression (Kelleher, 1997; Neuman & Baron, 1998); the negative role of the media; increased workplace diversity (Neuman & Baron, 1998; McClure, 1999); harsh global competition (Kelleher, 1997); changing technology (McClure, 1999); easy availability of guns and weapons (Chenier, 1998); and financial stress associated with not having the means to maintain a chosen lifestyle, shifting family structures, and social isolation (Kelleher, 1997). In the following paragraphs, some of the environmental factors that seem especially relevant to workplace violence will be discussed.

### Community/Neighborhood Factors

Community or neighborhood characteristics that lead to the destabilization of a community or neighborhood can spill over into the federal, state and local government agencies through several pathways. First, community problems such as the level of violent crime, illegal drug use and gang activity can affect both the types of clients and the services that they need. Second, community characteristics, such as

high poverty rates or high percentages of minority cultures may strain relationships with government agencies that are primarily staffed by majority culture members. Based on past encounters with governmental agencies and facilities that have not been sensitive to their needs, there may be a lack of community trust and a low level of tolerance for the performance of the public agencies (Perrone, 2001). Third, low levels of community resources may affect the quantity and quality of public services received because of an inability of public organizations to adequately provide for all who are in need. This, in turn, may increase levels of distrust and suspicion (Chenier, 1998).

#### Economic Conditions

The economy has played a major role in escalating violence in the workplace. Studies attribute tension in today's workplaces to the economy, the changing workforce, rapid technological changes, "unmerciful" or relentless corporate competition, higher unemployment rates, competition for work, and a greater emphasis on performance, among other factors, have pushed stress to higher levels (Myers, 1995; Chenier, 1998). Global market forces demand constant changes in methods of production and workplace organization. Employees find themselves having to perform in new ways and more efficiently. Mandatory overtime, fatiguing production goals and erratic scheduling may intensify the pressure. Threats of mergers, takeovers and mid-life "career crash", feed anxieties that may elicit hostility (Kelleher, 1997). In an era of mass layoffs, fear of unemployment forces workers to remain in jobs that strain their ability to adapt and lead to personal economic

insecurity. The long-term consequences of such insecurity may be overwhelming psychological stress and even trauma, leading to hostility and outbursts of violent or bizarre behavior (Denenberg, Denenberg & Braverman, 1996).

Certain types of workplace violence, such as employee shoplifting and robbery, are directly related to economic conditions. Other crimes, which may occur during the course of a robbery, such as homicide, assault, and even some types of rape, can be indirectly related to economic conditions. Perpetrators may act-out their feelings of inferiority or rage resulting from a perceived need to balance out economic injustices (Myers, 1995).

#### Social Factors

There are many social factors that can be attributed to workplace violence. Some workplace violence results from the spillover of domestic violence (Stewart & Kleiner, 1997). The Department of Justice reports that approximately 13,000 incidents involving domestic violence occur each year at the work site, in part because the abuser knows he or she can locate the victim there at predictable hours (Zachary, 1998). According to the U.S. Department of Labor, seventy-four percent of employed battered women are harassed by their abusive partners at work, causing 54 percent to miss at least three full days of work a month and 20 percent to lose their jobs (Chenier, 1998; Denenberg, Denenberg & Braverman, 1996).

Employers have the responsibility to ensure the safety and welfare of employees. Ignoring or dismissing domestic violence problems that spill over into the workplace can lead to ongoing disruption in the organization and possibly to a violent

confrontation that would ultimately leave everyone a victim (Maggio, 1996). Rather than dismissing employees who suffer from domestic violence or abuse, employers must provide them with support, encouragement and protection by ensuring the safety of the workplace.

#### Physical Environmental Conditions

Some researchers tried to find a relationship between the physical environment and individual behaviors. The physical environment refers to elements like weather, rather than social elements such as organizational norms. Although the likelihood of individuals behaving aggressively or violently based on their physical environment has not been established and is still a subject for debate (Lawrence & Leather, 1999), some researchers examined the direct impact of aspects of the physical environment on violent behavior. Hot temperatures, high humidity, extreme cold, poor lighting and air quality, high noise levels and crowding all have been linked to increased levels of human aggression (e.g., Cohn & Rotton, 1997; Anderson, Anderson & Deuser, 1996; Baron, 1994).

#### Situational Factors

The magnitude of exposure to workplace violence, in particular homicide and robbery and other acts associated with them, depends not only on a person's occupation but also upon the circumstances under which that person is performing his or her job tasks. According to the literature, although workplace violence may occur anywhere, certain workplace characteristics increase the possibility of violence or are

“situations at risk.” These include situations involving solitary work assignments, working with the public, working with valuables (money for instance), late or early work hours, working with people in distress, working in education, and working in conditions of special vulnerability (Chappell & Di Martino, 2000).

### Working Alone

Technological changes, the trend toward automation, rationalization of production or costs, downsizing, sub-contracting, outsourcing, telemarketing and other forms of mobile and/or self-employment, increase the number of people who are working alone. In a survey of public employees in Canada, nearly 84 percent of respondents indicated that they often worked alone (Chappell & Di Martino, 2000). While this factor alone does not necessarily imply a corresponding increase in the level of risk, there are certain conditions under which working alone may, in fact, create vulnerabilities. For those working at night or in the early hours of the morning, isolation elevates the risks. The presence of a single staff member suggests to would-be attackers that there may be little resistance, and since there are fewer people out on the streets at night, the possibilities of detection are reduced (Bellamy, 1996).

As evidence from the United States has demonstrated, taxi drivers are the most vulnerable of lone operators, followed by those working in small stores such as gasoline stations, kiosks, and convenience stores (NIOSH 1992; Dobbs, 2000). Annually, 74 taxi drivers/chauffeurs are murdered while working or on duty (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998). The homicide rate of taxi drivers is 150 times higher than postal workers homicide rates (U.S. Postal Service Commission Report on a Safe and



Secure Workplace, 1998). In New York City alone, 43 cab drivers and chauffeurs were murdered during 1993. To counter the threat to drivers, the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission voted to require that bullet-resistant partitions be installed to separate the driver from passengers (Myers, 1995). Cleaning personnel are in a similar position of having to work alone and after normal business hours (Perrone, 2001).

#### The Exchange of Money or Working with Valuables

The presence of currency and other desirable items (such as drugs or jewelry) at a work site, often acts as a beacon for crime, thereby increasing the potential for violence. Hospitals, clinics and pharmacies frequently have drugs (and other valuables) on the premises. They may be viewed as an appealing target for drug dependent individuals who cannot access alternative sources of supply. One of the clearest trends in recent years is for smaller commercial establishments involved in the exchange of money to be targeted by those intending to commit robbery. It is argued that, while traditional targets of robbery (gambling agencies, banks, other financial institutions, and jewelry stores) have tightened their security precautions, organizations that cannot do so have become a more enticing target for opportunistic attack (Perrone, 2001).

#### Working in Contact with the Public

Working with the public increases the risk of exposure to violent behaviors. Employees are likely to meet individuals with mental illness who may wage a random

attack. In other cases, violent behavior may be provoked by or result from a perceived or poor quality of services, unfair or uncaring treatment. The organization itself -not the actual worker- may be the intended subject of the violent act. Those workers and employees at higher risk include: bus, train and subway workers; flight attendants; retail sector workers; social workers; and hotel, catering and restaurant staff (Chappell & Di Martino, 2000).

A survey conducted by California State Employees Association (CSEA), found that violence is most likely to occur in the following workplaces: public and government facilities 17.2 percent, restaurants and bars 14.6 percent, schools 14.6 percent, medical facilities 9.6 percent, convenience stores eight percent, plants or factories 7.6 percent, businesses seven percent, offices 6.4 percent, retail stores 6.4 percent, transportation facilities 4.8 percent, media facilities 2.4 percent, hotels and motels 1.4 percent (<http://www.calcsea.org>, 4/18/2002).

#### Working with Distressed People

The danger of being exposed to violent behavior increases when workers and employees deal with distressed people (Flynn, 1996). The dangers of solitary operation are dramatically intensified when employees are required to interact with clients/patients away from their employment base. Police officers and health care workers are at greatest risk (Cooper & Swanson, 2002). Recent data indicate that health care workers (more than 5 million workers according to NIOSH data) are at high risk for experiencing violence in the workplace. According to estimates by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 2,637 nonfatal assaults on hospital workers

occurred in 1999, a rate of 8.3 assaults per 10,000 workers. This rate is much higher than the rate of nonfatal assaults for all private-sector industries, which is 2 per 10,000 workers (NIOSH, 2002).

Violence in healthcare settings is increasing and nurses are often the target. Incidents are often underreported because it is hard to report what is not consistently defined. Research shows that there is a wide range of what nurses consider violent behavior. For example, nurses in some health care settings view understaffing as a violent act nearly as much as pushing or throwing objects (Anderson & Stamper, 2001). Part of the problem is the nurses' perception that assaults are part of the job (OSHA, 1998). For instance, "most nurses wouldn't report some aggressive behaviors of an Alzheimer's disease patient who strikes out as he is being fed" (Anderson & Stamper, 2001). The fear of perpetrators and the lack of support from supervisors and organizations exacerbate the issue (Nigro & Waugh, 1996).

#### Organizational Factors

Personal factors certainly must be taken into account, but organizational factors may ignite latent hostile tendencies in those individuals vulnerable to acting out in inappropriate or violent ways (Cooper & Swanson, 2002). Workplace violence is a complex phenomenon which requires not only an examination of the assailant and the victim but also the setting in which the assault takes place. Four distinct, but related, perspectives on organizational factors are evident in the literature: Work conditions, workplace environment or climate, work stress including sources of stressors, and staffing and personnel issues.

### Work Conditions

Poor work conditions can become a breeding ground for violence. However, the quality of the work conditions is often considered only after incidents of violence or homicide occur. Questions have been raised about certain stressful types of work conditions, such as those that exist at the U.S. Postal Services, and the enabling effect they may have on potentially violent employees (Kelleher, 1997). Given that millions of Americans workers spend at least eight hours each day, possibly for decades, in a single work condition, surroundings clearly have a significant impact on a worker's perspective, expectations, attitude, and stress level.

Donald W. Myers (1995) in his book "*Violence in the Workplace: A Guide to Understanding and Prevention*" cites several examples of physical working conditions that may contribute to workplace violence. These conditions include excessive temperatures, too hot or too cold or sudden and severe changes in temperatures, excessive noise, exposure to toxic substances, vibration from equipment, chemical substances, and unsafe equipment processes or procedures. Some job conditions may have a more pronounced effect upon behavior than others (Zachary, 1998). While some work conditions lead to workplace violence, others have proven to yield the opposite effect. Good lighting, high visibility of work areas, effective security system, enough parking spots, and reduced hiding places for perpetrators protect against some workplace violence (Denenberg, Denenberg & Braverman, 1996).

Workers and employees must feel secure on the job and physically comfortable in the work environment. If the workplace invites physical danger or discomfort, and these issues are not immediately addressed, a significant level of fear and stress will become apparent among the workforce. Continual subjection to the stress of an uncomfortable work environment can not only destroy the morale of an organization, it can lead to defensive, aggressive and hostile behaviors among employees (Kelleher, 1997).

### Work Environment

When the work environment provides a positive and enriching experience, the potential for violence is decreased. If the opposite is true, however, aggression and violence are enabled (Denenberg, Denenberg & Braverman, 1996). Behavior analysts have studied cases where certain risk factors observed in individuals were exacerbated by an overlay of destructive supervision that engendered violence. These might be called toxic work environments for employees (Johnson, 1994). Pamela R. Johnson (1994, p. 20) mentioned that "A toxic work environment" is characterized by: "an authoritarian management style and changeable/unpredictable supervision; an atmosphere where the work and dignity of employees are undervalued; and, an environment that includes frequent invasions of privacy, a high degree of secrecy, more demands, and less support". Lewis and Zare (1999) indicate that a toxic work environment has limited opportunities (people become aggressive or act out because they are not promoted), poor conditions, and ineffective management or toxic leaders. Here is a brief discussion of some of these elements:

- Authoritarian workplaces, which include those where employees have little say in how they do their jobs or who work in environments where managers bully employees, tend to have higher rates of on-the-job violence. Toxic leaders use a micromanagement style and show favoritism in dealing with their employees, claiming that their behaviors are consistent with Theory X management where employees are considered lazy and are disinclined to work -they must be forced to do so. Some researchers have suggested that authoritarian management styles and strict job performance standards that give employees little control over their work are factors in workplace violence incidents (Denenberg, Denenberg & Braverman, 1996; Travnick, 1994).
- Uncaring management can create a working environment in which distrust is rampant and teamwork is refuted or ruined. Employees and workers need to be appreciated by their supervisors, trusted, treated with dignity and respect and organizations should be sensitive to employees' needs. If employees feel that they are misused or abused by management, managerial and organizational problems start to appear, including disconnecting or disrupting communication and polarizing work groups. The severity of the problems will increase if organizations suffer from inadequate communication channels. As a result, organizations foster misunderstanding, hostility and violence (Kelleher, 1997; Johnson & Indvik, 1996a).
- Unfair treatment resulting from mismanagement practices could lead to violent acts. There is a significant amount of research related to organizational

injustice suggesting that, under certain circumstances, perception of unfair treatment is associated with conflict (Stewart & Kleiner, 1997), workplace violence or aggression (Neuman & Baron, 1997), employee theft (Greenberg, 1997), and negative reactions to employee layoffs (Brockner, Konovsky, Cooper-Schneider, Folger, Martin & Bies, 1994). With respect to coworker-involved homicide, the perpetrators of these acts often point to what they believe was unfair treatment at the hands of a supervisor or coworker (Baron, 1993; Kinney, 1995; Mantell & Albrecht 1994). For example, Weide and Abbott (1994) found that over 80 percent of the cases of workplace homicide they studied involved employees who wanted to get even for what they perceived as their organizations' unfair or unjust treatment of them. In another study, Neuman and Baron (1997) found that individuals who perceived that they were being treated unfairly by their supervisors were significantly more likely to report that they engaged in aggression against those superiors.

- Allowing bullying behavior in the workplace can lead to higher turnover and absenteeism, decreased morale, losses in productivity, legal costs incurred to defend against employees' claims, and violence (Bernardi, 2001). Broadly defined, bullying is any behavior that intimidates, humiliates or demeans a person. Sometimes it is directed at one employee in particular. At other times it is part of a hostile or poisoned work environment. Although bullying is a form of harassment, only discriminatory harassment (harassment related to a legally protected form of discrimination such as race, sex, religion, age, or

sexual orientation) is prohibited under human rights laws. Bullying can range from physically abusive or aggressive behavior to persistent, excessive and unjustified criticism and constant scrutiny. Organizations should be aware of bullying problems in the workplace and must act aggressively to solve them through education and training.

- Organization culture is the institutional customs, beliefs, rules, values, and management philosophies reflected in managerial and organizational practices within an organization. The culture in an organization has a profound influence upon employee behavior. Organizational culture may play an important role in aggression or violence in several ways. First, there may be a widespread belief that aggression is just a “normal” part of the job. For example, in 1995 a CSEA survey of its members found that 75 percent of jail workers, 59 percent of health workers, 48 percent of office workers, and 41 percent of field workers reported being verbally abused on the job. Workers in these occupations view this kind of behavior as job-related and seldom report these acts when they occur (CSEA, 1995). Second, organizational cultures according to Neuman and Baron (1998) may foster a contentious organizational climate (e.g., a ‘dog-eat-dog’ environment) or celebrate the appearance of toughness (e.g., a ‘macho’ image). Third, organizational culture may feed employee selfishness and praise individualism, rather than teamwork and cooperation. In that case individuals will seek to achieve their own goals by any means, without regard to the organizational goals. As a



result, a negative work environment prevails. Fourth, organizational culture may lead to malpractice in organizational and managerial functions and methods. For example, contemporary management practice involves the use of computers to monitor employee productivity, which could be considered an invasion of privacy. This practice has been strongly linked with increased levels of stress (Amick & Smith, 1992). In a study by Gallatin (1989), 81 percent of the respondents indicated that electronic performance monitoring made their jobs more stressful. Another study, comparing attitudes of monitored and non-monitored employees performing similar work, demonstrated that monitored employees experienced more stress (Neuman & Baron, 1998).

### Work Stress

In organizational settings, frustration and stress have been found to be positively correlated with aggressive behavior, interpersonal hostility, sabotage, strikes, work slowdowns, stealing, and employee withdrawal (Spector, 1997). Today's jobs are structured in such a way that stress is a natural by-product that helps create Type A personalities. Violence is the ultimate manifestation of job stress. Corville and Bernardi (1999) mentioned that there are two types of jobs that are particularly stressful. The first are jobs with many deadlines over which the employee has very little control. The second are jobs in which an employee must expend a high degree of energy to complete tasks, while receiving very little reward for doing so. An example is an executive assistant who "makes the boss look good" while the boss

gets and takes all the credit. In fact, many jobs fall into this category because employees often receive little recognition and appreciation for their efforts (Myers, 1995).

Aside from jobs that are inherently stressful, there are numerous factors that contribute to stress in all jobs. One of the biggest of these is other people. This takes many different forms such as being interrupted by others, competitive or lazy coworkers (which is especially stressful in a team-based work environment), interpersonal conflicts, difficult managers, aggressive supervisors and unfair treatment.

Change is another significant issue. Any type of change is stressful, whether it is a positive change such as a promotion, or negative changes such as downsizing, restructuring and redesign, business process reengineering, technology adoption, and mergers (Braverman & Braverman, 1994; Perrewe, Ferris, Frink & Anthony, 2000). Change is often made worse by poor communication and a lack of control over what is happening. An interesting stressor related to downsizing is "survivors syndrome." This is the stress felt by the individuals who remain in an organization when others have been terminated. These survivors feel uncertain about their own job security and think they will be next on the firing line. To add to their stress, they often have to struggle with a heavier workload (Bernardi & Corville, 1999). A study found a strong relationship between three elements of workplace changes and workplace violence. Those elements are: the increased use of part-time and temporary workers, management turnover and change, and major schedule changes (Caudron, 1998).

In 2001, the Families and Work Institute based in New York City conducted a survey on the impact of work changes, overwork and related stress (“The negative”, 2001). In answering a question about how overworked employees felt over a three-month period, the results indicated that: 28 percent “felt overworked” often or very often; 28 percent often or very often felt “overwhelmed by how much work they had to do”, and 29 percent often or very often felt they “didn’t have the time to step back and process or reflect on the work they’re doing”. According to the study, the more overworked employees feel:

- The more likely they are to report making mistakes at work. 17 percent of those reporting feeling much overworked said they make mistakes at work often or very often, compared to only one percent of those with lower levels of stress.
- The more likely they are to feel angry toward their employers for expecting them to do so much. 43 percent of employees who feel highly overworked say they feel angry toward their employers often or very often, compared to only three percent of those who experience low levels of feeling overworked.
- The more likely they are to resent coworkers who do not work as hard as they do.
- The more likely they are to look for a new job with another employer. Forty-nine percent of those feeling highly overworked say it is somewhat or very likely that they will seek employment elsewhere in the coming year, compared to 30 percent who feel less overworked.

- The more likely they are to be neglecting themselves. Only 41 percent of employees with high levels of feeling overworked say they are very or extremely successful in taking good care of themselves, compared to 66 percent of those with low levels of feeling over-worked.

The most recent U.S. National Norm Survey, conducted by International Survey Research (ISR, Chicago: [www.isrsurveys.com](http://www.isrsurveys.com)), found that among the 320,000 U.S. employees ISR surveys annually, 38 percent (up from 32 percent in 1998) claim their work effectiveness has been seriously reduced by on-the-job stress. These results were released early last year-before the recession became a fact and therefore are likely underrepresenting the current problem (HR Focus, 2002).

While stress among rank-and-file workers has been well documented and attributed to downsizing and other organizational causes, it turns out that bosses are strained, too, even though they presumably have more control over their work. In 15 of 16 stress-inducement categories, the 1,885 executives surveyed by Paul Ray Berndtson (1996) said they were under greater stress in 1996 than in 1993. According to the survey, stress levels increased an average of 25 percent to 30 percent for high-level executives from 1993 to 1996. While office politics created the most stress overall, the amount of time spent at work showed the biggest increase as a stress inducer, up from 10 percent of respondents in 1993 to 22 percent in 1996. The survey determined that the high workloads that led to high stress levels could be due to the extensive reengineering and downsizing movement. Corporate restructuring has prompted job insecurity and increased job-seeking activity, even at the upper levels of

the organizational ladder. Thirty-five percent of those surveyed said they were dissatisfied with their jobs, and 64 percent had gone on at least one job interview within the past year ("Stress resides", 1996).

Studies indicated that stress levels of top executives will continue to increase as competition intensifies. Labor market conditions will create a scarcity of talent. Technology will continue to change in rapid and unpredictable ways, as the degree of accountability at all levels of organizations increases (Perrewe, Ferris, Frink & Anthony, 2000; DeFrank & Ivancevich, 1998; Kinney, 1995). Indeed, increasingly fast-paced, turbulent work contexts, fueled by ambiguity through organization downsizing, restructuring and redesign, technological change, mergers and acquisitions suggest that stressful work environments are becoming even more noxious. The result is that physical and mental health-related illnesses are at an all-time high, particularly among top executives.

Top executives in government and public organizations face the same problems as do their counterparts in the private sector, especially with tight budgets, program and service cuts, downsizing, and the political nature of those organizations (Smith, 1997). Scholars and practitioners alike have tended to characterize most organizations as inherently political arenas that can serve as major sources of stress (Mintzberg, 1983). Recent statistics show that both physical and mental health problems among managers and executives are at all-time high (Perrewe, Ferris, Frink & Anthony, 2000).

But the question now is, does stress bring about violence or does violence bring about stress? The answer is both. Stress can be a cause and effect of workplace violence. That is, high levels of stress may lead to violence, but a violent incident in the workplace will most certainly lead to stress, perhaps even to post-traumatic stress disorder (Stieber, 1999). In general, stress damages people and their organizations. The impact of workplace stress should not be underestimated. It is seen in the human cost of ill health, broken relationships, career failure, and wasted lives. It also presents itself in the commercial costs of lower productivity, poor customer service and failure of innovation. In the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) survey (1994), one third (32.7 percent) of respondents said violent incidents had no effect on their organization while 40 percent said such cases have led to increased stress. Respondents also said the violence has led to paranoia (18.9 percent), decreased trust among coworkers (17.6 percent), and 11.3 percent said violence lowered productivity (Johnson & Indvik, 1996b).

There are psychological/emotional warning signs, which may reveal that a person is not coping adequately, and organizations should pay attention to those signs. Some early signs according to Pihulyk (2001b) include: irritability, tension headaches, impatience, anxiety, poor job performance and susceptibility to colds and flu. As stress becomes more acute, other more serious signs may appear such as high blood pressure, depression, substance abuse, gastric problems and chest pain. It is important that action be taken to deal with stress during the early stages before it becomes acute and damaging.

## Personnel or Human Resources Management Issues

Human resources departments do not operate in a vacuum. Many external and internal environmental factors affect an organization's human resources management. Government organizations are facing rapid changes, confronted with declining revenues and tighter budgets brought about by shifts in federal and state funding priorities and by other fiscal policies. These changes have occurred concurrently with increasing demands for efficiency and effectiveness. In many public services, employees have been forced to compete with the private and non-profit sectors, which has resulted in the privatization of some of these services. Outsourcing, franchise agreements, vouchers, and the purchase of service contracting are just some of the means public organizations use in privatizing services. All of these alternatives have human resources management implications.

Changing demographics have resulted in an increasingly diverse workforce composed of greater numbers of employees who have disabilities, who are women, and who are members of ethnic and racial minorities. These changes have pushed organizations to review their human resources management practices and ensure that employees are treated fairly and evaluated on job-related performance, rather than according to stereotypes or biases. Training programs have been implemented in many agencies to expedite a change in attitude. In today's litigious society, such initiatives are not only sound business practice but may be crucial to survival.

Technological changes have rendered many jobs obsolete. At the same time, advances in technology enable employees to work from their homes, provide

opportunities for more flexible work hours, increase the employment options for disabled individuals and encourage restructuring of public agencies. Technological changes have altered communication patterns, often resulting in flatter, “leaner” or “thinner” organizations through the elimination of layers of management or administration. This flattening of the hierarchy has led to fewer promotional opportunities and the need for organizations to review their reward systems.

According to human resources management literature, human resources departments at any organization have to fulfill several functions. Those functions include: job analysis; recruitment and selection; education and training or employee development; performance evaluation; direct and indirect compensation; legal, policies and procedures compliance to ensure employee safety and health; grievance systems; and employee and labor relations (Pynes, 1997; Mantell & Albrecht, 1994). Failure in managing the human resources functions accurately and effectively can be a major cause of violence at workplace.

#### Profile of Potentially Violent Employee and Workplace Violence Warning Signs

##### Profile of Potentially Violent Employee

No workplace is immune from violence. A number of profiles have appeared in the literature attempting to define the characteristics of a potentially violent employee (mainly for employees who commit homicide). However, these profiles are really more of a general guideline. Workplace violence cannot be accurately predicted or forecast. The profile and narrative that follow falsely contribute to the idea that



employers have at their disposal a chart or diagram that is predictive. Profiling may lead to stereotyping or singling out employees. However, it may be valid to accept a profile as generally accurate if it is not taken too literally. Many tragic workplace homicides clearly indicate that a profile that is too specific or interpreted too rigidly can be misleading. For instance although roughly 80 percent of homicides are committed by white males, a large number of cases did not involve drug or alcohol abuse, nor did the perpetrator have a previous history of violence.

Since one purpose of this study is to provide human resources directors and professionals with sufficient information to be able to prevent workplace violence, a review of the existing profiles should provide some background to this important issue. Research on profiling potentially violent employees assumes that many violent individuals share common characteristics. Often, an individual who commits violence has already come to the attention of the management because of difficulties in the workplace. Thus, organizations and human resources managers should be aware of and watch for those characteristics that are precursors of violence and the behaviors associated with them. Table 3 shows the characteristics to the violent employee as suggested by some researchers.

It is clear from the table below that researchers have limited workplace violence perpetrators to one age group -- baby boomers. During the 1980s, the age of workplace violence perpetrators ranged between 25-40. During the 90s age range moved upward to between 35-55. These ages correspond directly to the baby boomer generation.

Table 3

Potentially Violent Employee Profile

Study	Violent Person Profile
Baron (1993)	A male, aged 25-40 years; has a history of violence; tends to be a loner; owns several weapons; has requested some form of assistance in the past; exhibits frequent anger; has a history of conflict with others; has a history of family or marital problems; after periods of verbalizing anger will become withdrawn; is paranoid; exhibits self-destructive behavior such as drug or alcohol abuse.
Mantell & Albrecht (1994)	Exhibits a disgruntled attitude regarding perceived injustice in the workplace; is likely to be socially isolated (a loner); is likely to exhibit poor self-esteem; cries for help of some kind; demonstrates a fascination with military or paramilitary subjects; may be a gun or weapon collector; may demonstrate difficulties with temper control; may have made threats against coworkers, supervisors or the organization; demonstrates few, if any, healthy outlets for rage; may demonstrate excessive interest in media reports of violence, especially workplace violence; may have an unstable family life; may cause fear or unrest among coworkers and supervisors; may have been involved in chronic labor-management disputes; may exhibit numerous unresolved physical or emotional injuries or have a history of numerous unresolved physical or emotional claims against the organization; may complain regularly about poor working conditions or an unsatisfactory working environment; may complain of heightened stress at work; will be male between the age of 30 and 40 years; may demonstrate a migratory job history; may demonstrate drug and /or alcohol abuse; may exhibit psychiatric impairment.
Myers (1996)	Rather than a single profile of a potential perpetrator, there may be three factors that, when they occur in combination, appear to be associated with workplace homicide: (1) personal characteristics, (2) behavioral patterns, and (3) precipitating events. (1) Personal characteristics: white; male; middle-aged (some experts say 25-40 years of age, others say 35-45); dissatisfied with his present career status; despondent about events in his personal or business life; has a weak system of support from friends, family, and others; tends to be a loner; a long-time employee, often with 15 or more years of employment with the firm. (2) The behavioral patterns consist of one or more of these behaviors: blaming others for traumatic events he experiences; having a history of on

Table 3—Continued

Study	Violent Person Profile
	<p>the job problems and below-average performance; unable to accept criticism easily; taking extreme positions on issues; having a history of committing violent acts; having both a fascination with and access to guns; talking a great deal about violent acts committed by others; a history of marital or family problems and/or problems at work; holding grudges, losing his temper easily, and being irritable; having a high rate of absenteeism, alcoholism, or other drug abuse; exhibiting recent changes in behavior and threatening or intentionally intimidating coworkers; and having had a personality conflict with one or more coworkers and/or family members.</p> <p>(3) The precipitating events may be events such as disagreements with coworkers, discharges, discipline, and layoffs.</p>
Kelleher (1997)	<p>The potentially violent employee from a psychological view involves a three-part profile which includes:</p> <p>(1) General characteristic of a violent worker: a white male, age 25-50, demonstrates low self-esteem, is considered a loner, has a fascination with weapons.</p> <p>(2) A worker who may commit nonlethal violence demonstrates these additional characteristics: under the age of 30, has a history of some violence, and abuses drugs or alcohol.</p> <p>(3) A worker who may commit lethal violence demonstrates these additional characteristics: over the age of 30, indicates no history of violence or substance abuse, and shows indications of paranoia or delusions and is unable to appropriately release frustration.</p>
Bloom (2002)	<p>A disgruntled 35 to 55-year-old; white male; with a fascination for guns; has a past history of violence; has a past history of destructive, aggressive, or bullying behavior; romantic obsessions, and even self-destructive danger; shows some changes in his emotional and psychological functioning such as appearing depressed and disorganized in his thinking; is a chronic complainer; may be a soft-spoken individual who is suddenly agitated and suspicious, and starts to misperceive the innocuous actions of coworkers or supervisors as threatening; is a loner; may tolerate frustration poorly; usually sensitive to criticism and takes his work seriously; weak support system inside and outside the organization; and is either conflict prone or tends to warehouse his angry feelings as fuel for a later explosion.</p>

But the question now is, can human resources managers predict which applicants will be prone to violence? Unfortunately, there are no absolute predictors of who will become involved in workplace violence. Certainly, research in profiling violent individuals is helpful since those individuals have certain common characteristics and are, by definition, the group targeted by this study. Atkinson (2001) suggested that instead of looking for violent characteristics in the applications, human resources managers should look for “stabilizing influences” which indicate that an applicant is not prone to violence. The four most important stabilizing influences are: no drug or alcohol abuse (one of the highest correlating factors), being outwardly focused (having outside interests and friendships rather than being primarily self-involved), no past pattern of criminal conduct and a good work history.

#### Workplace Violence Warning Signs

Regardless of the source of potential violence or the venue in which it may occur, it often happens that the individual who is prone to a violent act exhibits predictable patterns of behavior before the act is committed. In other words, most people demonstrate warning signs before they become violent. However, such predictable patterns of behavior are not always readily observable in the workplace. Supervisors should be aware and vigilant of the warning signs. Based on the literature (e.g. Filipczak, 1993; Labig, 1995; Davis, 1997; Kelleher, 1997; Lewis & Zare, 1999), the following behaviors, among others, should prompt the organization and its managers to assess the situation:

- Threatening statements: verbal threats to kill or do harm to oneself or others, a pattern of escalating threats that appear well planned, references to other incidents of workplace violence.
- Intimidating behavior: intimidation of coworkers, open defiance or insubordination, crossing of behavioral boundaries with another person (excessive phone calls, gift giving, etc.), belligerent behavior with coworkers or customers, blaming of others for everything that goes wrong.
- History of violence: violent, reckless or antisocial behavior, evidence of prior assaultive behavior.
- Alleged fondness for firearms: fascination with weapons, service in military or law enforcement.
- Recent marked performance decline: attendance problems, decreased productivity and inconsistent work patterns, concentration problems, increased involvement in accidents, continual excuses.
- Personality changes: withdrawal, change from introversion to boisterous behavior, major changes in interpersonal relations, decline in personal grooming.
- Major changes in mood or behavior: bizarre thoughts or paranoid behavior, fantasies with self-centered outcomes, irrational violent associations or thoughts, delusional commands or statements, secretive behavior, strong emotional mood swings, psychosis.

- Obsessions: desire to hurt a specific person or group, obsessively romantic attachment to someone, preoccupation with a notoriously violent incident, obsession with weapons.
- Serious stress in personal life: financial problems, crying and excessive personal phone calls, losses (job, marriage, loved one), divorce or bankruptcy, desperation.

Researchers indicate that workplace violence is a process and violent employees do not act out their anger suddenly. Rather, there is increase over time in inappropriate behavior, an increase in the frequency of acting out, an increase in the intensity of the acting out, and an increase in the threat level of the behavior. Thus the warning signs mentioned above do not all appear at the same time. Violent behavior may escalate if early cues are not identified and defused. The hostile or violent act seldom is an isolated event, but rather, the end point along a continuum of actions and reactions.

Two studies by Anthony Baron in 1993 and Dennis Davis in 1997 mapped this escalation of violent behavior. Baron is considered one of the founding fathers of workplace violence research. Table 4 summarizes the major findings of those two studies. The table clearly shows that both authors reached the same conclusions about the consequences of the violent behaviors. It is very important to recognize the early warning signs and when and how to intervene to defuse potentially violent employees and violent situations.

Table 4

Escalation of Violent Acts at Work by Baron and Davis

Baron (1993)	Davis (1997)
<p><u>Level one:</u> involves what Baron calls “the early warning signs.” The person (worker or employee) at this level may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Refuse to cooperate with immediate supervisor.</li> <li>* Spread rumors and gossip to harm others.</li> <li>* Consistently argue with employees.</li> <li>* Act belligerently toward customers.</li> <li>* Constantly swear at others.</li> <li>* Sexually harass others through comments and actions.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Stage one:</u> the following behaviors are characteristics of this stage, indicating “early potential” for violence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Objectivity and dehumanizing others.</li> <li>* Challenging authority.</li> <li>* Regularly becoming argumentative.</li> <li>* Alienating customers or clients.</li> <li>* Originating and spreading lies about others.</li> <li>* Swearing excessively, using sexually explicit language.</li> <li>* Abusing others verbally, sexually harassing others.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Level two:</u> “escalating the situation.” Here the person may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Argue increasingly with employees, clients and management.</li> <li>* Refuse to obey agency policies and procedures.</li> <li>* Talk about hurting other employees and managers.</li> <li>* Sexually harass coworkers and/or managers.</li> <li>* Think of himself or herself as being the victim of the agency.</li> <li>* Steal property and sabotage equipment.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Stage two:</u> behaviors at this stage show “Escalated Potential” for violence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Arguing frequently and intensely.</li> <li>* Blatantly disregarding organizational policies and procedures.</li> <li>* Setting traps for others.</li> <li>* Making verbal threats.</li> <li>* Conveying unwanted sexual attention or violent intentions by mail, email or voice mail.</li> <li>* Holding others responsible for all problems and difficulties.</li> <li>* Stealing from the agency or from other employees or managers.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Level three:</u> involves “further escalation, usually resulting in an emergency response.” Here the person displays intense anger, which may lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Recurrent suicidal threats and physical fights.</li> <li>* The defacing of property.</li> <li>* Use of weapons to harm others.</li> <li>* Threat of commitment of murder, rape or arson.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Stage Three:</u> behaviors at this stage reveal “realized potential” or actual violence. This violent employee at this stage may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Get involved in physical confrontations and altercations.</li> <li>* Display weapons at workplace (gun, knife, etc.)</li> <li>* Commit or attempt to commit assault, sexual assault, arson or suicide.</li> </ul>

Michael Mantell and Steve Albrecht (1994) suggested a workplace violence spectrum that sorts employees at any agency into five groups: normal, covert, fence-sitter, overt, and dangerous or homicidal. The normal employee does not engage in any kinds of antisocial, dangerous or destructive behaviors and represents no threat of violence at work. This type of person constitutes the majority of workers. The covert employee engages in silent, hidden or behind the scenes activities that disrupt the workplace. The fence-sitter sits on the border between covert activities and actual violence. Persons who belong to this category show some degree of destructive behavior and make direct threats. The overt employee uses a high level of threats to attack other workers and managers. The possibility of continuing these threats is very strong. The covert employee engages in various violent activities such as injuring others physically, sabotage, vandalism, and damaging the agency's property intentionally. The most dangerous employee is the homicidal worker who kills his coworkers and/or managers, which may be followed by suicide.

### Workplace Violence Prevention Model

#### From Violence-Prone to Violence Prepared Organizations

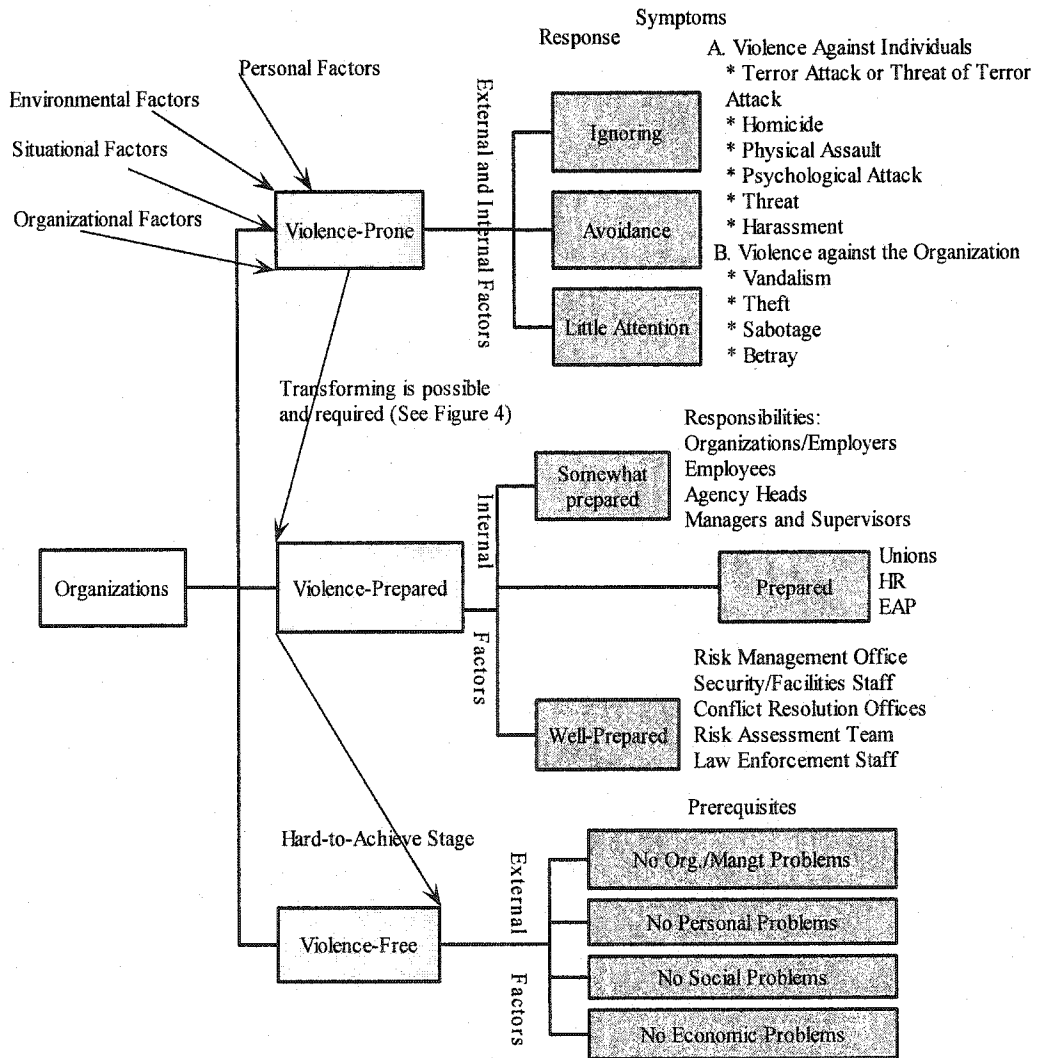
Although no workplace is immune from violence, careful analysis of workplace violence incidents clearly show that some workplaces are more likely than others to experience violence. The difference has been conceived as a polarity between "Violence-Prone" and "Violence-Prepared", or "Crisis-Prone" and "Crisis-Prepared" organizations (Denenberg, Denenberg & Braverman, 1996). The following



model (Figure 3) classifies organizations into three categories: Violence-Prone Organizations, Violence-Prepared Organizations, and Violence-Free Organizations. While the last category is an ideal or utopian, since achieving this phase and fulfill its prerequisites depends on external factors which lie outside the organizational purview, transforming organizations from Violence-Prone to Violence-Prepared is vital.

Figure 3

From Violence-Prone to Violence-Prepared Organizations



### Violence-Prone Organizations

These types of organizations either do not recognize or ignore workplace violence as a current organizational problem. They deny problems or seek to avoid dealing with them by expelling or suppressing deviants. They ignore or neglect the warning signs of violence, have no prevention plan, have no reporting system, do not have a good communication system, suffer management and employee dichotomy, have no crisis prevention team, do not evaluate the impact of their policies (such as layoffs) on their employees and organization, suffer impaired screening and hiring processes, and lack supporting methods such as employees assistance programs (Denenberg, Denenberg & Braverman, 1996).

The role of these organizations in fighting workplace violence is virtually absent. These organization managers believe that the fight against violence just wastes the organizational resources (Di Martino, 2000). What appears instead is that the cost of violence represents a serious, sometime lethal threat to the efficiency and success of organizations. Nothing could be worse for an organization than to be labeled as violent.

### Violence-Prepared Organizations

Based on their efforts to reduce and prevent workplace violence, organizations can be classified into three subcategories: Violence-Somewhat Prepared Organizations, Violence-Prepared Organizations, and Violence-Well Prepared Organizations. The following individuals, units or offices (actors) can play a productive role in preventing workplace violence: employers or organizations,

employees, agency heads and top executives, managers and supervisors, human resources departments, risk management staff, conflict resolution offices, employee assistance offices, security and facilities staff, unions and employee organizations, and law enforcement staff (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2001).

Organizations that are Somewhat Prepared give too little attention to the problem and are reactive when it comes to dealing with workplace violence. However, they do not entirely deny the existence of the problem or totally ignore it. Rather, not all units, offices, departments and individual employees are doing what should be done to ameliorate this problem. The violence prevention efforts by a few offices and units could be characterized as scattered, isolated and at the minimal level. These efforts are too weak to considerably influence the level of violence in these organizations. These types of organizations need to focus on becoming more proactive in transforming themselves into Violence-Prepared organizations.

In the Violence-Prepared organizations, some units, offices, departments, and individuals as shown in Figure 3, take a proactive approach to prevent this problem while other offices or units are still taking a reactive approach to combat this problem or at most start to take some real steps in that regard. This study focuses on the preventive steps taken by the employers or organizations (city governments) and the human resources departments. Figure 4 shows the components or the tools that city governments (10 components) and human resources management or personnel departments (nine components) have or can use to fight and prevent workplace violence. In this type of organizations, some sort of cooperation and integration of

different units, offices, and departments' efforts to combat workplace violence appears to exist.

Figure 4\*

The Role of Organizations and Human Resources Management in Preventing Workplace Violence



\* This figure should be connected with the Causes of Workplace Violence Model (Figure 2). Also, this figure is a supplement of the previous figure (Figure 3).

The scope of this study has been limited to city governments and their human resources directors' role in preventing workplace violence for three primary reasons:

First, it is beyond the scope of this study to research all the efforts taken by all of the offices and units as shown in Figure 3. Rather, focusing on two actors (city governments and human resources management (HRM)) will allow a deliberate discussion and will lead to a more detailed analysis.

Second, it is assumed that city governments and HR have a crucial role in fighting workplace violence. That, and the fact that local government employees are at higher risk of workplace violence than their counterparts at both federal and state levels makes this more critical for investigation. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) statistics, annually about 591 government employees were homicide at work from 1997 to 2002, and more than 53 percent of them were employed by local governments (USDOL, 2003). Even through there was a decrease in the total number of homicides during the last year (2002), the number of homicides of local government employees increased by four percent. Also, on average according to DOL statistics, between 10 and 22 human resources workers employed by governments were killed at work during the same period.

Additionally, part of HR's role in organization is preventing workplace violence by creating an environment less conducive to volatility, an environment in which workers are empowered, have support systems such as EAPs in place and are treated fairly. But more than that, HR can be proactive by putting together violence prevention strategies. According to a study by Northwestern National Life Insurance, coworkers, bosses or former employees committed 30% of workplace attacks, 43% of threats of violence, along with 88% of harassment. These acts of workplace violence committed by group of people that HR can have the most significant effect in preventing (Anfuso, 1994).

Third, it is scientifically and operationally difficult to study some of the actors at this stage of workplace violence research. Some units and departments are still

configuring their role in fighting workplace violence. Examples include risk management offices and unions. The researcher noticed that the majority of city governments do not have a separate department or office for risk management, which is most often part of human resources departments' responsibilities. Some cities have a risk manager, however this position is under HR director supervision.

Regarding the role of labor unions in combating workplace violence, ten years ago, the debate focused on whether workplace violence was an occupational hazard or strictly a police and criminal justice issue. However, since the mid-1990s, labor unions have joined with occupational safety and health professionals in recognizing that workplace violence is a serious occupational hazard that is often predictable and preventable (Rosen, 2001). They have advocated that employers establish multidimensional violence-prevention programs. However, not all city employees are union members, and not all industries have unions. When all of these offices, departments and units start to play their roles and effectively carry out their responsibilities, organizations can become violence Well-Prepared.

#### Violence-Free Organizations

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires that employers provide a place of employment that is free from recognizable hazards that are causing or likely to cause death or serious harm to employees (USDOL, 1992). As a result, much of the research on workplace violence described organizations that take some steps in preventing this problem as Violence-Free. Some researchers and organizations think that the Violence-Free organizations stage is achievable (e.g.

Chavez, 2002; Myers, 1995; U.S. Postal Services, 1998). According to them, some preventative methods such as training programs, effective hiring processes, establishing reporting systems, and attaining the highest practical level of physical security is enough to qualify as a Violence-Free organizations.

However, this study assumes that transforming organizations to the Violence-Free phase is unattainable. Although it is necessary for organizations to take all the necessary steps to prevent workplace violence and solve any managerial problems to insure a safer workplace, violence is as old as human beings. Achieving this stage depends on external factors on which organizations have no considerable influence or impact. To have Violence-Free organizations, societies themselves would need to be violence-free and people would need to have no personal, economic, or societal problems, clearly an idealistic goal. In 1995, Littlefield and Merrick indicated that, as proved in so many cases, organizations can never eliminate the threat of workplace violence.

## The Role of Organizations and Human Resources Management in Workplace Violence Prevention

### Organizations and Workplace Violence

Transforming an organization from Violence-Prone to Violence-Prepared may require profound changes. There are several approaches that organizations can follow to ensure safer workplaces. Braverman and Braverman (1994) suggested five approaches to stopping workplace violence. These are: 1) hiring and firing policies or human resources management approach, 2) security strategies and work design for

high-risk occupations, 3) constructing a profile of the potentially violent worker, 4) the wellness of the workplace, and 5) the systematic approach.

According to Braverman and Braverman, the first three approaches look at the individual and his or her response to work stress and other organizational issues. The fourth approach, which has not been adequately addressed in the literature, looks at the problem from an organizational perspective. Organizational practices could be a major cause of violence but there is little research available that bears directly on human resource practices, health care, safety and injury policies, management style, or organization-wide work culture issues. Although these five approaches focus on important issues that deserve the attention of researchers and organizations, they bypass the crucial system dimension. Approaches that focus on individual employees are limited and will fall short of effective solutions. It would be advisable for organizations to use a combination of both strategies: individual health and well being, and workplace health and well being.

The systematic approach does not ignore the context that allows the violence to occur or violent climate to exist. It looks at workplace violence as a system problem, thus the solution of the problem should be systematic. It is the responsibility of employers to ensure a safe work environment, however, they alone have not created this problem and the solutions cannot come from employers in isolation. Workplace safety must develop out of a collaboration with government, labor, and other influential groups such as the media. A study by Denenberg and Denenberg



(1996) emphasized that only by collaborative and creative efforts will it be possible to organize the resources of the workplace to ensure a safer work environment.

Lloyd Nigro and William Waugh Jr., leading researchers in workplace violence, have suggested four approaches a public employer can adopt to deal with workplace violence. The starting point for public management is to recognize that workplace violence is a meaningful threat to many government workers. It is an organizational problem that should be addressed through well-informed policies and appropriate procedures. A good starting place is a preventative approach that follows the recommendations of NIOSH and other government agencies concerning appropriate security precautions and other work standards. Second, an emergency management approach should provide policy structures and management processes to handle violent events. This approach should include a formal process for risk assessment, emergency plans to respond to crisis situations, establish working relationships between different security agencies or offices and top management, and simulation exercises to assure the effectiveness of the plans. Third, a human resource management approach should focus on developing increased supervisory sensitivity to the known early warning signs of violence, and employee assistance programs to help workers deal with the psychological causes and results of violence. Better methods for screening job applicants also need to be put in place. Fourth, and finally, a management approach should provide training that equips managers to understand the potential effects of their decisions on the safety of employees and clients (Nigro & Waugh, 1996).

To minimize the possibility of workplace violence and decrease legal liability resulting from them, every organization should have a workplace violence prevention plan. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (1996), a workplace violence prevention program should include the elements of any good safety and health program: management commitment and employee involvement, work site analysis, hazard prevention and control, and training and education. Each prevention program also should include record keeping and evaluation (Panko, 1996).

It is essential for city governments to create an organizational culture that recognizes the high cost of violent incidents, rather than choosing denial or avoidance as a response to the needs of both employer and employees. Recognizing workplace violence as a major issue and preparing for critical incidents can result in more appropriate management responses (Frolkey, 1996).

As shown in the study model (Figures 4 and 5), suggested by the researcher, organizations (in this case city governments) have several tools or methods to combat workplace violence. These tools represent the main components of any effective workplace violence prevention plan and determine the degree to which organizations are prepared to curb this problem. The study suggests ten components including: written workplace violence policy, written workplace harassment policy, zero tolerance policy, risk assessment team, security system, Employee Assistance Program, workplace violence incidents tracking and reporting systems, emergency response team, counseling services for workplace violence victims and witnesses, and utilization of all the available resources to prevent this problem (Appendix A).

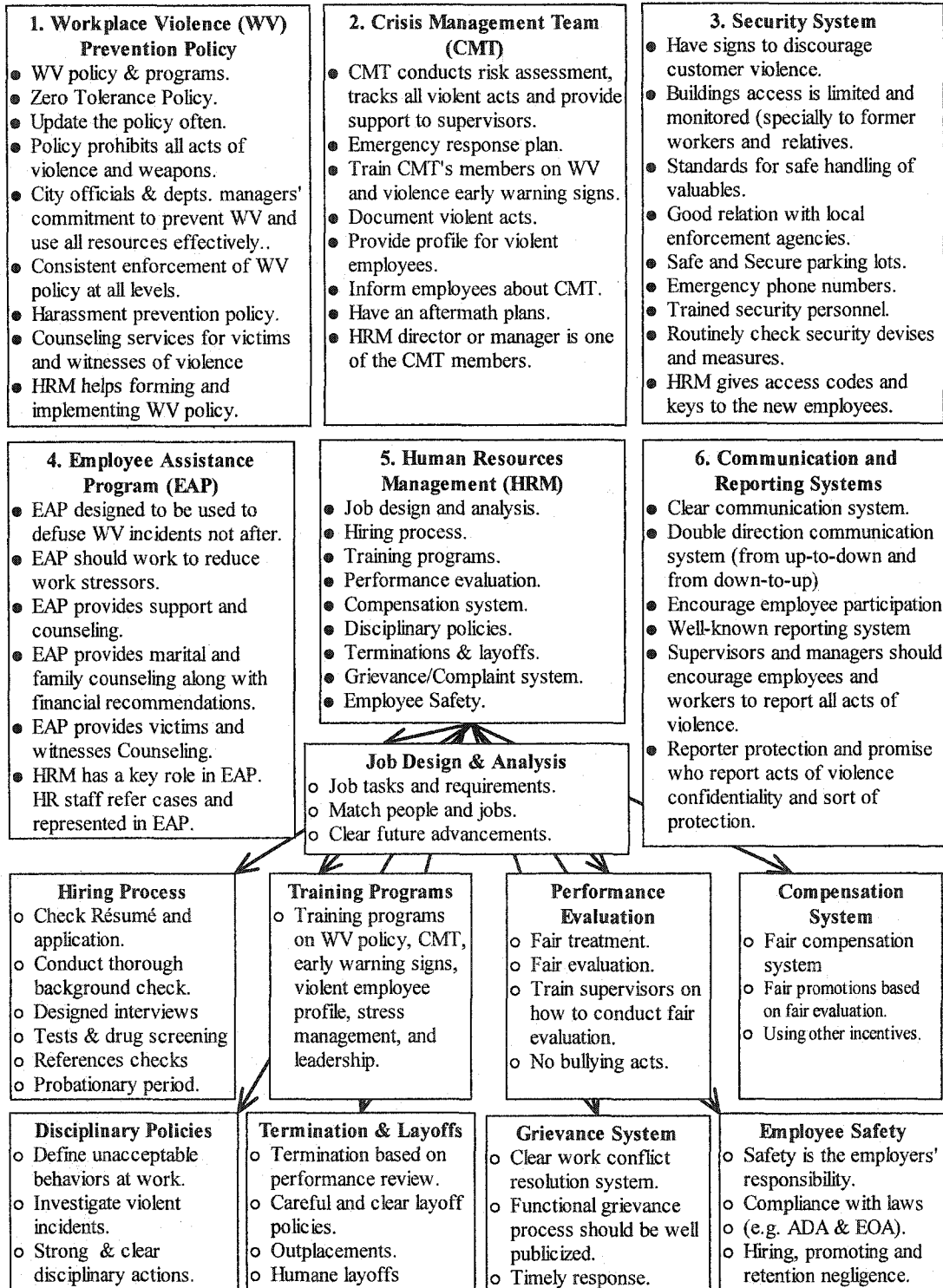
### Workplace Violence Prevention Policy

City governments should adopt violence prevention policies that prohibit violence of any kind in the workplace and encourage employees to report violent incidents. The written policy should clearly prohibit bringing weapons to the workplace unless required for the job. City government should adopt a tough zero-tolerance policy for violence in the workplace. A separate written policy to prevent harassment of any kind (racial, sexual, religion, age, etc.) is also necessary. Also, city government should utilize effectively all the available resources to fight this problem. It is important to mention that these strategies (workplace violence policy, harassment policies, counseling services and utilization of the resources) will be analyzed as separate components of the prevention plan. Cooperation and coordination between different city departments and agencies will help the city to combat this problem and insure safer workplace.

City governments should evaluate prevention plans on a regular basis. To determine if the preventive policy or program is effective, there should be regularly scheduled meetings include representatives from the HR department, risk management office, and the security department. This group should review documentation from departments of incidents that have occurred. The effectiveness of the program should be evaluated at this time. Training needs should also be evaluated to determine any deficiencies or improvements that need to be addressed. There should be a record of all training meetings, employees' attendance, and the qualifications of the trainers.

Figure 5

Workplace Violence Prevention Model



Additionally, the safety and security measures should also be evaluated for effectiveness. Documents to be reviewed may consist of reports of assaults, corrective actions, injuries, accidents, absenteeism, and behavior reports on employees (Chenier, 1998).

#### Risk Assessment Team

City governments should form workplace violence risk assessment team. The primary responsibility of this team is conducting an initial assessment to determine the risk factors and areas of vulnerability. Certain types of work conditions or job functions may be more vulnerable to critical incidents than others. The assessment should identify events and situations that may need intervention and the best method to defuse workplace violence (Labig, 1995).

#### Develop Effective Security Systems

This system should include, but not be limited to, keeping track of who is in the workplace, establishing check-in procedures and providing ID badges or nametags for all visitors, installing closed-circuit TV cameras and alarm systems to improve surveillance inside and outside, improving internal and external lighting, installing mirrors to improve surveillance of hard-to-see areas, and locating intercoms or panic buttons in parking areas. The sophistication of any security system will depend on a variety of factors, including the organization's available resources. City government agencies and departments should routinely check their security system to measure effectiveness and install updates.

### Develop Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) helps to reduce workplace conflicts if used correctly. In the past, the programs were primarily designed for persons with addiction problems. Today employees can receive marital and family counseling, along with financial recommendations. Employees Assistance Programs also have been developed to address domestic violence. The role of the EAP has broadened to include reducing workplace violence and eliminating work stressors. EAPs can help city employees and net substantial savings for city departments through effective loss prevention programs (Chenier, 1998).

The Employee Assistance Program is sometimes utilized after an incident has occurred, although it is designed to defuse the situation leading up to the violence by providing stress management, employee wellness services, financial advice, out-placement services, and help in evaluating troubled employees (DiLorenzo & Carroll, 1995). Through counseling and consultation, employer costs may be reduced in dealing with employees that have problems. Job disputes may also be resolved through this program. Employees may be more willing to talk to the EAP than their managers in resolving problems affecting job productivity. EAP professionals can organize workshops on topics such as resolving conflicts, handling stress, addressing sexual harassment problem, and make referrals of at-risk employees. They can help supervisors to recognize and respond to conditions that can compromise health, safety and organizational effectiveness (Johnson & Indvik, 1996a). In general, the EAP can

take steps to increase employee productivity, efficiency and morale as well as defuse worker anger before it turns to violence (Ivancevich & Matterson, 1996).

#### Establish Effective Communication and Reporting Systems

City governments have to create a climate in which employees feel free and safe to communicate their distress and report any violent or aggressive behavior that occurs at the workplace. Management must accept the responsibility to respond effectively to such reports (Denenberg, Denenberg & Braverman, 1996). In general, top management should be committed to making the organization prepared to combat violence. City agencies and departments should coordinate internal and external communication.

Different city departments have to maintain open communication with employees. Employees are less likely to be disgruntled when employers keep them apprised of developments that may affect their livelihoods, such as layoffs. Employers should announce these decisions early and arrange for outplacement services and counseling for laid-off employees (Stewart & Kleiner, 1997).

#### Form Emergency Response Team or A Crisis Management Team

This team should compile historic information concerning violent incidents and should establish guidelines for handling various incidents. It should also develop a profile of perpetrators from previously recorded workplace violence incidents to prevent such people from committing violent acts in the future (Chenier, 1998). Once

a violent incident occurs, a crisis team should be available to direct employees and handle emergency procedures.

In addition to these methods that the city governments can use to prevent workplace violence, human resources can play a vital role in this process. City government should maintain effective human resources management. HR can play a major role not only in making and forming workplace violence prevention policies or programs but also implementing them.

### Human Resources Management and Workplace Violence

The increased number of violent workplace incidents over the last two decades has focused attention on its causes as well as on the employer's responsibilities (Travnick, 1994; Pynes, 1997). As mentioned before, organizations that fail to take adequate precautions against potentially violent situations may find themselves facing a lawsuit over negligent security. Specific danger areas are negligent hiring, negligent supervision, and negligent retention (Johnson & Indvik, 1994).

Because violence is, in part, an uncontrolled expression of built-up stress, it has been suggested that city government should review which elements of their human resources management system can be used to defuse stress and frustration. This will, in turn, curb workplace violence (Elliott & Jarrett, 1994). Nine human resources elements that merit review are discussed in the following section.

Figure 6 shows the relationship between organizations and individuals and the role of human resources management in that relationship. Figure 6 clarifies when,



how and what HRM can do to facilitate job performance in the organization and curb violent acts. The study identified nine human resources functions thought to have a relationship with workplace violence. These human resources functions are: job analysis, selection and hiring, training and development, performance evaluation, incentives and compensation, disciplinary procedures, termination and layoff, and employee safety.

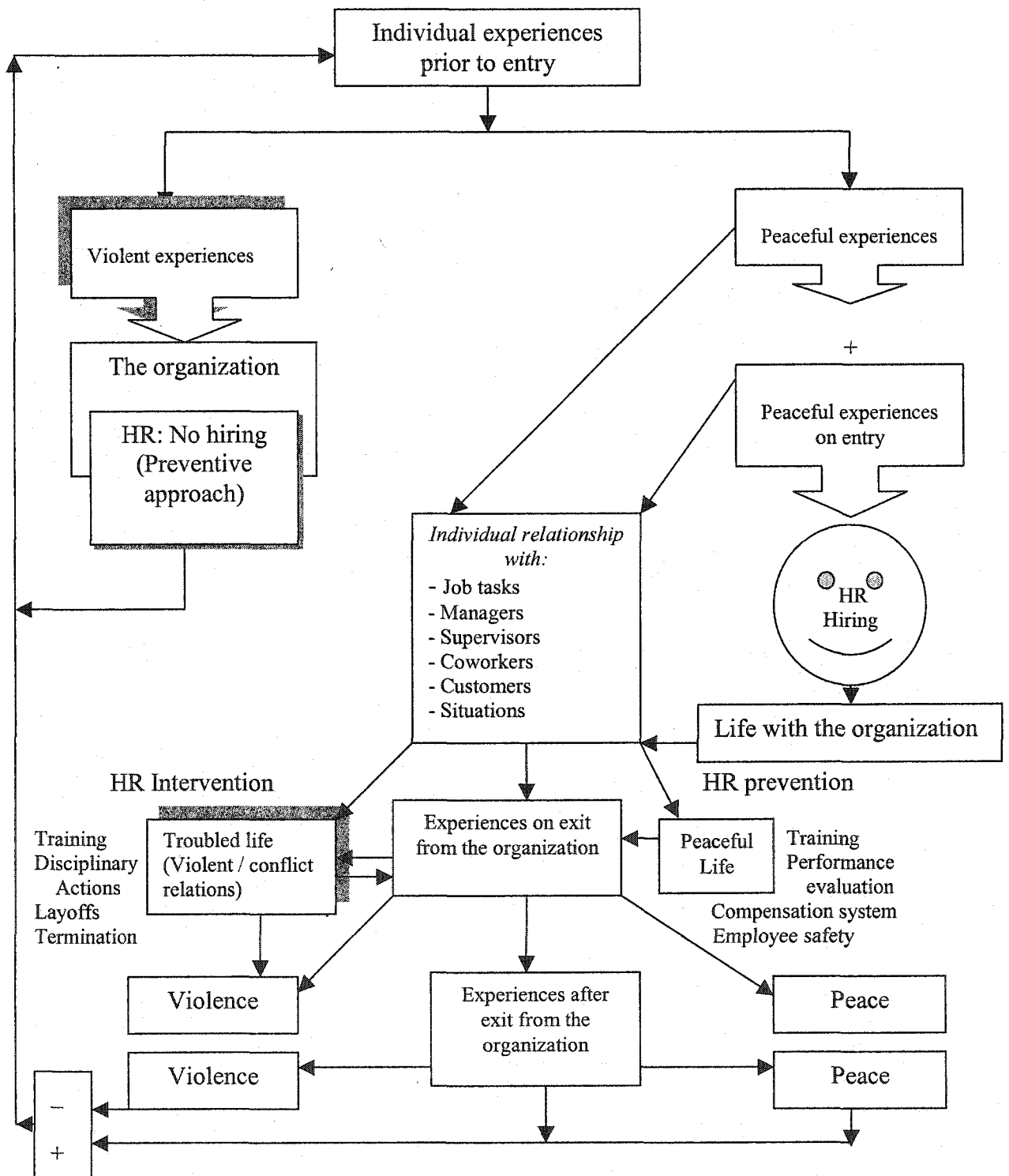
### Job Analysis

A systematic job analysis should not only describe the job and detail critical job tasks, but also should identify the prerequisite knowledge, skills, abilities, and personality characteristics required for solid job performance. The job analysis should help city agencies and departments recruit individuals who possess those characteristics and who are able to perform or learn the tasks. This should help minimize city employee frustration since the mismatch between an employee's skills or personality and the job he or she performs creates stress (Bernardi & Corville, 1999). Jobs with a high risk of violence should be identified, and precaution to minimize risks should be emphasized. This process is the first function in creating a healthy, harmonious work environment (Pynes, 1997).

The study identified two elements of job analysis process are related to workplace violence issues (Appendix A, questions 4 and 5). The first, job descriptions should focus on observable and measurable behaviors that are expected from city employees. The second, job descriptions should include requirements for job-related interpersonal behavior, including non-violent behavior.

Figure 6

HRM Role in the Relationship between Individuals and Organization



### Selection or Hiring Processes

The use of particular selection instruments should be validated. They should screen out candidates who are unable to adequately perform the required job duties. Applications, interviews, tests, reference checks, background checks and psychological profiles can be used to discover nonapparent personality or work-related attitudes. So, human resources management can keep troubled individuals out of the city agencies and departments from the beginning. Failure to conduct the selection and hiring processes carefully and successfully means that human resources management is responsible for whatever outcomes result from hiring troubled individuals (Williams, 1997).

For example, conducting thorough background checks exclude mismatched individuals from getting into city agencies and departments. Effective and comprehensive background checks include: criminal history, driving record, civil litigation, workers' compensation history, credit history, and social security number verification (Atkinson, 2001). Human resources and personnel departments should conduct background checks on applicants using as many of these elements as possible to ensure safer and successful hiring processes.

- Criminal history: It is essential that HR conduct a criminal record search of every applicant being seriously considered for hire. Such records are usually searched for seven years (juvenile records are not available for pre-employment screening). The criminal court system is convoluted and differs in structure from state to state. Felony convictions are the most serious, but it

is important to know what courts to search and how broad the coverage is that HR will need.

- Driving record: A driving record can reveal much to the discriminating human resources professional. Physical description, Social Security number and address should match the applicants'. If they do not, then HR staff should consider the discrepancy a warning. The number and type (DWI for instance) of citations can also indicate a lack of responsibility.
- Civil litigation: Reviewing the kinds of civil/legal problems an applicant has had can help fill in details about his or her background and character. Research of municipal, county and federal district courts can reveal judgments for monetary damages, injunctions and liens, as well as difficulties with child support, alimony and bankruptcies. It may also uncover lawsuits against former employers.
- Workers' compensation history: Fraudulent workers' compensation claims are becoming a serious problem for organizations nationwide. However, HR staff should know that the law only permits such a check after making an offer of employment. Still, a benefit of this search is discovering a claim at an organization not listed on the application. This could be grounds for rescinding a job offer.
- Credit history: The credit report has become an integral part of any comprehensive employment background check. It provides a detailed history of accounts, payments and liabilities and shows total debt and a monthly

breakdown of financial obligations. It can be another means of verifying the applicant's name, address and Social Security number. It may also provide prior addresses that a human resource professional can use to search more thoroughly for other information. Additionally, a credit history also includes public records, including judgments, liens, collection accounts and bankruptcies. A potential employer has the right to review the credit history of any job applicant, provided the applicant signs a proper release.

- Social security number verification: despite credit reports automatically providing verification of this essential number, there are times when a potential employer does not need or seek a financial history. But, organizations can still order a Social Security number verification independent of a credit report. To be thorough in these days of such a transient workforce, organizations must have an assurance that the number is correct. It also provides prior addresses that can be used to conduct a more extensive criminal record search.

Also, HR and other city departments staff should be vigilant when they conduct job interviews. They should avoid asking personal and job-unrelated questions. Typically, a wide variety of questions can be used to gain information about a candidate's job skills. Although there is no one prescription that fits all positions, the following are some behavior-based questions that could be used during the interview.

1. Tell me about a time when you had to use your spoken communication skills in order to get a point across that was important to you.
2. Give me an example of when you felt you were able to build motivation in your coworkers or subordinates.
3. Give me an example of an important goal you had to set and tell me about your progress in reaching that goal.
4. Give me an example of a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
5. Give me an example of a time when you were able to communicate successfully with another person, even when that individual may not have personally liked you.
6. Give me an example of a problem you faced on the job, and tell me how you solved it.
7. Describe a situation in which you were able to positively influence the actions of others in a desired direction.
8. Describe a time when you felt it was necessary to modify or change your actions in order to respond to the needs of another person.
9. Describe a time when you were faced with problems or stresses at work that tested your coping skills. What did you do?
10. Describe a situation in which you were able to read another person effectively and guide your actions by your understanding of his/her individual needs or values.

11. Tell me about a situation in the past few years in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or coworker.
12. Describe the worst customer or coworker you have ever had and tell me how you dealt with him or her.
13. What did you do in your last job in order to be effective with your organization and its goals?

As a result of applications, interviews and background checking, public managers and human resources or personnel staff might find certain applicants they would prefer not to hire because of a concern for potential violence. But the question which arises at this point is: How should they turn these individuals down without running afoul of the law or triggering violence that prevented them from hiring the person in the first place?

Although the answer to this question is beyond the goal of this study, one can safely say that there are several methods that could be used. They include sending a polite letter explaining that the applicant's services are not needed or that the job is not suited to the individual's qualifications. There is no need to provide information on why the organization finds the applicant unqualified. If the department managers or HR representatives are still concerned about the potential for violence from an applicant, they should notify the security department and have them on alert for the next week or so, in case the rejected applicant returns.

Yet, human resources can correct the mistake made during the hiring process by using a probationary period. The probationary period should be used to closely

monitor an employees' performance of job tasks and interactions with coworkers and management. Danger signals should not be ignored and if warranted, the probationary period should be extended (Elliott & Jarrett, 1994). One out of five employers know within the first week that they have hired the wrong person. Sixty percent of respondents to an *HR Focus* survey identify hiring mistakes within the first month. While some employers terminate these employees quickly, the majority wait the full three months for the first review session (HR Focus, 1997).

Also, public employers must take the required steps to understand applicable state laws in the areas where their agencies operate. Many states have laws regarding the release of information contained in criminal records, for example. Local laws often tighten federal laws and restrictions, making the hiring manager's job in particular, and human resources, in general, much more difficult. Nevertheless, recruiters have a critical need to access a candidate's records, if they are to hire workers who are qualified and safe to bring on board. Reasonable information that employers must have to make informed decisions goes beyond merely finding out whether applicants possess the technical skills required to perform tasks.

The study identified 12 functions related to the selection and hiring processes (Appendix A, questions 6-17) that human resources or personnel departments in any city should perform to insure safer workplace in their cities. HR department carry out some of these functions and directly responsible for performing them such as background checks, and correcting the hiring mistakes during the probationary period. Other city department managers and supervisors are responsible for



performing some of these functions such as contacting former employers. However, HR departments have to ensure the performance of these functions.

2.A. Human resources department reviews employment application carefully and inquires about any employment gaps in the application.

2.B. Human resources department carefully compares information on the résumé and application to discover if there is any gap between them.

2.C. Human resources department requests written permission from job applicants to contact former employers and to verify academic records.

2.D. Human resources department checks personal and professional references and inquires about any prior incidents of violence.

2.E. Human resources department conducts thorough background checks on criminal convictions and driving record where applicable.

2.F. Job interviews focus on job-related behavioral issues.

2.G. City departments conduct behavioral tests designed to uncover how job candidates react to certain situations.

2.H. All prospective employees must take drug-screening tests.

2.I. Human resources department staff cooperates with other organizations and agencies when they are asked about the behavior of former employees.

2.J. City departments regularly use employee assessments during the probationary period to correct hiring errors.

2.K. The city preemployment checks and screening processes abide by all applicable laws.

2.L. Human resources and other city departments give prospective employees accurate information about the performance requirements of their new jobs and future advancements before they are hired.

### Training and Development

Constant change is one of the main characteristics of current organizations. Training and development initiatives offer opportunities for employees to upgrade their skills to meet changing job requirements. According to the literature (e.g. Johnson & Indvik, 1996a; Frolkey, 1996; Stewart & Kleiner, 1997; Piturro, 2001) training is a key component of any organizational violence management plan and training should cover the following subjects:

- Identification of potential sources of violence. Familiarization of employees with a profile of a potentially violent person.
- Warning signs and the need to report any threatening remarks or situations.
- Procedures for dealing with violent behaviors. What to do and whom to contact in the event that problems arise.
- Levels of human needs and how to recognize stress.
- Management training in hiring, downsizing, and termination.
- Stress management for both employees and employers.

The following programs should also be a part of the training effort: effective communications, conflict resolution, team building, and management of change. Recent research by the Institute of Management and Administration (IOMA) bears this out. The 2002 Security Management and Salary Survey found that: 1)

Organizations that provide training to supervisors and employees in workplace violence awareness are cutting their incidence rate for employee-on-employee violence. 2) With the incidences of violence between employees and non-employees growing, so is the need to train workers on how to handle disputes with outsiders.

As reported by the 300 respondents from different industries (health care, manufacturing, retail, financial/insurance/real estate, education, service/consulting, non-profit and others), supervisor training seems to lead directly to reductions in employee-on-employee violence. Among the organizations that train supervisors to identify and address troubled workers, 20.2 percent reduced the number of violent incidents between employees. Only 17.9 percent of organizations that do not conduct such training have been able to cut these incidents. Providing workplace violence training to all employees, as opposed to just supervisors, seems to make an even bigger difference. 21.9 percent of organizations that do so reduced employee-on-employee violence, compared to 15.7 percent of organizations that do not provide such training. Also the study found out that close to 40 percent of the respondents provide no training on workplace violence (“The most effective”, 2003).

There is an enhanced danger that organizations should be aware of in the area of training and development. In severe economic times or when organizations face financial difficulties, training and development programs are often the first to suffer budgetary cutbacks. It is understandable from a management perspective to cut back on training before cutting back on staff. Yet such training cutbacks can have severe long-term consequences. One of these consequences may be an increase in the

number of employees within the organization who are under-prepared to perform their job tasks effectively and efficiently. This can create a highly stressful environment. The kind of environment generates violent responses by frustrated and insecure employees (Elliott & Jarrett, 1994; Pynes, 1997).

HR and other city departments should train city employees, managers, and supervisors on different issues related to workplace violence. The study identified 11 areas for training (Appendix A, questions 18-28). These areas are:

- 3.A. The city workplace violence prevention policies and programs
- 3.B. Causes of workplace violence.
- 3.C. Conflict or dispute resolution in the workplace.
- 3.D. Leadership and communication skills.
- 3.E. Stress management
- 3.F. workplace violence warning signs and profile of potentially violent employee.
- 3.G. Training programs on handling violent incidents.
- 3.H. Diversity issues and equitable treatment.
- 3.I. Training on how to detect, documenting and report violent incidents.
- 3.J. Training on how to conduct safe termination and layoff.
- 3.K. Training on how to conduct an effective and fair performance and evaluation.

#### Performance Evaluation or Appraisal Process

Supervisors and managers need to be trained in providing timely, fair and constructive feedback to their staff on both the positive and negative aspects of job performance. The feedback should be provided in a helpful and non-confrontational

manner (Elliott & Jarrett, 1994). Any verbal or physical threats between employees should be documented by supervisors and reported to top management. The potential for stress-related violent situations is always present when untrained managers handle evaluation sessions. It is important to convince employees that evaluations are fair and justified (Pynes, 1997). HRM should develop policies and systems, such as performance appraisal, based on the objectives of skillfully evaluating and managing employee performance.

The study identified two elements of an effective evaluation processes (Appendix A, questions 29,30). City employees have to feel fairly treated and respected and HR and other city departments handle poor performance directly, constructively and within a reasonable time frame.

#### Incentives and Compensation Systems

In most public sector workforces, “merit” is the stated criterion for the distribution of rewards within the organization. Human resources management has a responsibility to ensure that discrimination, partisanship, and favoritism do not occur in organizational recognition and reward systems. Organizations must ensure that superior performance is recognized and that employees with unacceptable performance are held accountable. Human resources management should develop training programs for managers on how to handle employees who are passed over for promotion and on how to provide other incentives in the workplace (Johnson & Indvik, 1996a).

The study identified four elements of the incentives and compensation processes that might have a relationship with workplace violence (Appendix A, questions 31-34). These elements are:

5.A. City employees recognize the fairness and effectiveness of the incentives and compensation systems.

5.B. Workers' compensation system covers employee injuries resulting from workplace violence.

5.C. City employees recognize promotion decisions and process as fair and effective.

5.E. City departments develop other methods to retain and reward outstanding employees.

#### Disciplinary Policies and Procedures

Human resources management handles policy interpretations and disciplinary actions. Organizations should have workplace violence prevention policies and procedures in place. Once a violent incident occurs, an organization must promptly investigate the situation and take disciplinary action, if appropriate. Simple mediation efforts may be sufficient in many situations (Danzig, 1999).

These policies attempt to establish work environments free from a wide range of aggressive behaviors including harassment, intimidation, veiled and direct threats, weapon possession, and physical violence. In addition to defining the type of behavior that is unacceptable, zero tolerance programs clearly establish that such actions will not be tolerated and will subject employees to disciplinary action up to and including termination (Lucero & Allen, 1998). However, the objective of the

disciplinary process should be to improve performance and not to punish or denigrate the employee. Discipline must be consistent with the event or violent behavior (Danzig, 1999).

Wilson A. Scott (2001) described comprehensively the investigation process recommended to be part of any training program. In conducting an investigation, the city department should interview the person who made the report to obtain such information as: 1) who made the threat, 2) against whom the threat was made, 3) the specific language of the threat, 4) any conduct that would substantiate the belief that the person making the threat intends to follow through on it, 5) names of any witnesses to the alleged conduct, 6) the time and place of the incident, 7) threats or violent conduct by the alleged perpetrator before this incident, and 8) any other information that could help the employer to perform an investigation and prevent the threat from being carried out or violent conduct from occurring in the workplace.

After beginning the investigation and determining that the threat is genuine and a violent act is perhaps imminent, a city department may decide to use a proper disciplinary action such as suspending the potential perpetrator with or without pay, pending conclusion of the inquiry. If it is necessary to meet with other witnesses to determine whether the threat is genuine, the city department should do so immediately. As quickly as possible after interviewing the person reporting the incident and any witnesses that person has named, and after documenting all of the interviews, department staff should decide how to approach the accused.

Undoubtedly, fairness requires that the suspect's side of the story be told. However, city departments might take appropriate security measures before meeting with this individual. If the threat is against a specific supervisor, for example, another supervisor should discuss the issue with the threatening employee. Under no circumstances should a supervisor who is the intended or potential victim be asked to conduct the investigation or the interview. Where the allegation of a threat is believed to be genuine, the interview may be conducted by a specialist and in the presence of a human resources representative and department security personnel or, in unusual circumstances, local police officers. Involving the police often underscores to the alleged perpetrator the seriousness of the threat and may subsequently help in convincing the court to grant a restraining order. During such an interview, the employer should normally not communicate any conclusions regarding who was believed, but rather receive the alleged perpetrator's side of the story.

When discussing the threat with the alleged perpetrator, the interviewer should take care to minimize the possibility of a lawsuit by that person based on the investigation. For example, threatening an employee with criminal prosecution if he or she refuses to come to the office to discuss the incident could constitute the tort of false imprisonment. It is important to make an attempt to hear the alleged perpetrator's story. A balanced investigation may not only yield pertinent information but also be evidence of good faith, if it becomes necessary to defend against a wrongful discharge or other suit evolving from the eventual termination of the employee. The tone of the discussion should be non-confrontational and designed



merely to obtain the alleged perpetrator's side of the story. His or her feeling that the interviewer is trying to understand another side of the story could aid the investigation and reduce the likelihood of a violent response. Of course, once serious violence has occurred and an arrest and criminal prosecution are likely, an interview with the alleged perpetrator may have lower priority or be substantially delayed.

Following the investigation, the employer should report to the complaining party on the conclusion as well as any planned affirmative steps to control the situation. In finalizing such a report, the employer should consider how it would appear if 12 months later the alleged perpetrator attempted to shoot the complaining party. If the report demonstrates that all the reasonable steps were taken, the employer has very likely met its obligation even if subsequent violence occurs. On the other hand, if the employer makes feeble preventive responses, a subsequent event such as a shooting could open the door to legal liability.

City departments should evaluate fairness in personnel procedures. Personnel procedures must be consistent for everyone. Allocations must be done fairly and must be based on clear standards. According to Stewart and Kleiner (1997), "Zero tolerance need not mean dismissal. Discipline, rather than termination, may be the best response when an offender is a long-term employee with an otherwise spotless record and the violent episode is clearly an aberration (p.7)."

The study identified two areas of the disciplinary policies and procedures thought to have a relationship with workplace violence (Appendix A, questions 35-36). These areas are:

6.A. Disciplinary actions should be in line with city ordinances and stated policies and with the state and federal regulations.

6.B. city employees should know that all violent threats will be taken seriously and will be investigated thoroughly.

#### Termination and Layoff Processes

Downsizing and violence are associated (Federal Human Resources Week, 9/14/1998). Employees need warning about their performance before they are terminated. Many organizations handle this through a yearly performance review, when employees are notified about possible or probable termination. A policy must be set for individual termination as well as for group downsizing. Termination-related workplace homicides have occurred as soon as five minutes to as long as three years after the termination of the assailant. Job retraining and other aggressive outplacement efforts such as buyouts, extended medical insurance coverage, credit toward pension eligibility, and psychological or employment counseling services may significantly reduce the potential for hostility. These strategies relay the message that management cares about the well being of the former employee, particularly if he or she enjoys limited support from friends and family. These gestures help prevent the deterioration of worker morale by reassuring remaining employees that management will be fair in the event of future layoffs.

William S. Frank (2000) has recommended 25 ways to prevent workplace violence during terminations. Among them, human resources managers should not fire an employee on Friday afternoon or the day before a holiday. Termination should

occur on weekdays since that allows the employee the opportunity to call with follow-up questions, take advantage of resources (such as check cashing services), or constructively start considering alternatives, rather than spending the weekend or the holiday passively reflecting on the “injustice of it all.” Organizations should organize stress management training programs and they should review their outplacement practices and provide counseling.

Although employers have the legal right to fire employees who present a serious danger to coworkers, supervisors, managers, or themselves, human resources managers should be very careful when they make this decision. They should comply with all laws and regulations in this regard. For instance, although employees with serious medical and mental conditions are protected by the ADA, organizations still have the right to fire them for valid work-related reasons. The guidelines to the ADA, published by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 1997, make it clear that the law allows employers to fire mentally disabled employees if they pose a direct threat or a “significant risk of substantial harm” that cannot be eliminated by a reasonable accommodation. Reasonable accommodation may include paid time off from work or a modified work schedule to obtain treatment. Employees must adhere to those accommodations and must comply with workplace behavior and conduct standards. The U.S. Court of Appeals has upheld decisions to fire disabled employees based on performance or behavior, not on the mental condition of an employee (Bencivenga, 1999).

The study identified three issues of termination and layoff processes that thought to have a relationship with workplace violence (Appendix A, questions 37-40). These issues are:

7.A. Human resources department ensures that layoff decisions are made in a fair and legal manner.

7.B. Necessary layoff and terminations should be conducted in a humane manner with adequate support services.

7.C. city outplacement strategies should include elements that preserve employee dignity including counseling, retraining and job search.

#### Grievance or Complaint Systems

Workplace violence perpetrators may believe that their victims have wronged them. Providing a functional system for venting, grieving and resolving workplace conflicts might alleviate these perceptions and might reduce employees' feelings of powerlessness. Organizations sometimes have a poorly functioning grievance procedure that often results in inattention to problems rather than their resolution (Moffatt, 1998). Using words such as "we are concerned" or "soon this problem will be solved" without action creates hostility. A dysfunctional grievance procedure can be worse than no procedure at all. A functional grievance procedure ensures that the employee knows to whom he or she should take their complaint. It also includes a system of acknowledging the grievance, initiating a review process (which ideally involves a panel representing all employees) and ensuring that the employee is informed of the panel's decision.

The Labor-Management Relation Act, the Federal Labor Relations Authority Act, and the Public Employee Relations Act require that a grievance procedure be included in every collective bargaining contract. Grievance systems provide employees with a peaceful method of venting their frustrations. Human resources management must insure that the procedures are clear and provided to all employees. Employees should be fully informed regarding grievance procedures and know what to do when they feel they are wrongly treated (Pynes, 1997).

The study identified three areas of the grievance and complaint systems that might have an impact on workplace violence (Appendix A, questions 41-43). These areas are:

- 8.A. Grievance and complaints systems are well known to city employees.
- 8.B. Grievance procedures are associated with swift actions.
- 8.C. Grievance and complaints systems present alternative methods to stressed employees to express their views about different managerial and organizational issues.

#### Employee Safety

Employers are responsible for the safety of their employees. Under the principle of “respondeat superior” (let the master answer), an employer can be held liable for the wrongful acts of their employees, but only when those acts are committed within the scope of employment. Through case law, this liability has gradually taken on an expanded definition under the concept of “vicarious liability” - a body of case law that holds an employer liable for injuries to a third parties when

those injuries occur because the employer's negligent hiring practices resulted in hiring unfit or dangerous persons (Spittler, 1999).

A key distinction, however, is that unlike respondeat superior which focuses on the actions of the employee, negligent hiring, negligent supervision, and negligent retention focus on actions by the employer. Additionally, under these concepts, employers can be held liable for the actions of their employees, even if these acts are not committed on organization or agency premises.

Under the concept of negligent hiring, an employer can be held liable for actions of an employee if they hire him/her without conducting a thorough background check. The single most effective step in preventing workplace violence is the hiring process. If properly conducted -as mentioned earlier- it can provide indicators that an individual may have a propensity for violence.

Negligent supervision indicates the employer's failure to maintain adequate control and counseling of an employee to allow for corrective action in the event of misconduct or inappropriate behavior. Moreover, in a toxic work environment, violent people are often supervised in manner that is likely to bring out their worst characteristics. That is a major criticism of postal supervisors (Spittler, 1999).

Employers can be held liable under the concept of negligent retention if they are aware of an employee's inclination or tendency for violence and retain him anyway. Thus, whenever an employer is aware of specific instances of inappropriate behavior and continues to employ that person who subsequently acts out in a violent manner, the employer can be held accountable and liable for such actions.

This study identified one element of the employee safety process (Appendix A, question 44). Human resources directors were asked to determine how important employee safety issues to their HR departments.

To summarize, this chapter provides an extensive review of the literature on the contributory factors of workplace violence. It is necessary to view workplace violence as a hazard and occupational problem in order to understand the organizational factors associated with it. In this chapter, a new model of workplace violence prevention was suggested. The aim of this model is to prepare public organizations to combat workplace violence. The present study in Chapter 5 measured the extent to which city governments and human resources departments implement the 19 elements of this model. While 10 elements intend to measure the preparedness of city government, the rest examine the human resources practices or functions.

Noticeably, much of the workplace violence research focused on studying the causes of violence and suggesting some preventative techniques. Yet, some empirical researches focused on finding practical solutions to this problem. However, the research of human resources management and workplace violence is “somewhat disappointing” because of inconsistent attention to this issue and lack of a theoretical framework. The majority of the research on workplace violence did not focus on human resources management as a major factor in preventing this problem. Rather HRM was given a marginal attention. Consideration of the significant role of HR in combating workplace violence started with Elliott and Jarrett’s study in 1994. In this

study, the authors complained about the lack of the literature in this area. Nigro and Waugh's work in that regard (1996, 1998 and 1999) is a prompt for empirical research. However, despite their focus on local governments, their work did not consider most of HRM aspects. The lack of research on workplace violence and HRM and the limited literature on studying workplace violence at the local government level necessitate writing this dissertation and conducting this research.



## CHAPTER IV

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents several issues related to the methods used to conduct this study. In addition to the research questions, the study has 20 research hypotheses. While one hypothesis intended to measure the relationship between the size of city government (number of employees) and HR directors' perception of the level of workplace violence, ten hypotheses were designed to examine the relationships between city government prevention plan components and the perceived level of workplace violence. Nine hypotheses were designed to test the relationships between human resources functions and the perceived workplace violence. The population of this study is human resources or personnel departments' directors in cities with over 100,000 resident each. The study used the survey method to collect the data and 49% response rate was achieved.

#### Research Questions

Surveys were sent to the human resources or personnel directors in city governments of at least 100,000 residents. From this target group, this study seeks to answer three major questions:

1. What is the current level of workplace violence in the city governments from the HR directors' perspective?

2. What do these city governments do to prevent workplace violence?
3. What do human resources departments in these cities do to prevent workplace violence?

### Research Hypotheses

Based on the model of this study as shown in Figures 4 and 5, the study seeks to examine and test three groups of hypotheses: 1) demographic factor, 2) preparedness of city governments or city government prevention plan components, 3) human resources departments (independent variables) and the extent of the workplace violence problem as perceived by the HR directors (dependent variable).

#### Demographic Factor or Size of City Government and Workplace Violence

Hi 1: There is a relationship between the number of city government employees and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence in that city.

#### City Governments Preparedness Plan Components and Workplace Violence

Hi 2: There is a relationship between having a written workplace violence prevention policy or program and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

Hi 3: There is a relationship between having a written workplace violence policy that prohibits harassment of any kind and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

Hi 4: There is a relationship between having a written a zero tolerance policy and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

Hi 5: There is a relationship between having a risk assessment team and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

Hi 6: There is a relationship between implementing security systems (such as metal detectors, ID badges, surveillance cameras and alarm systems) and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

Hi 7: There is a relationship between having an employee assistance program (EAP) and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

Hi 8: There is a relationship between having a workplace violence incident tracking and record keeping system and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

Hi 9: There is a relationship between having an emergency response team or crisis management team and a post-event recovery plan and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

Hi 10: There is a relationship between providing counseling services to workplace violence victims and witnesses and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

Hi 11: There is a relationship between utilizing all of the available resources to prevent workplace violence by city government and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

#### Human Resources Management and Workplace Violence

Hi 12: There is a relationship between city job descriptions and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

Hi 13: There is a relationship between the city hiring process and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

Hi 14: There is a relationship between the training and educational programs offered by a city and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

Hi 15: There is a relationship between the performance review or evaluation practices and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

Hi 16: There is a relationship between the city compensation system and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

Hi 17: There is a relationship between the city disciplinary system and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

Hi 18: There is a relationship between the city layoff and termination policies and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

Hi 19: There is a relationship between the city grievance system and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

Hi 20: There is a relationship between the importance of employee safety and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

#### Research Population

The target population of this study is all cities in the United States with populations of 100,000 or more. The Year 2000 U.S. Census data states that there were 236 cities with at least 100,000 residents. Seventy-five million Americans live in those cities. That number represents almost 27% (26.65%) of the U.S. population.

The researcher identified the human resources or personnel departments' directors and managers (or their equivalents) in these cities. The reasons for choosing the cities with more than 100,000 residents were that those cities have the largest number of employees, their workplaces are more diverse, they should have the resources to prevent and combat violence, and they should have a policy to reduce or prevent violence in their workplaces. The researcher is assuming that the larger the city, the larger the exposure to workplace violence behaviors and the greater the likelihood there is a workplace violence prevention plan in place. Furthermore, these 236 cities are found in a majority of states around the country, 42 states in addition to Washington DC.

The researcher was eager for representation to include all states. However, eight states (Alaska, Delaware, Maine, Montana, North Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming) did not have any cities with more than 100,000 residents. As shown in Table 5, California had the most cities in the study population (56 cities-23.7%), followed by Texas (10.2 %). Ten states, in addition to Washington DC, had only one city among the largest cities in the country. Those states were, Arkansas, Hawaii, Idaho, Maryland, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Rhode Island, South Carolina and South Dakota.

The study focuses on the human resources or personnel directors and managers because HR people are in a position to take a leadership role in helping their organizations develop preventive and protective measures. Also, they are usually in the forefront of efforts to help organizations recover after an act of violence.

Table 5

## Geographic Distribution of the Study Population by State

State	Number of Cities	Percentage	State	Number of Cities	Percentage
AL	4	1.7%	MT	0	0.0%
AR	1	0.4%	NC	6	2.5%
AZ	9	3.8%	ND	0	0.0%
AK	0	0.0%	NE	2	0.9%
CA	56	23.7%	NH	1	0.4%
CO	8	3.4%	NJ	4	1.7%
CT	5	2.1%	NM	1	0.4%
DE	0	0.0%	NV	4	1.7%
DC	1	0.4%	NY	5	2.1%
FL	13	5.5%	OH	6	2.5%
GA	3	1.3%	OK	2	0.9%
HI	1	0.4%	OR	3	1.3%
IA	2	0.9%	PA	4	1.7%
ID	1	0.4%	RI	1	0.4%
IL	7	3.0%	SC	1	0.4%
IN	5	2.1%	SD	1	0.4%
KS	4	1.7%	TN	5	2.1%
KY	2	0.9%	TX	24	10.2%
LA	4	1.7%	UT	3	1.3%
MA	5	2.1%	VT	0	0.0%
MD	1	0.4%	VA	8	3.4%
ME	0	0.0%	WA	5	2.1%
MI	8	3.4%	WV	0	0.0%
MN	2	0.9%	WI	3	1.3%
MO	4	1.7%	WY	0	0.0%
MS	1	0.4%	Total	236	100%

Source: The researcher extracted this table from Census 2000 PHC-T-5. Ranking Tables for Incorporated Places of 100,000 resident or More: 1990 and 2000. U.S. Census Bureau, April 2, 2001.

In 1998, the findings of a national survey of city and county governments found that the human resources departments and personnel offices at the city and county levels

played a major role in both the formulation and implementation of workplace violence policies or programs and they will continue to play this role in the future (Nigro & Waugh, 1998b).

The role of human resources in preventing workplace violence is critical not only in the public sector but also in the private sector. Pinkerton -a private security services company- annually surveys professionals who are responsible for assuring the security of America's largest companies and the safety of their employees. They found that for seven consecutive years the human resources directors and managers not only have had primary responsibility for their organization's security programs, but also have played the leading role. For example, in 2002, the survey found that while just 7% of security departments report directly to the CEO or company president, the largest group, 21%, report to the human resources departments (Pinkerton, 2000).

The researcher pursued many resources to obtain accurate information regarding the study's participants. The researcher obtained the contact information on the 236 human resources directors or managers from city web sites and telephone books whenever possible. The researcher contacted about 75 cities by phone to obtain the addresses of the human resources or personnel departments and their current directors. Electronic mail was also used to get this information for ten cities. Most of the cities included in the study population had a web page and some of them had a separate section for the human resources department. The collected information contained the department mailing address, phone and fax numbers, email address when available, and the name of

the human resources or personnel director for each city. The researcher frequently updated the information to keep it current.

### Data Collection (Instrumentation)

The research method chosen to conduct this study was a mail survey. Surveys are not only the most common method used to collect data related to organizational behavior and other organizational issues, but also the most successful method used to collect data related to the human resources management field (Phillips, 1996). Surveys can either measure internal practices or gather information on practices and policies at other organizations (Fleming and Wilson, 2001).

The researcher designed the questionnaire (Appendix A) to probe several areas. The first part of the survey covered the size of the city government. The second part covered the perception of the human resources or personnel department directors of the level or the extent of the workplace violence problem. The third part included the components of the workplace violence prevention plan or the city government's preparedness to combat workplace violence. The last part of the survey covered the role of human resources departments in preventing workplace violence.

A pilot study contributed to the design of the final survey. The major purpose of this pilot study was to determine the reality of the research and to test the research procedures and the practicality of the survey. The pilot study supported the authenticity and contributed to the refinement of the survey.



In compliance with university requirements, approval was obtained from the Western Michigan University Human Subject Institutional Review Board. The respondents were public officials and were not promised confidentiality. However, the survey used an anonymous design and no attempt was made to link specific surveys to specific cities or individual respondents. In addition, answering all or part of the questionnaire was voluntary.

Each questionnaire had a code number stamped on it. The researcher clearly stated in the consent letter, which was sent along with the questionnaire, that this code number served as a correspondence cost reduction method and there was no other purpose behind it. Notably, although study participants were promised anonymity, while some of them took extra steps to veil their identity by removing the code numbers, others seemed to ignore this issue. They voluntarily revealed themselves and their identity in various ways. Some respondents enclosed their business cards with the returned questionnaires. Others used their city envelopes to return the questionnaire instead of the stamped returned envelopes provided by the researcher. A group of respondents chose to write their city name and address on the return envelopes or imprint the return questionnaire with the department and/or city stamp. Others wrote their city name on the questionnaire after filling it out. One respondent sent the response using the city fax.

The study followed Dillman's recommendations regarding design, conducting, and using the survey method to maximize the response to the survey (Dillman, 2000). Also, the respondents were promised a copy of the final results. The researcher followed the enclosed data collection timeline.

Table 6  
The Data Collection Timeline

Steps	Step Description	Timeline	Remarks	Response Rate*
Step 1	Prenotice postcards mailed	September 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2003	Notice to anticipate survey and kindly request a response.	
Step 2	Surveys mailed	October 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Each mailing contained a cover letter "Consent letter" and reply envelope with first class stamp.	
Step 3	Reminder thank you post cards mailed.	November 20 <sup>th</sup>	Several emails were received requesting new surveys due to not getting the original surveys.	23%
Step 4	Replacement surveys mailed	November 28 <sup>th</sup>	Each mail contained a cover letter and another copy of the survey. November 15 <sup>th</sup> was set as the last day to receive the surveys.	
Step 5	Surveys due date	November 15 <sup>th</sup>	Eight surveys were received after the due date.	49%

\* Valid percentage

The researcher sent a copy of each mailing to his address not only to keep track of the mailing times but also to assure the delivery of the mailings. However, the researcher's response was excluded completely from the study analysis and was not considered by any means part of the response rate. The following table (Table 7) summarizes the questions included in the questionnaire (44 questions), the rationale behind each one of them, and how they served the hypotheses of this study.

Table 7

## Survey: Questions, Variables and Hypotheses

Q. No	Area of the Question	Purpose of the question	Variables	Hypothesis Served
1	City government employees number	Knowing the size of the city.	Independent	1
2	Types of workplace violence	Knowing types and HR directors' perceptions of the level of violence in the city.	Dependent	All
3	City government workplace violence prevention components	Exploring the level of city government readiness to combat workplace violence by knowing how many components they have. This question covers all areas of workplace violence prevention outside the HR area.	Independent	2,3,4,5,6,7, 8,9,10, and 11
4-5	HR Functions: job analysis & design	Exploring the nature of the job design in the city governments.	Independent	12
6-17	HR Functions: hiring process	Exploring the HR hiring practices in the city and knowing how prepared the HR department is	Independent	13
18-28	HR Functions: education and training process	Exploring the HR and city government training programs and knowing how prepared HR is to combat violence.	Independent	14
29-30	HR Functions: job performance and evaluation	Exploring the HR practices in job evaluation and job performance review.	Independent	15
31-34	HR Functions: compensation sys.	Exploring the compensation system in the city government.	Independent	16
35-36	HR Functions: disciplinary actions	Exploring the disciplinary actions applied by city gov. to ensure safer public workplace.	Independent	17
37-40	HR Functions: layoff and termination	Exploring HR practices and other city departments on layoffs.	Independent	18
41-43	HR Functions: grievance system	Knowing the grievance system in the city government.	Independent	19
44	HR Functions: employees safety	The answer gives an overall look at the importance of the employees' safety to HR.	Independent	20

### Percentage of Response Analysis

Overall, a 54% response rate was achieved ( $N=128$ ). The valid response rate was 49% ( $N=116$ ) since 5% returned the survey completely void of response. Also, one city contacted the researcher by email saying they are currently establishing a workplace violence prevention program and therefore were unable to respond to the survey. It is worth mentioning that the valid surveys were completely filled out, not leaving a single question blank, possibly due to giving the respondents the option of “undecided” in a majority of the questions. Table 8 summarizes the survey response.

Table 8

#### Percentage of Response by State

State	Frequency	Percent	State	Frequency	Percent
AL	4	3.4%	NC	4	3.4%
AR	1	0.9%	NE	2	1.7%
AZ	6	5.2%	NJ	1	0.9%
CA	30	25.9%	NV	3	2.6%
CO	4	3.4%	NY	1	0.9%
CT	1	0.9%	OH	2	1.7%
FL	3	2.6%	OK	1	0.9%
GA	2	1.7%	OR	3	2.6%
IA	2	1.7%	PA	1	0.9%
ID	1	0.9%	RI	1	0.9%
IL	4	3.4%	SC	1	0.9%
IN	4	3.4%	TN	4	3.4%
KY	1	0.9%	TX	9	7.8%
MA	3	2.6%	UT	3	2.6%
MD	1	0.9%	VA	1	0.9%
MI	5	4.3%	WA	2	1.7%
MN	2	1.7%	WI	1	0.9%
MO	2	1.7%	Total	116	100%

A comparison of Table 5 and Table 8 shows that, regardless of the number of respondents, all surveys sent to Alabama, Arkansas, Idaho, Iowa, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina and Utah were completed and returned.

Kansas, Louisiana, South Dakota, New Hampshire, and Hawaii were excluded from the analysis with no responses received. Florida, Virginia, Ohio, and Connecticut had a relatively high representation in the study population, but with a proportionately weak percentage of response.

The U.S. Census Bureau classifies the country geographically into four major regions: The Northeast, Midwest, South and West. Northeast region consists of New England Division and Middle Atlantic and Midwest region includes East North Central and West North Central. The South region comprises South Atlantic, East South Central and West South Central and the West region has two divisions, the mountain and pacific.

Figure 7

Distribution of the Study Population by Region

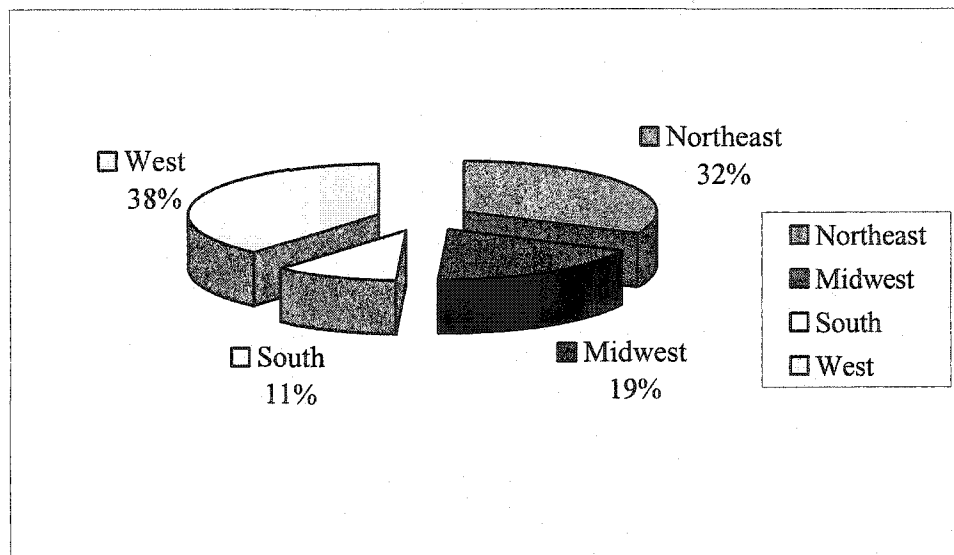


Table 9

## Distribution of the Study Population and Response by Region

Region	State	Population		Response		Region	State	Population		Response	
		Number of Cities	(%)	Number of Responses	(%)			Number of Cities	(%)	Number of Responses	(%)
West	AK	0	0	0	0	Northeast	CT	5	2.1	1	0.9
	AZ	9	3.8	6	5.2		MA	5	2.1	3	2.6
	CA	56	23.7	30	25.9		ME	0	0	0	0
	CO	8	3.4	4	3.4		NH	1	0.4	0	0
	HI	1	0.4	0	0		NJ	4	1.7	1	0.9
	ID	1	0.4	1	0.9		NY	5	2.1	1	0.9
	MT	0	0	0	0		PA	4	1.7	1	0.9
	NM	1	0.4	0	0		RI	1	0.4	1	0.9
	NV	4	1.7	3	2.6		VT	0	0	0	0
	OR	3	1.3	3	2.6		Total	25	10.5	8	7.1
	UT	3	1.3	3	2.6						
	WA	5	2.1	2	1.7		South	AL	4	1.7	4
WY	0	0	0	0	AR	1		0.4	1	0.9	
Total	91	38.5	52	44.9	DC	1		0.4	0	0	
					DE	0		0	0	0	
Midwest	IA	2	0.9	2	1.7	FL		13	5.5	3	2.6
	IL	7	2.9	4	3.4	GA		3	1.3	2	1.7
	IN	5	2.1	4	3.4	KY		2	0.9	1	0.9
	KS	4	1.7	0	0	LA		4	1.7	0	0
	MI	8	3.4	5	4.3	MD		1	0.4	1	0.9
	MN	2	0.9	2	1.7	MS		1	0.4	0	0
	MO	4	1.7	2	1.7	NC		6	2.5	4	3.4
	ND	0	0	0	0	OK		2	0.9	1	0.9
	NE	2	0.9	2	1.7	SC	1	0.4	1	0.9	
	OH	6	2.5	2	1.7	TN	5	2.1	4	3.4	
	SD	1	0.4	0	0	TX	24	10.2	9	7.8	
	WI	3	1.3	1	0.9	VA	8	3.4	1	0.9	
Total	44	18.7	24	20.5	Total	76	32.2	32	27.7		
					WV	0	0	0	0		

Based on the U.S. Census Bureau regions, and as shown from Table 9 and Figures 7 and 8, while the West and Midwest had a higher percentage of response than their share in the study population (consecutively, 44.9% compared to 38.5% and 20.5% compared to 18.7%), South and Northeast regions had lower percentage of response than their representation in the study population (consecutively, 27.7% compared to 32.2% and 7.1% compared to 10.5%).

Figure 8

Percentage of Response by Region

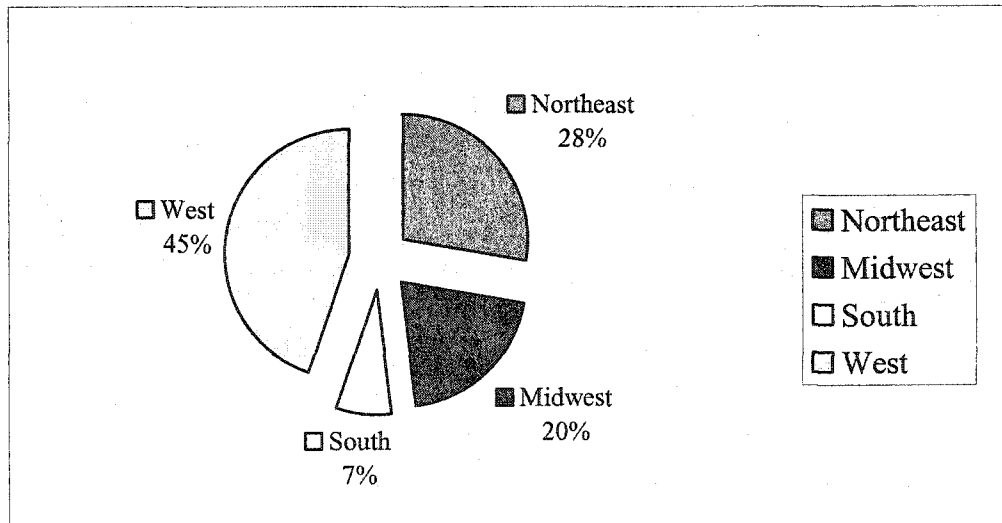


Figure 9 shows the percentage of response by city population. The majority of the surveys came from cities that had 100,000 to 249,999 residents (85 responses or 73%). Followed by cities with populations of 250,000-499,999 (15 responses or 13%) and 500,000-749,999 (11 responses or 9.5%). Cities with populations of 750,000-999,999 residents returned two surveys (2%), and cities with populations of one million residents or more returned three surveys (2.6%).

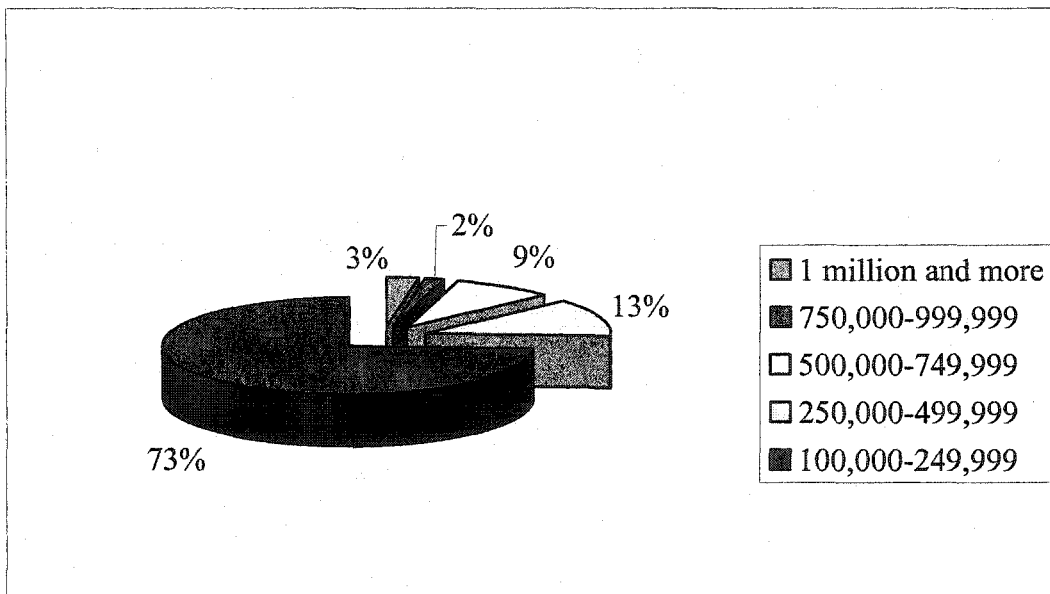
Table 10

Percentage of Response by City Population

City Population	Number of Responses	Percentage
100,000-249,999	85	73.3%
250,000-499,999	15	13.0%
500,000-749,999	11	9.4%
750,000-999,999	2	1.7%
1000,000 and up	3	2.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 9

City Population and Percentage of Response



In terms of the participants' gender, the surveys were mailed out to 128 female (54.2%) and 108 male (45.8%) human resources or personnel director. The percentage of response of the female directors was higher than their contribution in the study

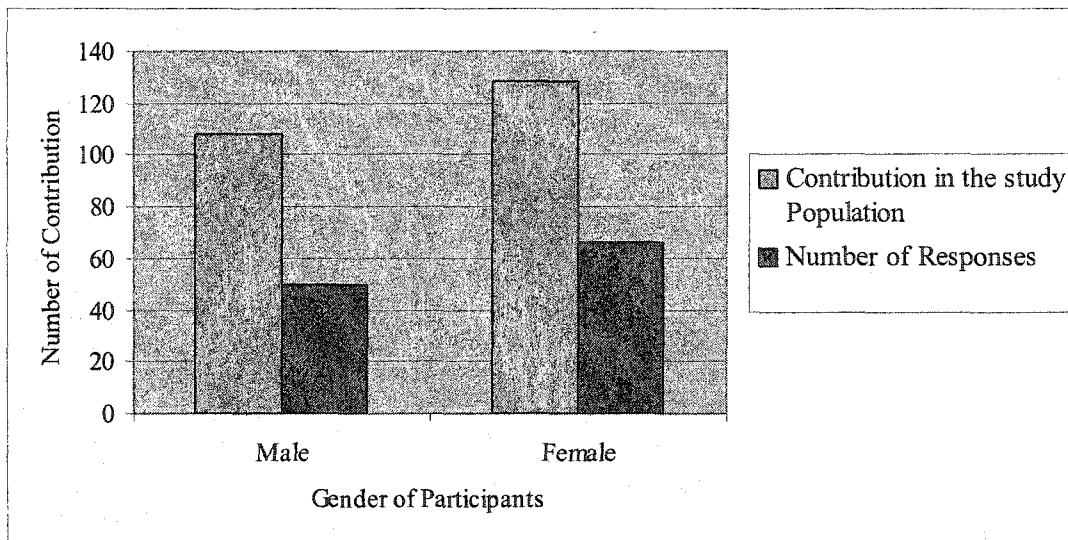


population and higher than their counterparts' percentage of response (consecutively, 56.9% and 43.1%). However, it is difficult to decide who exactly answered the survey, the director or someone else in the department. The researcher knew in at least one case that the director of the human resources department was a female and the manager of the labor relations unit in the department, who is male, answered the survey. The following Table 11 and Figure 10 show the gender of the study participants.

Table 11  
Gender of the Study Participants

Gender	Population		Response	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Male	108	45.8%	50	43.1%
Female	128	54.2%	66	56.9%
Total	236	100%	116	100%

Figure 10  
Gender Distribution of the Study Participants



## Limitations of the Study

Despite an attempt to be as thorough and complete as possible in this research, there inevitably were some limitations and concerns.

- The researcher was concerned that his Arab-sounding surname would unnecessarily reduce the response rate on a survey regarding workplace violence in the most populated cities in the country. Therefore the committee chairperson signed his name along with the researcher on the cover letter sent with the surveys. Interestingly enough, most of the respondents, when requesting information, contacted the chairperson.
- There is always a possibility that the direct subject of the study, directors of the human resources or personnel departments, would not answer the survey themselves. Due to factors such as time constraints, they may have asked someone else in the department to respond, which might affect the responses to some survey questions. The study assumes that the directors of the human resources or personnel departments are most knowledgeable. To avoid the pitfalls associated with this problem, the researcher gave the participants the freedom to mark undecided in the majority of the questions of the survey. In fact, as shown in Chapter 5 of the current study, a high number of respondents (sometimes about 30% of them) chose to use this option.
- The desire to increase the response rate controlled the survey design and the number of questions in the survey.

- The researcher used code numbers to lower the costs associated with the mailing process. In addition to assuring anonymity and aggregation of response, the cover or consent letter stated clearly that this code number had no hidden purpose and was only intended to keep track of the respondents who returned the survey. Some of the respondents deliberately obliterated this code on their forms. The researcher, while he was entering the data, did find some noticeable differences between answers in the coded surveys and the answers in the second mailing where surveys were not coded, which may have been related to the issue of perceived anonymity. The researcher felt that respondents answered more freely when the code was not there.

#### Data Analysis Methods

Based on the level of data collected, several statistics methods of analysis were used in the following chapter. Spearman Rho -- a rank-order correlation coefficient-- was used to test the relationship between size of city government (number of city government employees) and HR directors' perception of workplace violence (ordinal level data). For validity and accuracy purposes, the researcher used Gamma as a measure of association. Also, Spearman Rho correlation coefficient was used to measure the relationship between human resources functions and the perceived level of workplace violence.

As shown in Table 12, the values of the correlation coefficient range from -1 to 1. The sign of the correlation coefficient indicates the direction of the relationship. Negative values indicate a negative relationship and positive values indicate a positive relationship.

Also, the absolute value of the correlation coefficient indicates the strength, with larger absolute values indicating stronger relationships. When a relationship between two variables is found to be significant ( $p < .005$ ), Table 12 was used to determine the direction and the strength of the correlation. It is difficult in social science to find perfect or even very strong correlations between variables. This study considered weak negative or positive correlation and excluded very weak relationships from the analysis even if the relationships were statistically significant. It is important to say that the current study analyzed 60 variables and 416 relationships were tested.

Table 12

Correlation Coefficient Values and Strength of the Relationships between the Variables

Value of r	Interpretation
$r = 0$	The two variables do not vary together at all
$0 > r > 1$	The two variables tend to increase or decrease together
$0 > r > .10$	Very weak positive correlation.
$.10 > r > .30$	Weak positive correlation
$.30 > r > .50$	Moderate positive correlation
$.50 > r > .70$	Strong positive correlation
$.70 > r > 1.0$	Very strong positive correlation
$r = 1.0$	Perfect positive correlation
$-1 > r > 0$	One variable increases as the other decreases
$r = -1.0$	Perfect negative or inverse correlation
$-.70 > r > -1.0$	Very strong negative correlation
$-.50 > r > -.70$	Strong negative correlation
$-.30 > r > -.50$	Moderate negative correlation
$-.10 > r > -.30$	Weak negative correlation
$0 > r > -.10$	Very weak negative correlation.

Chi-Square was used to measure the association between city government prevention plan components (Independent variable) and the perceived level of workplace violence (dependent variable). Chi Square is the most appropriate test for the nominal data (the independent variable). Chi Square was used to statistically test the existence of a relationship in a cross tabulation. However, to measure the magnitude or the strength and direction of the relationships, measures of association at nominal levels such as Phi was used.

## CHAPTER V

### DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### Variables Analysis and Hypotheses Testing

This chapter consists of two sections. The first presents thorough statistical analysis for each group of variables. As I mentioned in chapter 4, this study has 60 variables (52 independent variables and 8 dependent variables). The study hypotheses will be discussed in the second section. By using SPSS software, the researcher tested 416 relationships.

#### Analysis of the Dependent and Independent Variables

As shown previously in Table 7, there are four major groups of variables (see also, Appendix A). In this section, a statistical analysis of each one of these variables will be presented. While the first, the third, and the fourth groups of variables are independents, the second group of variables is dependent. The first group of variables has only one variable, which is the size of the city government or the number of city employees. The second group of variables is HR directors' perception of the level of workplace violence in the city government. The third group of variables consists of the components of the workplace violence prevention plan or the preparedness of city government in combating workplace violence (ten components). The last group includes the human resources management functions (nine major functions).

Size of City Government (Number of City Government Employees)

The questionnaire asked the respondents to identify the number of their city government employees by choosing one of six predefined groups. As shown in Table 13 and Figure 11, while the fewest responses came from cities with less than 500 employees (a little less than 1%), the highest response rate came from cities with between 1,000 and 2,000 employees (34%). Cities with more than 500 and less than 2,000 employees comprised 52.5% of the study respondents. More than 80% of the respondents were from cities with more than 1,000 but less than 5000 employees. Cities with more than 10,000 employees constituted only 6% of the study respondents.

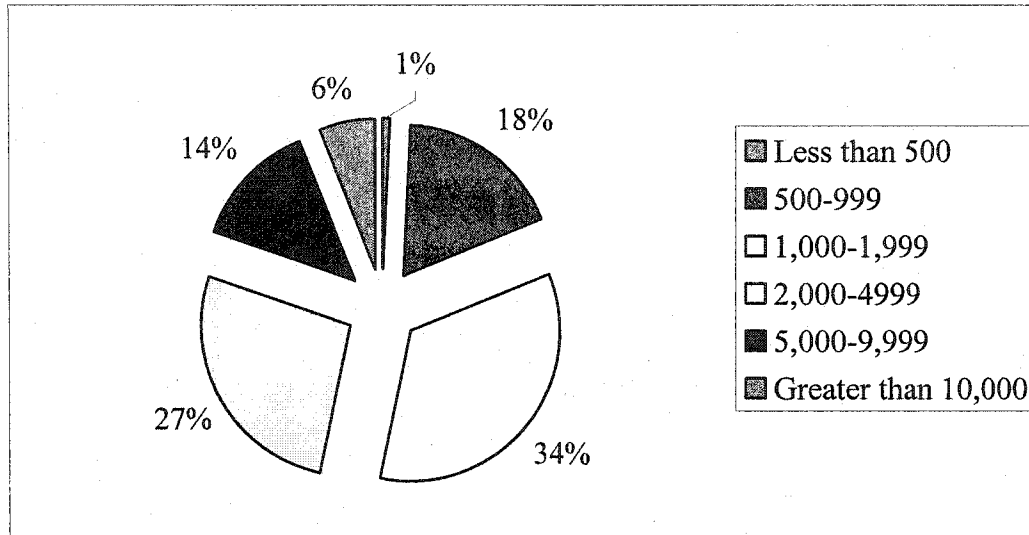
Table 13

Number of City Government Employees Response Crosstabulation

Number of City Government Employees	Number of Responses	Percent
Less than 500	1	0.9%
500-999	21	18.1%
1,000-1,999	40	34.4%
2,000-4,999	31	26.7%
5,000-9,999	16	13.8%
Greater than 10,000	7	6.0%
Total	116	100%

Figure 11

Number of City Government Employees Response Crosstabulation



Level of Workplace Violence From HR directors' Perspective

Seven possible types of workplace violence were identified in the literature review. The questionnaire asked the respondents to identify the level or the degree of each type of workplace violence in their city workplaces. Also, respondents were asked to determine the overall level of workplace violence against city government employees. They were given 5-point scale labelled respectively, *not a problem, small problem, moderate problem, serious problem and very serious problem*. Table 14 and Figure 12 demonstrate the findings.

Terror Attack or Threat of Terror Attack. While 47% of the respondents said terror attack or a threat of terror attack was not a problem in their city government, 53% of them reported that it was a problem. Out of those who said terror attack was a problem, 31% thought it was just a small problem and 22% thought that the problem



ranged from moderate to very serious and 4% reported it was a serious or very serious problem. One respondent commented that it “hasn’t been a problem but could be anywhere.”

Table 14

Workplace Violence in City Government as Perceived by the Directors of HR

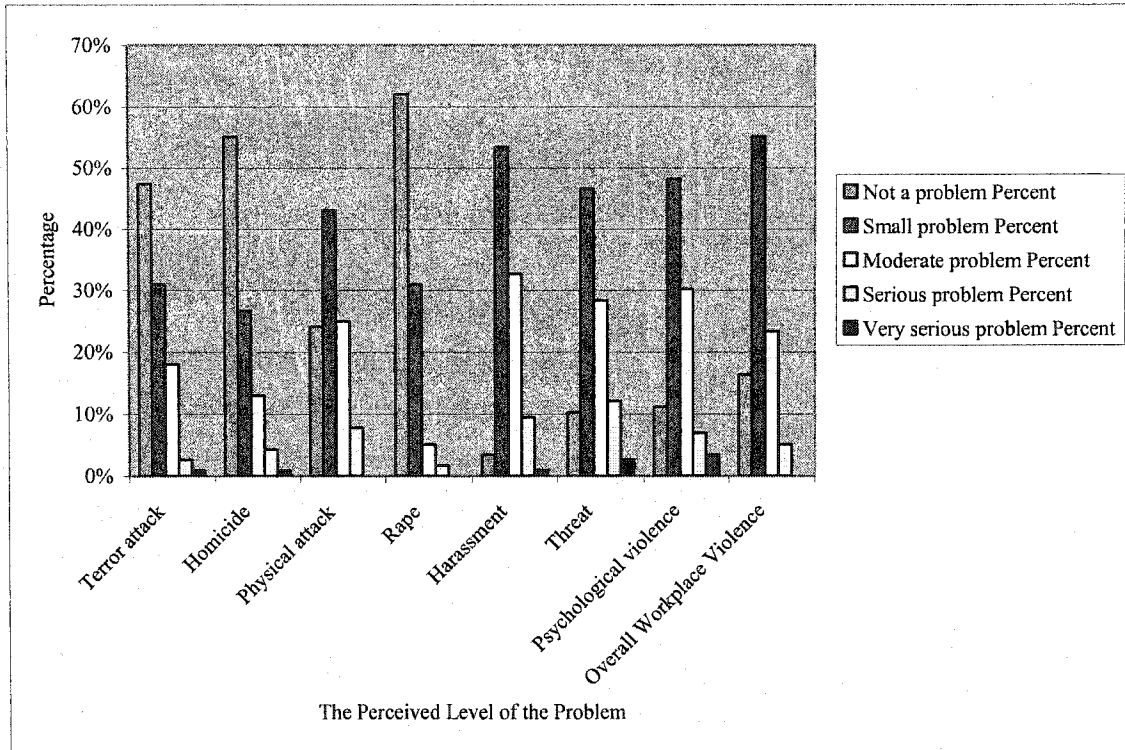
Violent act		Terror attack	Homicide	Physical attack	Rape	Harassment	Threat	Psychological violence	Overall WPV**
Not a problem	Response*	55	64	28	72	4	12	13	19
	Percent	47.4%	55.1%	24.1%	62.0%	3.4%	10.3%	11.2%	16.4%
Small problem	Response	36	31	50	36	62	54	56	64
	Percent	31.0%	26.7%	43.1%	31.0%	53.4%	46.6%	48.2%	55.1%
Moderate problem	Response	21	15	29	6	38	33	35	27
	Percent	18.1%	13.0%	25.0%	5.1%	32.7%	28.4%	30.2%	23.3%
Serious problem	Response	3	5	9	2	11	14	8	6
	Percent	2.6%	4.3%	7.8%	1.7%	9.5%	12.1%	7.0%	5.1%
Very serious problem	Response	1	1	0	0	1	3	4	0
	Percent	0.9%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	2.6%	3.4%	0.0%

\* Number of responses checked this level.

\*\* WPV: Workplace Violence. The overall all workplace violence was not calculated as the average of the other types of workplace violence but rather was a separate category in the questionnaire.

Figure 12

HR Directors Perception of the Level of Workplace Violence in City Government



Workplace Homicide. 55% of the respondents said homicide was not a problem at all in their workplaces against 45% reported they had a homicide problem. While 27% said the homicide problem was just a small problem, 13% said it was a moderate problem and 4% said homicide was a serious or very serious problem.

Physical Attack. Less than a quarter (24%) of the respondents reported that they had no physical attack or assault problem in their workplaces, while 76% percent reported that physical attack or assault (by using body parts or object) against city government employees was a problem. While 43% thought the physical attack was only a small problem, 33% thought that the problem ranged from being a moderate to

very serious problem and 8% said physical attack was a serious or very serious problem.

Workplace Rape. A little less than two-thirds of respondents (62%) reported no rape problem in their city workplaces and 38% said it was a problem. While 31% said rape was a small problem, 5% said it was a moderate problem and 2% said it was a serious problem.

Workplace Harassment. Sexual, racial, religious and other forms of harassment surpassed all other forms of workplace violence. While 3% said they had no problem with harassment in their city government, 97% admitted the existence of the problem. More than half of the HR directors who perceived harassment as a problem (53%) said it was a small problem, 33% said it was a moderate problem and 10% said it was a serious or very serious problem.

Written or Verbal Threats. A significant proportion of the respondents admitted they had a threat problem. Ninety percent of HR directors surveyed reported that threat was a problem in their city workplaces, against 10% who perceived there was no threat problem. While 47% said it was a small a problem, 28% said it was a moderate problem. Almost 15% said it was a serious or very serious problem (12% said it was a serious problem and 3% said very serious problem). Thus, human resources or personnel directors perceived verbal or written threats as a workplace violence type as the foremost serious problem against city employees.

Psychological Violence. Eighty nine percent of respondents reported that psychological violence was a problem in their workplaces. Out of those who said

psychological violence was a problem, 48% said it was a small problem, 30% felt it was moderate and 10% said it was a serious or very serious problem.

Overall Workplace Violence. According to the respondents, 84% reported they had a workplace violence problem, while 16% rejected the existence of the problem. More than half of the respondents (55%), said workplace violence was a small problem in their workplaces and 23% said it was a moderate problem. Five percent said it was a serious or very serious problem.

But the question now is: what are the most problematic types of workplace violence as viewed by the human resources or personnel directors? To answer this question, the statistical method of ranking the means was used. As mentioned earlier, each respondent rated each of the 7 types of workplace violence (terror attack, homicide, physical attack, rape, harassment, threat, and psychological violence) on a 1-5 scale. To measure the responses to each type, SPSS sorted the size of each type in descending order by the size of its mean. Thus the order of the variables provides ranking of workplace violence types as perceived by HR directors.

As shown in Table 15, the responses ranged from 1-5 and the means for the 7 variables stretched from 1.47 to 2.51. The smallest ordered mean (1.47) is closest to code 1 (*Not a problem*), and the largest mean (2.51) is in-between 2 and 3 (*Small problem and Moderate problem*). Based on that, HR directors in the city government do not consider or perceive rape a problem in the city workplaces. Homicide, terror attack or threat of terror attack, physical attack, and possibly psychological types of violence are a small problem, while threat and harassment as types of workplace

violence tend to be viewed as more problematic than other types of workplace violence. The standard deviations are fairly constant, ranging from .68 to .93.

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics: Types of Workplace Violence

Type of Workplace Violence	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Rape	116	1	5	1.47	.68
Homicide	116	1	5	1.69	.92
Terror attack or threat of terror attack	116	1	5	1.78	.89
Physical attack/assault	116	1	5	2.16	.88
Psychological violence (humiliation, bullying, etc.)	116	1	5	2.43	.91
Threat (verbal or written)	116	1	5	2.50	.93
Harassment (sexual, racial, religious, etc.)	116	1	5	2.51	.75
Valid N (listwise)	116				

Notably, the analysis found significant relationships between these types of workplace violence as perceived by HR directors. Crosstabulation showed that the existence of one type of violence positively correlates with the existence of the remaining types. However, by using the information in Table 12, the strength of these relationships ranged from moderate to very strong. Table 16 demonstrates Pearson Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ) values of these types of workplace violence as perceived by HR directors.

Table 16

Workplace Violence Types Correlations

	Terror Attack	Homicide	Physical Attack	Rape	Harassment	Threat	Psychological Violence	Overall Violence
<b>Terror Attack</b>								
Pearson Correlation		.544**	.486**	.526**	.359**	.457**	.438**	.555**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
<b>Homicide</b>								
Pearson Correlation	.544**		.728**	.737**	.483**	.603**	.466**	.601**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
<b>Physical attack/assault</b>								
Pearson Correlation	.486**	.728**		.612**	.645**	.737**	.638**	.746**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
<b>Rape</b>								
Pearson Correlation	.526**	.737**	.612**		.504**	.511**	.463**	.602**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
<b>Harassment</b>								
Pearson Correlation	.359**	.483**	.645**	.504**		.704**	.658**	.666**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
<b>Threat (verbal or written)</b>								
Pearson Correlation	.457**	.603**	.737**	.511**	.704**		.714**	.702**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
<b>Psychological Violence</b>								
Pearson Correlation	.438**	.466**	.638**	.463**	.658**	.714**		.762**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
<b>Overall Violence</b>								
Pearson Correlation	.555**	.601**	.746**	.602**	.666**	.702**	.762**	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

N=116

As illustrated in Table 16, the p-values (.000) indicate that the relationships between different types of workplace violence were statistically significant. The values of Pearson Correlation Coefficient (ranged from .359 to .762) indicate that the relationships were not only moderate to strong but also positive. For example, while terror attack or threat of terror attack had a moderate correlation with harassment, there was very strong association between psychological types of violence and overall workplace violence since the correlation coefficient is greater than .70.

#### City Government Preparedness (Workplace Violence Prevention Plan Components)

With regard to the respondents' view of the level of city preparedness to combat workplace violence, the study identified ten possible components of an effective workplace violence prevention plan. The questionnaire asked the respondents to identify which of these had been adopted by their city governments. Table 17 and Figure 13 show these ten components and summarize the results.

Written Workplace Violence Prevention Policies. This study found that more than 85% of the most populated cities had workplace violence policies and programs. These findings indicate that the concern regarding workplace violence issues at the city level has increased recently, and more and more cities have started to adopt prevention policies.

Previous studies proved the importance of workplace violence prevention. The majority of employers are increasingly aware of this problem and its consequences and are taking steps to address it. For example, in 1999, 68% of human resources

professionals who responded to the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM) survey said their organizations had written policies addressing workplace violence, up from 59% in 1996. Also, 79% of human resource professionals say their organizations have written policies regulating weapons on their premises, up from 73% in 1996 (“how to fight”, 2000).

Table 17

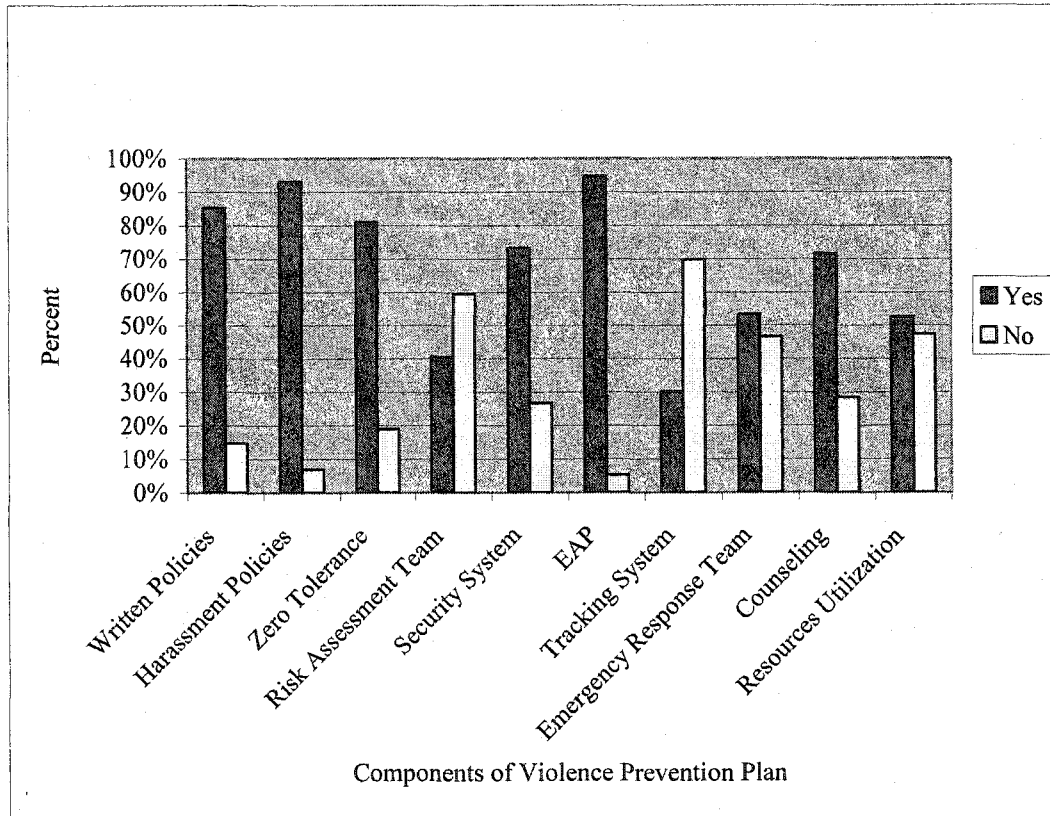
City Governments Level of Preparedness

Components of Workplace Violence Prevention Plan or City Government Level of Preparedness	Respondents' Answers			
	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Written Workplace Violence Prevention Policies	99	85.3%	17	14.7%
Harassment Prevention Policies	108	93.1%	8	6.9%
Zero Tolerance Policy	94	81%	22	19%
Risk Assessment Team	47	40.5%	69	59.5%
Security System	85	73.3%	31	26.7%
Employee Assistance Program (EAP)	110	94.8%	6	5.2%
Tracking System and Reporting System	35	30.2%	81	69.8%
Emergency Response Team	62	53.4%	54	46.6%
Victims and Witnesses Counseling	83	71.6%	33	28.4%
Utilization of all the Available Resources	61	52.6%	55	47.4%
Other (s)	10	8.6%	106	91.4%



Figure 13

City Government Level of Preparedness



Also, in a joint study conducted by RIMS (Risk and Insurance Management Society) and the Risk Management/Insurance Division of the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE), more than half of the respondents surveyed noted that they have improved workplace violence programs by adding prevention techniques to their organizations' policies. The survey was sent to 1,000 randomly selected RIMS members and 500 ASSE Risk Management Division members in Fall of 1998. 299 total responses were received or a 20% response rate. 62% of the respondents reported their organizations had written policies and programs in place addressing

violent acts in the workplace. Eighty-two percent had written policies addressing weapons (ASSE, 1999).

In their evaluation of the workplace violence prevention policies and programs adopted by the most populated cities and counties, Nigro and Waugh (1998b) found that over one-third of the respondents (37.8%) indicated that their jurisdictions had workplace violence policies and programs. Most had been adopted since 1990 and cities were more likely to have them (48.3%) than counties (31.1%).

Harassment Prevention Policies. Almost 97% of the respondents said harassment (sexual, racial, religious, etc.) is a problem in the city workplaces. More than 93% of the respondents said they had policies that prohibit workplace harassment of any kind.

After studying some harassment policies, the researcher found that harassment policies often clearly state that harassment of any kind (based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, origin, and religion) is prohibited and will not be tolerated, and state the repercussions of violating the policies. They also state the internal and external resources available to help harassment victims. Employees should be aware of these policies through training programs and other methods such as human resources handbook and organization publications (e.g. newsletters).

Zero Tolerance Policy. Eighty-one percent implemented zero tolerance policies in dealing with violent people and violent behaviors in the workplace. A typical zero tolerance policy prohibits intimidation, threats of violence (bodily harm or property damage) and acts of violence (regardless of whether they cause harm or

damage). Intimidation generally means actions or words that cause another person to reasonably fear for his or her safety or the safety of others (Perry, 2000). An employee who violates a zero tolerance policy may be referred for counseling or other help, such as a substance abuse program. The violator also may be subject to criminal prosecution, as well as discipline up to and including dismissal in accordance with applicable human resources regulations and collective bargaining agreements.

Risk Assessment and Management Team. About 60% of cities surveyed did not have a risk assessment team. One respondent wrote, “We have a risk manager” and another stated, “We don’t have risk assessment team but we have risk assessment consultants.” This finding concurs with the ASSE and RIMS’s study results. Almost three-quarters of the respondents (70%) had not undergone a formal risk assessment of the potential for violence in the workplace (ASSE, 1999).

Security Systems. A little less than three quarters of the respondents reported their cities had security systems to prevent workplace violence. None of the respondents circled all the components of the security system measures included in the survey (Appendix A, question 3). It is worth mentioning that the components included in the survey were provided as examples of security measures. It was not the goal of the survey to present a comprehensive list of security system components. One respondent commented, “We don’t have metal detector and only alarming system, cameras and ID badges.” Another stated they had “No metal detector but ID badges, camera and security guards.” Several respondents commented that only

“some departments” or “partial -only some worksites” had a security system but it is “not citywide yet.”

These voluntary comments indicate to the importance of conducting more research not only to study the components of security systems but also the effectiveness of these components in preventing workplace violence. As mentioned in the first chapter, despite the security measures, James Davis, a New York City Councilman, killed inside the city hall.

Employee Assistant Program (EAP). Almost 95% of the respondents reported their cities had Employee Assistance Programs. This indicates that city governments are aware of the role of Employee Assistance programs in that regard. Employee Assistance Program could be a supportive partner in fighting workplace violence. Since many EAP resources can help defuse problem situations and reduce the chance that a troubled employee will see violence as the only answer to a problem (“Strategies that”, 2001). Inappropriate behavior or performance at work may well be rooted in substance abuse, or other personal or family dysfunction problems which are the major focus of EAPs.

According to the previously mentioned study by the Risk and Insurance Management Society (RIMS), more than half (58%) of employers surveyed said they refer potentially violent employees to their employee assistance programs (“Employers take”, 2000).

Tracking and Reporting Workplace Violence Incidents Systems. Almost 70% of the respondents reported that their cities did not have workplace violence incidents

tracking, record keeping and reporting systems. This result is supported by previous studies that found many organizations do not have tracking and reporting mechanisms in place for workplace violence. As a result a significant proportion of harassment, threats, and attacks go unreported by employees (Atkinson, 2000; Layden, 1999; Nigro & Waugh, 1998b). Also, reporting pertained only to physical injuries and not psychological violence. Researchers suggested that if psychological cases were reported, there would probably be a greater number of workplace violence incidents (North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation, 2003).

Organizations are urged to assess the risk of violence and establish formal violence tracking and reporting systems, assessment procedures and ongoing communication, as well as policies encouraging reporting of violent incidents, among other measures (Baron, 1993; Kinney, 1995; Mantell, & Albrecht 1994). However, organizations should avoid creating situations where employees turn on each other and call for punitive measures rather than supportive prevention. The focus should be on the source of greatest violence and offering anonymous methods for reporting trouble to avoid personal conflicts.

As discussed in chapter 2 and 3, there is no reliable data on workplace violence. One possibility might be the lack of the existence of workplace violent incidents tracking or bookkeeping record systems. Having an effective and reliable tracking system of violent incidents would tremendously affect the research in the workplace violence area. For example, it will enable researchers to conduct more empirical studies.

Emergency Response Team. More than half of the respondents surveyed (53.4%) reported their cities had an emergency response team or crisis management team and aftermath recovery plans. One respondent mentioned that the “employee assistance program staff work as an emergency response team.”

In 1993, a survey by the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) of HR professionals found that only 28% of the organizations surveyed had a formal plan aimed to deal with workplace violence aftermath (Anfuso, 1994). About 22% said they had a plan to introduce such a policy. There are three possible reasons behind the low number of city governments who had emergency response team or crisis management team: a lack of knowledge of what to do, cost, and a belief system that violence will not occur in their workplace.

Counseling Services for Victims and Witnesses of Workplace Violence Incidents. A little over seventy percent of the respondents (71.6%) stated their cities provide counseling for workplace violence victims and witnesses. One respondent stated that the city provides counseling through the Employee Assistance Program.

Utilization of all City Governments Resources. Little over half of the respondents (52.6%) stated that their governments utilized all the available resources to combat and prevent workplace violence. It is important that city government use effectively and efficiently all the available resources to reduce workplace violence. Coordination between different departments and city agencies should be embedded in their value system. Without such cooperation, all efforts of combating violence will be unfeasible.

In addition to these ten components, respondents were asked to mention any other workplace violence prevention components applied by their city governments.

These other components can be classified as follows:

- **Training:** Three respondents said their cities conduct training programs for employees and supervisors on workplace violence prevention. One respondent reported, "Training for all employees is mandatory." A respondent wrote, "I will hire trainer to conduct citywide sessions on various policies of violence in the workplace," while another one assured, "All employees have been trained in identification, prevention and reporting." A fourth respondent indicated that cooperation between the city and other local organizations (NPOs) is required to prevent not only workplace but also domestic violence.
- **Dispute and Conflict Resolution:** One respondent said that the city conducts internal mediation programs for city employees.
- **Organizational Culture:** A respondent mentioned that the city has "a culture that encourages respect - which we use in hiring processes, disciplinary action processes, training processes, promotion processes."

Notably speaking, none of the respondents talked about the issue of bringing weapons into the workplace. There is legislation in the majority of states that allows individuals to carry concealed weapons with training and a permit (Flynn, 1996). However, guns are banned in public buildings under many states and federal laws even with a concealed carry permit. Although employers cannot make employment decisions based on gun ownership, they have to be more restrictive in how they

structure the workplace environment. The workplace should be controlled exclusively by the employers. They can insist that employees disclose the nature of the licensed concealed weapon and where he or she is going to carry it. They can also forbid weapons at work sites. A concealed weapons permit does not grant automatic permission for an individual to carry the weapon at a work site where there is a zero tolerance policy - such as a school.

Before moving forward, it is important to mention that the questionnaire did not measure or evaluate the effectiveness of each component. Therefore there is an obvious need for further research designed to evaluate the performance of existing components of workplace violence prevention plans and programs. Do they actually prevent or reduce levels of workplace violence and improve the quality and punctuality of responses to violence when it occurs? How effective and efficient are they? Is the jurisdiction's exposure to costs associated with litigation, health care, and other employee services reduced? Policy makers and public managers need to have some sense of what works and where limited resources are best invested. In these terms, the experiences of local governments should be carefully studied.

#### Human Resources Management Functions

To measure human resources departments' level of preparedness to prevent violence at work, the study identified nine HR functions. These functions as discussed in chapter 3 are: Job analysis and design, selection and hiring processes, training and development processes, performance evaluation process, incentives and compensation systems, disciplinary policies and procedures, termination and layoff



processes, grievance and complaint systems, and employee safety. The study assumes that these functions or activities are vital for any efforts to prevent workplace violence. The questionnaire asked the respondents to evaluate the implementation of the HR activities on a scale from 1 to 5 labeled, respectively, *Strongly Agree*, *Agree*, *Undecided*, *Disagree*, and *Strongly Disagree*.

#### Job Analysis and Design

Job descriptions provide organizations in general, and HR in particular, connectivity, linkage, and useful taxonomies of work activities and competencies. The study questionnaire included only two elements to measure how human resources departments use this function as a method of preventing workplace violence. The survey sought to know to what degree the job descriptions in these cities focus on observable and measurable behaviors, and to what degree these job descriptions include requirements for job-related interpersonal behavior.

As shown in Table 18, the majority of the participants reported the job descriptions in their city focus on observable and measurable behaviors (78%). Eighteen percent did not agree that their human resources departments include measurable behaviors in job descriptions. In terms of whether the job descriptions include requirements for job-related interpersonal behaviors or not, the respondents divided equally between opposing and supporting this statement (43% each). The number of undecided participants was relatively high on the interpersonal behaviors issue (14% for interpersonal behaviors and 8% for the observable and measurable behaviors).

Table 18

Descriptive Statistics: Job Analysis Process

	Job descriptions focus on observable and measurable behaviors		Job descriptions include requirements for job-related interpersonal behaviors	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	30	25.9%	15	12.9%
Agree	56	48.3%	35	30.2%
Undecided	9	7.8%	16	13.8%
Disagree	19	16.4%	45	38.8%
Strongly Disagree	2	1.7%	5	4.3%
Total	116	100%	116	100%

Selection and Hiring Processes

The questionnaire included 12 items or components proven essential for effective selection and hiring processes. These components were: careful examination of the applications, careful comparison of the information provided by applicants in the application and résumé, written permission to contact former employers and to verify academic records, personal and professional references verification, thorough background checks, well-designed job interviews that focus on behavioral issues, behavioral tests, drug tests, cooperation with other organizations in giving feedback on current or former employees, correction of hiring mistakes by using employee assessment during the employment probationary period, hiring processes that comply with all applicable laws, and provide prospective employees with clear job

descriptions of the current vacant position and opportunities for advancement. Notably, using the information in Table 12, a crosstabulation analysis for these 12 elements found a moderate to very strong correlation between them.

Reviewing Job Application. Human resources or personnel departments should carefully check each item on the application. Repeated studies have shown that up to 42% of applications contain intentional misstatements of material facts. They include inflated employment periods to hide jobs with unsatisfactory performance, termination for cause (theft, fighting, insubordination), or time spent in jail. Frequently, applicants list non-existent undergraduate and graduate degrees and exaggerate their position descriptions and accomplishments (Niam, 1998).

Table 19

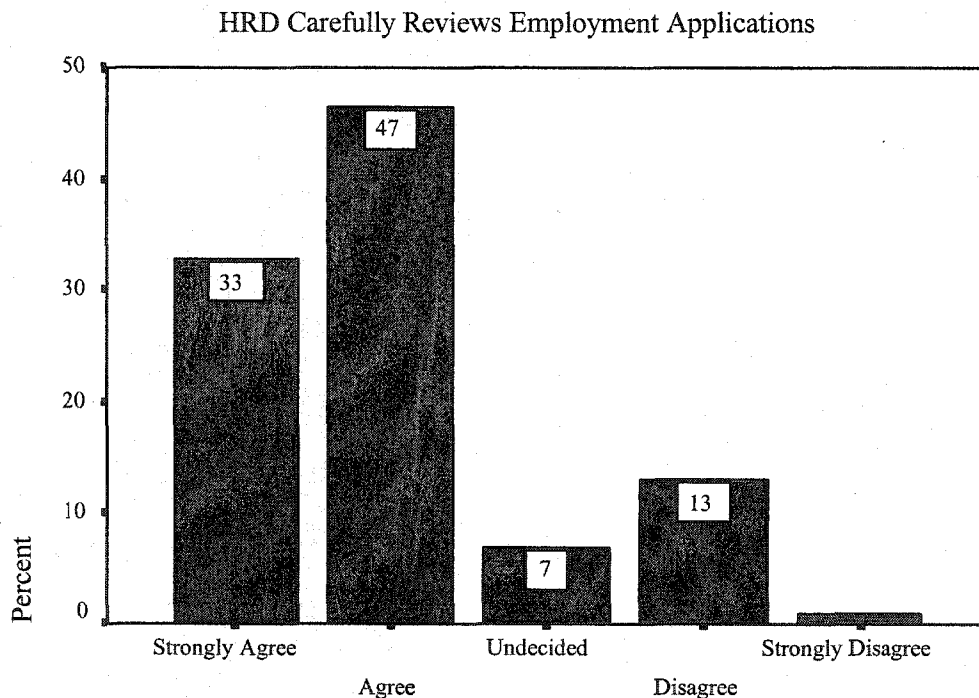
HRD Carefully Reviews Employment Applications

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	38	32.8%
Agree	54	46.6%
Undecided	8	6.9%
Disagree	15	12.9%
Strongly Disagree	1	.9%
Total	116	100%

As illustrated in Table 19 and Figure 14, 33% of respondents strongly agreed that human resources department in their cities carefully review job applications and inquire about any employment gaps. Almost Forty-seven percent (46.6%) confirmed

that their departments follow this rule. Almost 14% of the respondents denied that their human resources departments follow such a procedure. Only 7% neither approved nor disapproved this statement making the “undecided” category. Two respondents stated that reviewing job applications is not part of HR responsibility, rather “it is done by the employing department.” A third wrote that conducting an application review is “up to the interview panelist.”

Figure 14



The 16 human resources departments that do not review job applications thoroughly are encouraged to do so. They have to be sure applicants complete the entire application form. According to an HR expert William Atkinson, they have to look for gaps in employment and gaps in residence. Two years between jobs and between homes might mean two years in the “big house” (Atkinson, 2001, p. 15).

Comparing Information on the Résumé and Job Application. As a precautionary procedure, human resources or personnel departments should compare the information given by job applicants in the application and on the résumé. Depending on the position being filled, some organizations ask for a curriculum vitae along with the application. Not all organizations require provision of a résumé or C.V. with the application. These organizations think that a well-drafted job application will elicit the necessary information to make a preliminary determination about an applicant. However, for employee safety, organizations should follow the procedure of obtaining as much information as possible. Résumés can provide HR staff with more information than they can find in the application. Careful analysis and comparison of the information in both application and résumé may allow employers to decide accurately whether to consider a specific applicant for a vacancy.

Table 20

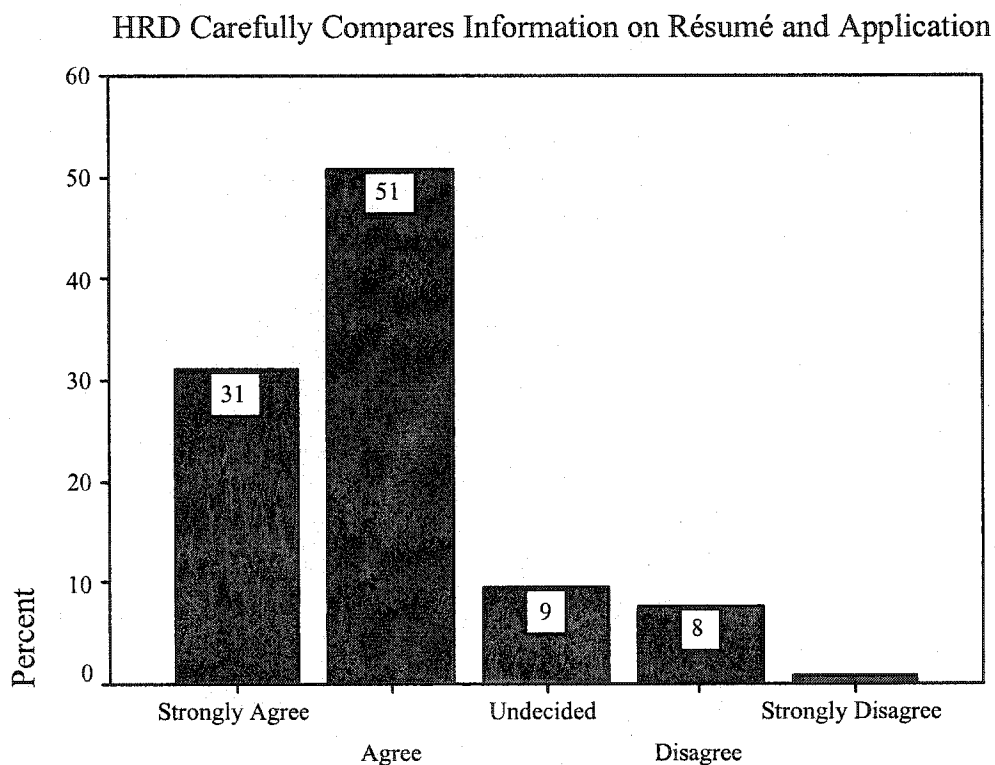
HRD Carefully Compares Information on the Résumé and Application

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	36	31.0%
Agree	59	50.9%
Undecided	11	9.5%
Disagree	9	7.8%
Strongly Disagree	1	.9%
Total	116	100%

As demonstrated in Table 20 and Figure 15, while 51% of the respondents agreed that their human resources departments compare information on the résumé

and job application, an additional 31% strongly supported this statement. A little over 8% of respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed that their human resources or personnel departments conduct this comparison. Nine percent were undecided.

Figure 15



Contact Former Employers and Conduct Academic Records Verification. As shown in Table 21 and Figure 16, while more than 71% of the respondents reported they either agreed or strongly agreed that their human resources or personnel departments request a written permission from job applicants to contact former employers and to verify academic records, little over 12% said they disagreed that they do so. Again 7% were undecided, either because they do not have enough knowledge to answer or they did not want to. One respondent stated that they “require

transcripts” to verify education records. Another person indicated that not all positions require such verifications and “it depends on the position.”

Table 21

HRD Contacts Former Employers and Conducts Education Verification

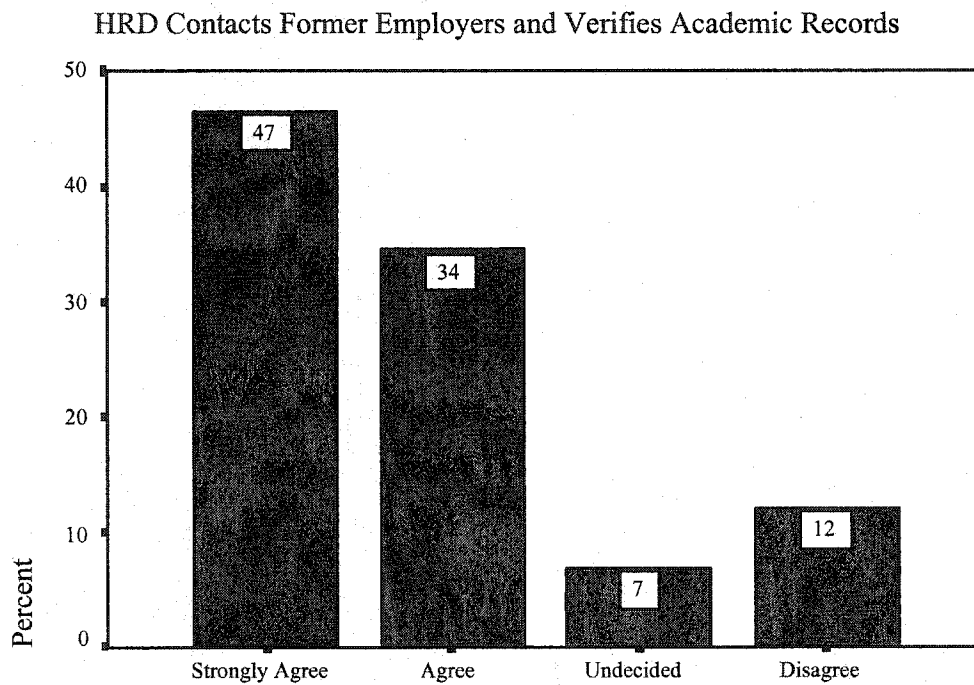
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	54	46.6%
Agree	40	34.5%
Undecided	8	6.9%
Disagree	14	12.1%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Total	116	100%

To encourage prior employers and educational institutions to provide this information, the applicant should explicitly waive any claims against those reference sources (Siegel, 1997). Getting a waiver from the job applicant to contact former employers is important, but what is more important is to use this waiver and obtain as much information from prior employers as available.

Choosing to pass on employment screening can be a costly mistake. Risks such as applicant dishonesty, workplace violence, theft and fraud are more common than some organizations may realize according to some literature. In fact, in a study of 2.6 million background verifications performed in 2001 by Automatic Data Processing (ADP), 44% of employment records showed a difference of information between what the applicant provided and the past employer reported (Kate, 2002). Thirteen percent of these information differences were negative remarks from the past

employer in regard to the applicant's work habits, attendance, behavior, termination or other unfavorable conduct. Knowing this type of information in advance can help public employers and HR directors reduce hiring risks and choose safe, honest, competent and qualified employees (Link, 2002).

Figure 16



When HR staff contact past employers they may ask some questions like, did the employee hold the position he claimed to have held? What was the reason the employee left your employ? Did the employee have any history of violence or aggression while being employed there? Is the employee eligible for rehire? However, they may not get answers to any of these questions because of concerns about legal protection. It is still worth asking. At least one expert suggested that if HR staff "came right out and asked an employer if the applicant ever threatened or injured



someone, the employer might be thrown off balance by the question and answer it, even though he might not have wanted to” (Atkinson, 2001, p.18).

According to Lynne McClure, president of McClure Associates, a workplace violence consulting firm, “often, what a past employer will not tell HR staff can tell them a lot”. For example, an employer might say, “This is all I can legally tell you.” What they are really saying is, “there is more I would tell you if I could, but I can’t, so watch out!” (Atkinson, 2001, p.16).

Checking Personal and Professional References. As shown in Table 22 and Figure 17, little over 53% of the respondents said they either agreed or strongly supported the statement that their departments check personal and professional references given by job applicants and inquire about any prior incidents of violence. At the opposite end of the scale, more than one-fourth of the respondents denied that their human resources or personnel departments take such action. Also, more than one-fifth of the respondents chose neither to agree nor to disagree with this statement. One respondent wrote that the employing departments check the references and not human resources department.

Comparing the data in Table 22 with the prior three tables (19, 20 and 21) shows that the number of human resources directors who disagreed or strongly disagreed with their HR departments’ practices regarding conducting personal and professional references checks has increased (25%). Only 14% disagreed that their departments review employment applications carefully, 9% disagreed that they

compare information on applications and résumés, and 12% denied that they contact former employers and verify education.

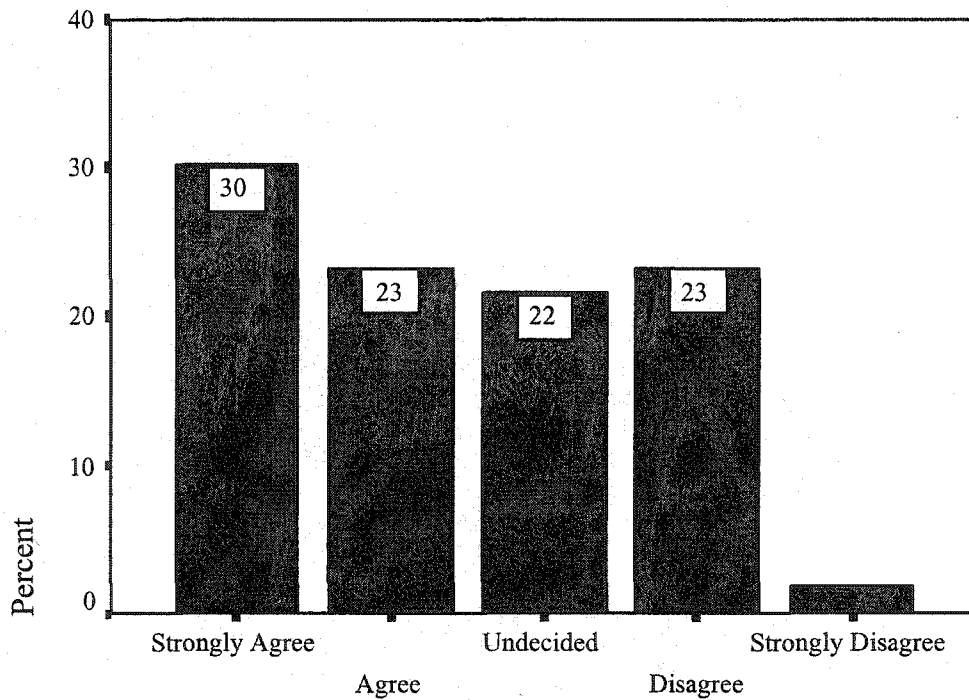
Table 22

HRD Checks Personal and Professional References

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	35	30.2%
Agree	27	23.3%
Undecided	25	21.6%
Disagree	27	23.3%
Strongly Disagree	2	1.7%
Total	116	100%

Figure 17

HRD Checks Personal and Professional References



However, this is not the case in the private sector. A 2000 survey of the Fortune 1000 companies by Pinkerton found that 70% of the respondents conducted reference checks before hiring new applicants.

The rationale behind the increasing number of HR directors who do not check references is that they are being careful not to run afoul of federal civil rights act and privacy laws. Recent events and new legislative trends are now changing the landscape of employment references. In one case, an employee working for an insurance company brought a weapon to work. For this and other performance-related reasons, the employer told the employee that he had the option of either resigning or being fired. The employee resigned. He not only had that option and selected it, but also was given a letter of reference stating that he was out of work because of a reduction in force. Based on this clean reference, the individual was hired by another insurance company, where he became enraged one day and killed three people (Atkinson, 2001).

The question now is: How effective are employment references in light of such incidents? Many states are trying to give employers the edge in this area. California passed a law stating that employers are not required to provide references. If they do agree to do so, they must divulge information about anything related to the individual in question that presents a threat to others. Other states, such as Florida, Minnesota, Delaware, Arizona and Vermont, are going even further, passing legislation that provides qualified immunity from civil liability to employers that tell

the truth about applicants, such as reasons they were terminated or disciplinary actions were taken (Nelson, 2002).

Another trend shaping what employers are willing to share about previous employees is the increase in negligent referencing lawsuits, brought against employers that fail to provide information to other employers about past employees who were threats to others. Also, under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), any employer reporting information on previous employees to any organization that is designated a reporting agency, has a certain amount of immunity not provided to that employer if the request comes from another employer. Therefore, an employer can report information on previous employees to a reporting agency, as long as it is provided without malice or intention to harm the individual. That is why it might be worth considering outsourcing this task or using a third party to check references.

Job Interview. Another vital part of the hiring process is the applicant interview. Supervisors, managers and HR staff are encouraged to use well-designed, open-ended questions that leave room for comment, rather than following traditional interview methods. Some HR and workplace violence researchers recommend that each applicant be interviewed individually by two responsible members of the organization's staff at different times. In addition to department managers or other professional department staff, someone from human resources or the personnel department should participate in the interview process. This guarantees professionalism and consistency. It also provides another opportunity to question and

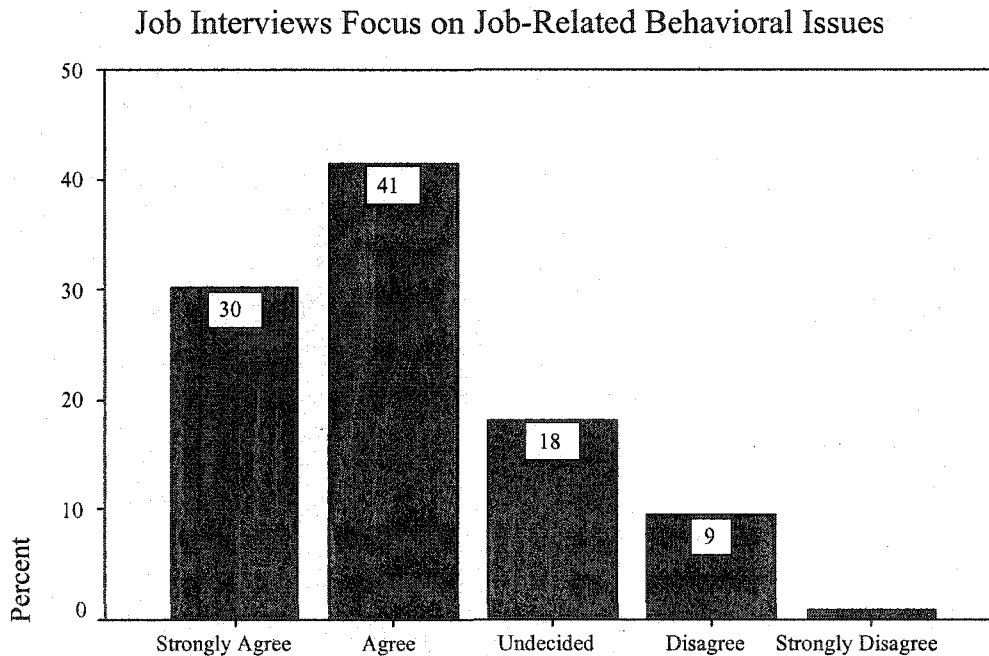
obtain concurring opinions on the suitability of the applicant (Mattman, 2003; “Strategies that”, 2001; Chenier, 1998).

Table 23

Job Interviews Focus on Job-Related Behavioral Issues

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	35	30.2%
Agree	48	41.4%
Undecided	21	18.1%
Disagree	11	9.5%
Strongly Disagree	1	.9%
Total	116	100%

Figure 18



As demonstrated in Table 23 and Figure 18, more than 41% of respondents agreed that their cities conducted well-designed interviews that focused on job-related

behavioral issues, while 30% strongly agreed. In total, 71.6% of the respondents said this procedure was used in conducting their hiring process. Close to 11% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that their city departments take such action before hiring new employees. Almost one-fifth of the respondents chose the “undecided” response.

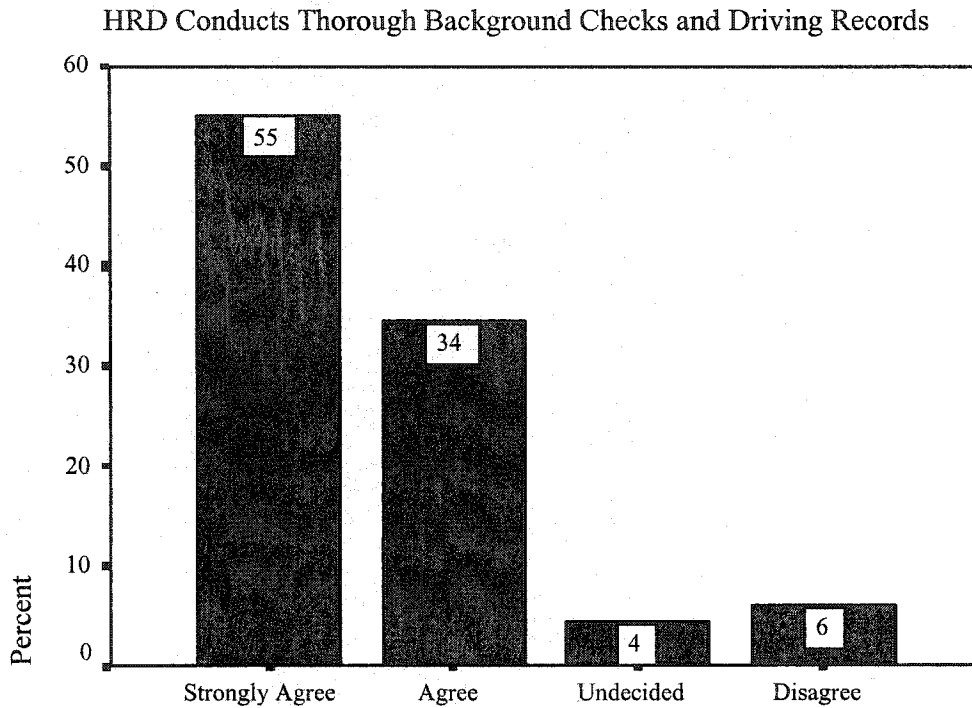
Conduct Thorough Background Checks. Employment background checks are an essential component of employment screening. They help HR staff and public employers take the guesswork out of the hiring process. The number of organizations which conduct thorough background checks has increased greatly in recent years. As illustrated in Table 24 and Figure 19, almost 90% of the respondents said that their city departments conduct thorough background checks on prospective employees, against only 6% of respondents who disagree that their departments conduct such checks.

Table 24

HRD Conducts Thorough Background Checks and Driving Records

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	64	55.2%
Agree	40	34.5%
Undecided	5	4.3%
Disagree	7	6.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Total	116	100%

Figure 19



A 1999 report (co-sponsored by RIMS and the Risk Management/Insurance Division of the American Society of Safety Engineers), titled “Workplace Violence Survey and White Paper,” found only 49% of respondents conducted thorough background investigations of employment candidates. The authors of this study thought at that time that the percentage was much lower than it should have been. They attributed that to the tight labor market, with employers feeling the pressure of the immediate need for more employees. There are many reasons behind the increasing numbers of organizations that conduct background checks before hiring new employees.

Among the most important is the need to hire better employees. Another reason for conducting background checks is to eliminate undesirable applicants who

might become serious problems for the organization in the future. Checking the background of new hires would help lower the cost of hiring, reduce turnover, protect the organization's good name, and shield employees from theft and violence. A background check can also insulate the organization from certain legal problems, including negligent hiring lawsuits (Niam, 1998). Finally, the economic problems and higher unemployment rates that changed the labor markets offer HR departments a better chance to choose the best-fit applicant. For all these reasons, the number of private organizations that provide background check services at a reasonable cost has increased.

Between 1998 and 2000, American Background Information Services found undisclosed criminal backgrounds on 12.6% of the people it screened. About 8.3% of applicants screened had a criminal history, and 23% misrepresented their employment or education credentials. These figures are even higher in some industries. Telemarketing applicants have a criminal rate of 30% to 40%. In spite of these startling figures, half of organizations are doing their own pre-employment screening, and most are not checking criminal history or credit reports (Mayer, 2002).

Some researchers claim that the September 11, 2001 attacks have had a direct and instant impact on the issue of conducting background check. Since September 11th, employers' desires to increase workplace security have led to greater interest in applicant background screening services. For example, a background check services firm in California (Pre-employ.com Inc.) reported that the daily average number of calls to the company doubled on September 12 and inquires about services increased.



67% in the week after the attack. Another company in the background checking business, Background Check International, received 2,400 hits on its website in the days following the attacks, compared to about 1,400 hits on a usual day (“Background screening”, 2001). But the question now is, does the September 11 terror attack still have the same impact on background checks or has the issue faded with time? The answer is still uncertain. The researcher has found no scientific studies which tested the relationship between those two variables.

Of course, background checks are not foolproof. But do they reduce the organizations vulnerability in a negligence claim. Convinced that past behavior strongly predicts future behavior, many workplace violence experts urge HR departments to be more diligent in background and reference checking to weed out potentially violent people (Grossman, 2002; “Background Screening, 2001).

Conduct Behavioral Tests. The purpose of personality tests and integrity tests is to weed out applicants with a potential for violence and produce a better quality work force. Table 25 and Figure 19 show the findings.

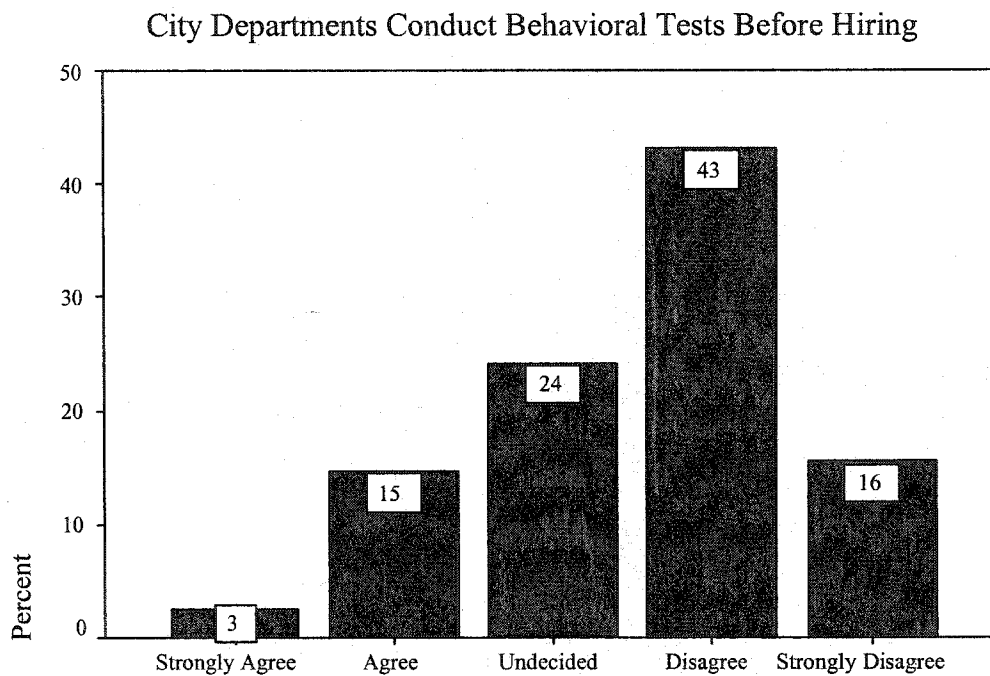
Table 25

City Departments Conduct Behavioral Tests to Uncover Job Candidates Reactions

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	3	2.6%
Agree	17	14.7%
Undecided	28	24.1%
Disagree	50	43.1%
Strongly Disagree	18	15.5%
Total	116	100%

As with all previous HR elements, human resources department directors agreed or strongly agreed that their departments conduct the stated functions. However, the majority of the study's respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed that their city departments conduct behavioral tests designed to uncover how job candidates react to certain situations.

Figure 20



According to Table 25, and as demonstrated in Figure 20, 43% of respondents disagreed that city departments conduct behavior tests and 15.5% strongly disagreed. Based on that, respondents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed represented 58.6% of the total population. Again, as the case with the previous hiring process elements, a large number of the study population (almost one quarter of the respondents) gave an undecided rating. Only 17.3% of respondents agreed (14.7%) or strongly agreed (2.6%) with their city departments' practice.

The case is not any better in the private sector. Only 4% of the private sector organizations surveyed by ASSE and RISM said a psychological test was done as a standard part of the hiring process for all potential employees (ASSE, 2001). Eleven percent of Pinkerton's study participants said they conduct integrity evaluation of the applicants (Pinkerton, 2001). But the question now is why the majority of the city departments or organizations do not conduct behavioral tests as part of their hiring process.

When it comes to psychological and behavioral tests, most experts recommend passing on this option (Danzig, 1999; Williams, 1997; Panko, 1996). First, it may be difficult to locate a verifiable test on the market that can predict the propensity for workplace violence. Second, other tests that employers might use for this purpose (e.g., personality tests) can often trigger lawsuits. Third, these tests are controversial, with some questioning their reliability, accuracy and whether they are an unreasonable intrusion upon the applicant's privacy and other rights. There are some cases where these tests have been challenged in court (Danzig, 1999). Applicants and employees claim that certain tests ask for information that violates employee privacy rights and they found many questions of some tests to be invasive, insulting and offensive. A court awarded a large sum to a litigant against a company that was using a personality test as a screening tool, a test that was specifically designed as a diagnostic test for mental health professionals (Atkinson, 2001).

An organization considering the use of such testing should, at a minimum, investigate thoroughly the reliability of the tests it proposes to use before

implementing a testing program. It might be valuable to consider a paper and pencil integrity test for applicants. Integrity tests measure attitudes toward honesty. Some studies have found that applicants who do well on these tests also tend to do well in terms of engaging in appropriate behaviors in the workplace, as well as following policies and procedures (Atkinson, 2001).

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, certain clinical psychological tests that are intended to be or are considered medical examinations can only be administered after a conditional offer of employment. Such tests, however, are not unlawful (Williams, 1997). All human resource decision-making tools (tests, applications, interviews), whatever their intentions, are subject effectively to the same human rights laws. Organizations that want to use these tests should develop or find a valid, nondiscriminatory and noninvasive test that comply with applicable federal and state laws (Anfuso, 1994).

The duties and responsibilities of certain positions (e.g., police officer) may require a test that specifically focuses on violence. In contrast, for some jobs the appropriate focus for testing will be on forms of behavior other than violence (Arnold & Demonte, 2000). However, it might be impossible to conduct such tests for all positions in city government.

Drug Screening Tests. At this point, if an applicant still looks good, the next step is to conduct a drug test after offering the job. As mentioned in chapter 3, researchers found a correlation between substance abuse and workplace violence. As a prerequisite, HR staff should tell applicants that everybody is subject to random

drug testing and/or pre-employment drug testing is mandatory based on the organization's policies (Chenier, 1998; Nigro & Waugh, 1996). Some organizations conduct on-site screening tests. However, drug testing is frequently outsourced regardless of organization size to reduce legal liability associated with divulgence of confidential information (Greer, Youngblood & Gray, 1999).

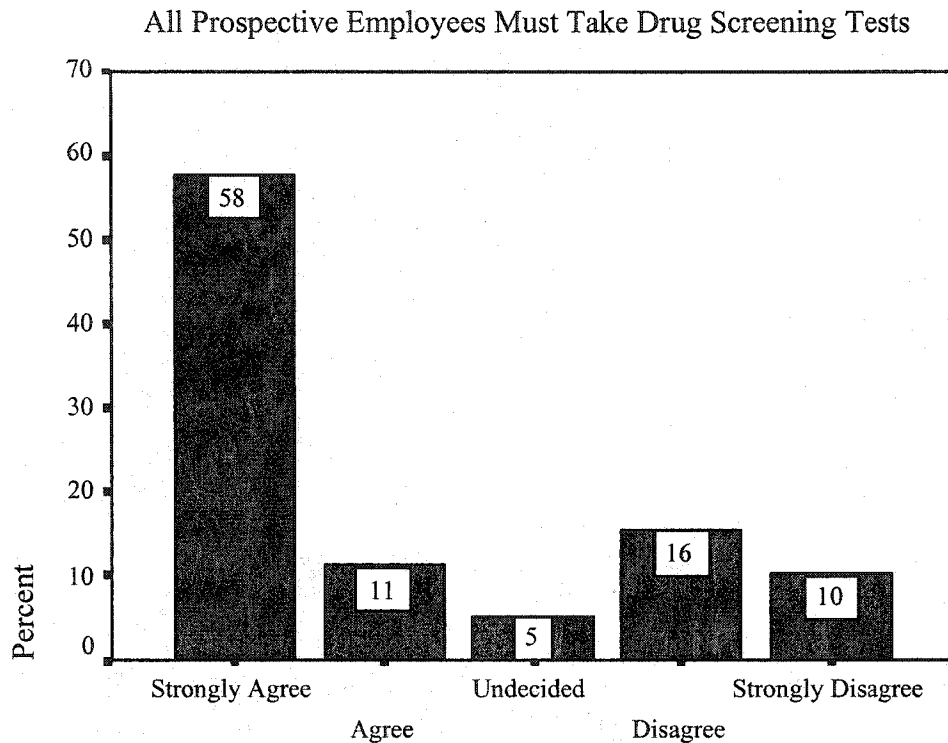
Table 26

All Prospective Employees Must Take Drug Screening Tests

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	67	57.8%
Agree	13	11.2%
Undecided	6	5.2%
Disagree	18	15.5%
Strongly Disagree	12	10.3%
Total	116	100.0%

As illustrated in Table 26 and Figure 21, 69% of the respondents reported that all prospective employees must take drug-screening tests before being hired (58% strongly agreed and 11% agreed that their department conducts these tests). Little over a quarter of the respondents thought that their city departments do not consider drug-screening tests as a part of the hiring process (while 15.5% disagreed, 10.3% strongly disagreed). One respondent stated that conducting drug tests depends on the nature of the services. They conduct these tests "If the services -the vacant positions- are provided to children, seniors, handicapped, etc." Two other respondents mentioned that only safety department job applicants take these test "All DOT applicants, law enforcement, corrections, fire get a drug test-others do not."

Figure 21



Most employers rely on drug-testing programs to identify high-risk candidates, often in concert with criminal-records checks to reveal past convictions. While employers were once reluctant to implement drug screens because of employee objections or potential challenges to their legality, with the advent of professional drug-screening administration organizations and ample legal precedent in support of the employer's right to assure a safe workplace, testing is now a standard practice at more than three-quarters (78%) of surveyed organizations (Pinkerton, 2001).

In several states, employers not only have the right to conduct drug testing but also they are required to have drug-free workplaces according to drug-free workplace laws or acts. In Georgia for instance, the state statute regarding drug-free workplace

testing programs was amended. The statute now stipulates that testing at the employer worksite, with on-site testing kits that satisfy testing criteria, shall be deemed suitable and acceptable (post job offer) as long as the employers use chain of custody procedures to ensure proper record keeping, handling, labeling, and identification of all specimens to be tested. Positive test results must be confirmed by a confirmation test conducted in a laboratory in accordance with specific requirements that govern laboratory approval, written procedures that establish a chain of custody, and proper quality control procedures are followed. The same change took place in Louisiana. However, the on-site test must be certified by the United States Food and Drug Administration for commercial distribution and it must meet generally accepted cutoff levels, such as those in the mandatory guidelines for Federal workplace drug-testing programs (Nelson, 2002).

In Tennessee, an addition to the policy statement section of the drug-free workplace programs law requires a covered employer to notify the parents or guardians of a minor of the results of any drug or alcohol testing program conducted pursuant to the law. The confidentiality of the records section also was amended to specify that any notice required by the law will inform minors who are tested that their parents or guardians will be notified of the test results. An employer who discloses test results will not be liable for the disclosure. Other laws require the testing of nuclear storage facility employees in Utah, and Texas revised the drug testing policy requirements for nursing homes. These institutions may establish their own drug testing policy, use a policy from another entity, or use the model drug

testing policy adopted by the Texas Board of Human Services. The model policy should include at least one scheduled drug test each year for each employee who has direct contact with residents, and also authorizes random, unannounced drug testing for these employees (Nelson, 2002).

Cooperating With Other Employers. According to this study, 71% of respondents said they contact former employers to verify employment history (Table 21), and 55% of them reported that they check personal and professional references (Table 22). The question now is: What do human resources or personnel departments do if they are contacted by another potential employer inquiring about a former city employee? Do they cooperate with this employer and provide the information needed about a former employee? The results as shown in Table 27 and Figure 22, indicate that the number of HR directors who check personnel and professional references was slightly more than the number of HR directors who cooperate with other organizations and respond to inquiries about former employees.

Table 27

HR Cooperates and Responds to Other Employers Inquires about Former Employees

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	13	11.2%
Agree	45	38.8%
Undecided	34	29.3%
Disagree	19	16.4%
Strongly Disagree	5	4.3%
Total	116	100%



While 50% of the respondents said their city departments' staff cooperates with other employers when they are asked about the behavior of former employees, 21% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that their city officials follow this HR practice. Almost one-third of the respondents (29%) gave an undecided rating.

Figure 22



The lower numbers of HR staff cooperating with other employers are justified by the legal barriers. When they are asked to provide information, many are reluctant to give potential employers any information about former employees beyond a neutral reference confirming dates of employment, classification and salaries. They fear that giving out more information could lead to defamation of character lawsuits.

To ease some of the concerns employers and human resources have about being sued for giving reference information, human resources can follow certain

procedures. They can ask that requests for references from prospective employers be made in writing and on that employer's letterhead. They can also channel their reference-providing function through one or two well-trained persons to minimize the risk of defamation and avoid giving inaccurate data to potential employers. Also, they can reveal information that is necessary for evaluating job performance, and only those data which can be verified as factual (Kondrasuk, Moore & Wang, 2003).

Additionally, they can ask for the applicant's authorization or written release that gives the employer the legal right to obtain background information. In the future, this issue may be less of a threat to employers, since 32 states have legislation releasing reference givers from liability lawsuits, when employers pass on information about former employees in good faith (Buckley & Green, 1999). It is important to provide HR staff with knowledge about what they can and cannot do to conduct legal HR practices and avoid lawsuits. Without this knowledge, it is clear that HR staff will not be able to perform their duties to the highest standards.

Using Employee Assessment During the Probationary Period. As mentioned in chapter 3, human resources departments have a reserve tool in the probationary period, even if they hired the wrong person. According to laws in most states, during a probationary period, either the employer or the employee may give notice to terminate employment without having to provide a reason. In legal terms, if an employer fails to establish a specific probationary period prior to or at the time of hire, there will be a presumptive probationary period of six months from the date of hire. At the end of the transition period, the employees who are retained are to be

offered continued employment if their performance during the probationary period was satisfactory. To protect employees from misconduct, HR should clarify their rights during this period.

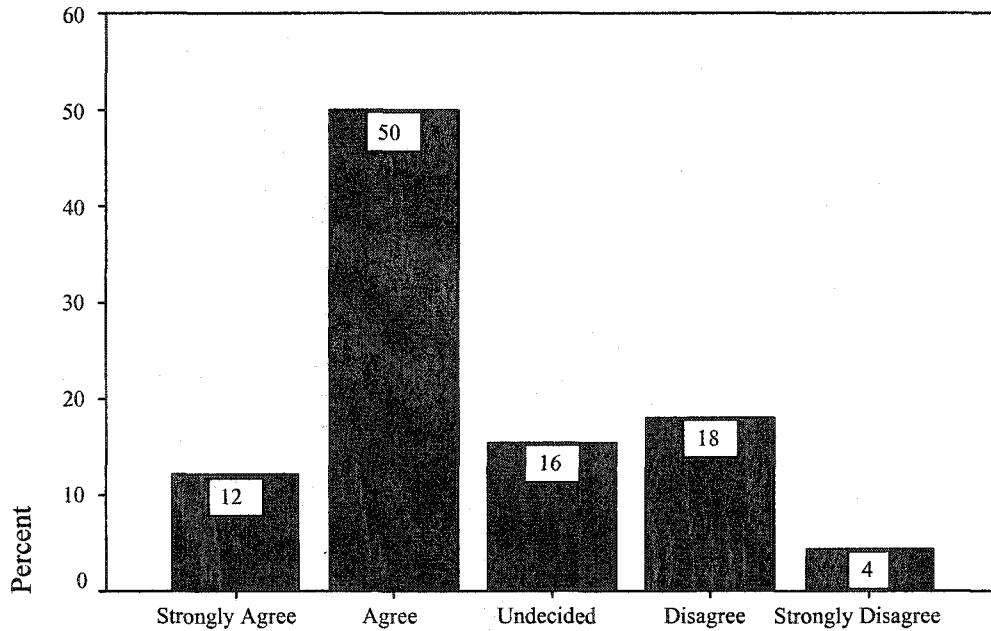
Table 28

City Departments Regularly Use Employee Assessments During the Probationary Period to Correct Hiring Mistakes

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	14	12.1%
Agree	58	50.0%
Undecided	18	15.5%
Disagree	21	18.1%
Strongly Disagree	5	4.3%
Total	116	100%

Figure 23

City Departments Use Employee Assessments During the Probation Period



According to Table 28 and Figure 23, half of HR and personnel directors surveyed agreed that they use probationary periods to correct hiring mistakes, while only 21% strongly agreed. More than 22% of the respondents did not think that their departments take this action against unfit and mismatched new employees.

Provide Prospective Employees with Accurate Information about the Job. As part of job analysis and design and as part of performance evaluation processes, each position in any organization should have clear written performance criteria. Human resources and personnel staff should provide new employees with accurate information on performance requirements and job responsibilities. Employees should never find themselves in a situation where they are responsible for something different than what they expected.

Table 29

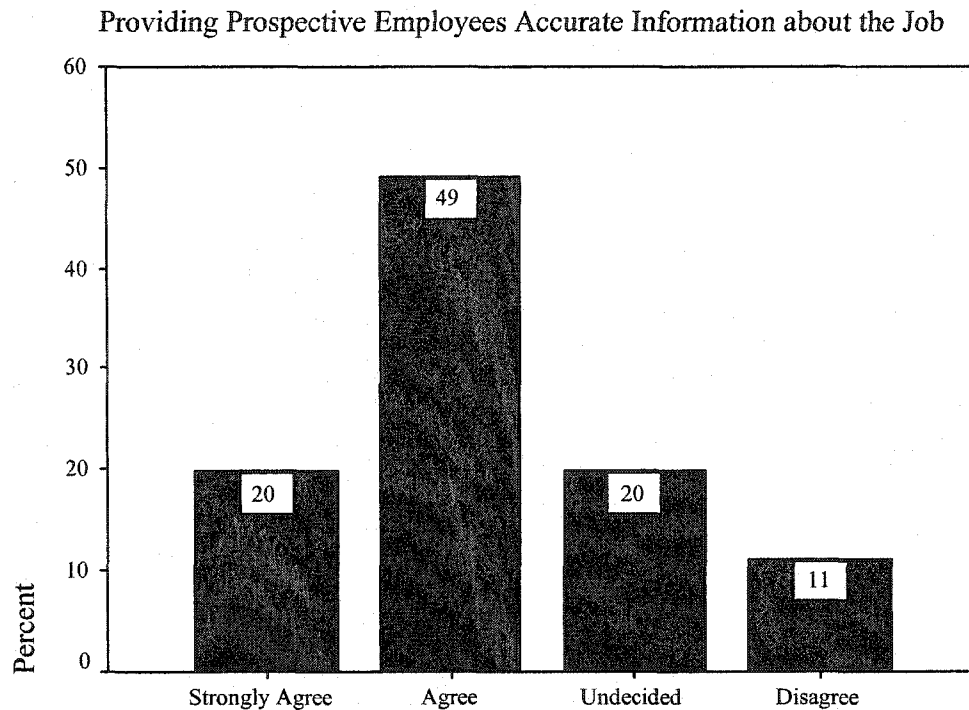
Prospective Employees are Given Accurate Information about Performance Requirements and Advancement Before Hiring

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	23	19.8%
Agree	57	49.1%
Undecided	23	19.8%
Disagree	13	11.2%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Total	116	100%

As shown in table 29 and illustrated in Figure 24, a little less than half of the respondents said they provide their new employees with accurate information on

job responsibilities and future advancement. Almost one-fifth of the respondents strongly agreed on their HR department practices related to this issue. The minority of the respondents (only 11%) disagreed that their HR or personnel department take into consideration this HR rule.

Figure 24



Conduct Lawful and Legal Hiring Process. Public employers should develop sound background check and hiring policies and practices that can both reduce workplace violence and minimize resultant negligent hiring lawsuits. They must find ways to protect their employees while at the same time not trampling individual rights. This balance is delicate and public employers have been found liable for violent acts of employees both within and outside their normal scope of employment. In general, organizations with employees untrained in policy practices, or without

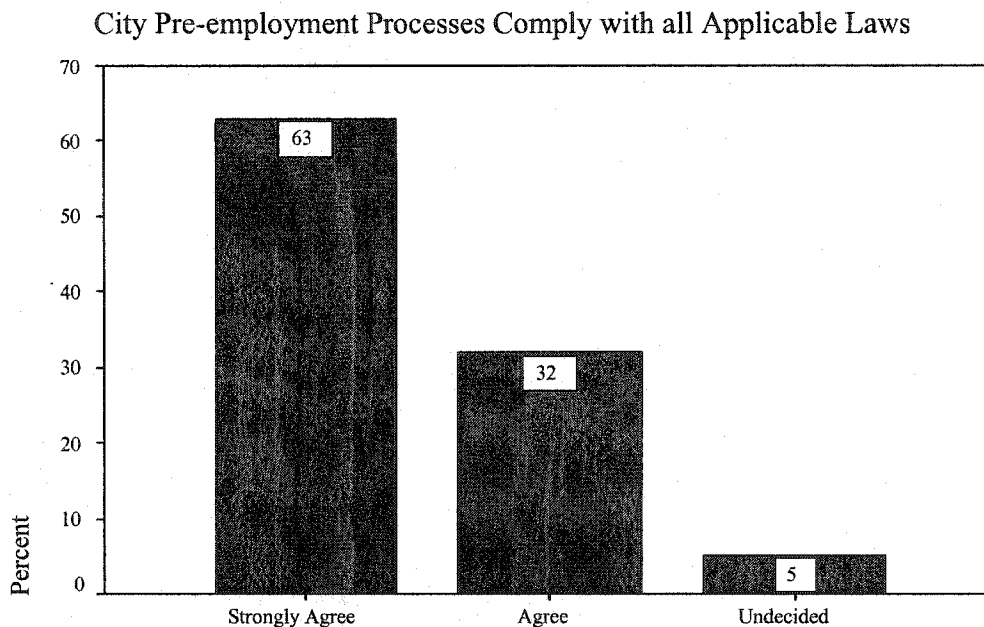
well-defined hiring and screening policies and practices, are at greater risk of violating federal and state legislative requirements for employee selection.

Table 30

City Preemployment Checks and Screening Processes Comply with all Applicable Laws

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	73	62.9%
Agree	37	31.9%
Undecided	6	5.2%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Total	116	100%

Figure 25



As demonstrated in Table 30 and Figure 25, the majority of the respondents (95%) said their preemployment screening process complies with all applicable state

and federal laws. For the first time, none of the respondents disagreed and only 5% were undecided. This finding reflects the importance given to the legal issues in hiring processes by human resources and personnel staff.

HR staff should take into account all applicable laws and acts before hiring. This includes the Americans with Disabilities Act, Equal Employment Opportunities Act, Affirmative Action Act, Occupational Safety and Health Act, Civil Rights Act of 1964, and state and local anti-discrimination laws. Based on these acts, public employers should avoid unfairly discriminating in any employment decision. As stated in pertinent legislation on discrimination, privacy, and credit checking, employers should not make employment decisions that violate protections for race, gender, age, national origin, religion, or physical or mental disability. Such laws propose to ensure equal opportunities for all job candidates. Unless a legal exception has been established, employers have an affirmative duty to make sure that all questions during the screening process, on the job application, and before, during, and after the interview, are job-related.

#### Training and Development Processes

The study identified 11 training areas thought to have an influence on workplace violence. Employees should be educated and provided the required knowledge on these issue through well-designed training programs. Employers should educate their employees on the following topics: workplace violence policies and programs; risk factors which lead to workplace violence; conflict and dispute resolution; leadership and communication skills; stress management; recognition of

workplace violence warning signs and potentially violent employees; handling violent incidents; diversity issues; detecting, documenting and reporting violent incidents; safe termination processes; and fair evaluation reviews. A crosstabulation analysis found that these 11 training programs were linearly correlated and there were statistically significant relationships between all of them ranged from moderate to very strong.

Training City Employees on the Workplace Violence Prevention Policy or Program. It is not enough to just have a workplace violence prevention policy or program. City employees must be informed and educated on this policy. While top executives and management officials in city departments may need less training on direct response to violent incidents, they must know their legal obligations for ensuring city employee and customer safety, and their role in promoting city policy to prevent workplace violence (“Strategies that”, 2001).

Without city executives’ commitment to the prevention policy, workplace violence would not be curbed. Supervisors, first-line managers, and all city employees should receive mandatory training on workplace violence and city policy. Workplace violence also can be covered as part of new employee orientation. A violence-prevention training program imparts skills and knowledge and transfers values that become part of organizational culture. Studies have found that employees’ skills in this area diminish sharply over time, so it is crucial to retrain them regularly (Gatewood, 2002; Dobbs, 2000).



It is important to note here that such training programs typically involve very basic training, which employees can often do on their own. A city's definition of violence and signs to look out for, its official steps to take in response to threatening behavior, the city code of conduct, zero tolerance policy, etc., can all be dispersed and read in policy manuals or via an office intranet. Organizations are also encouraged to refresh the memory of employees by using postings and other visual reminders to enhance awareness.

Table 31

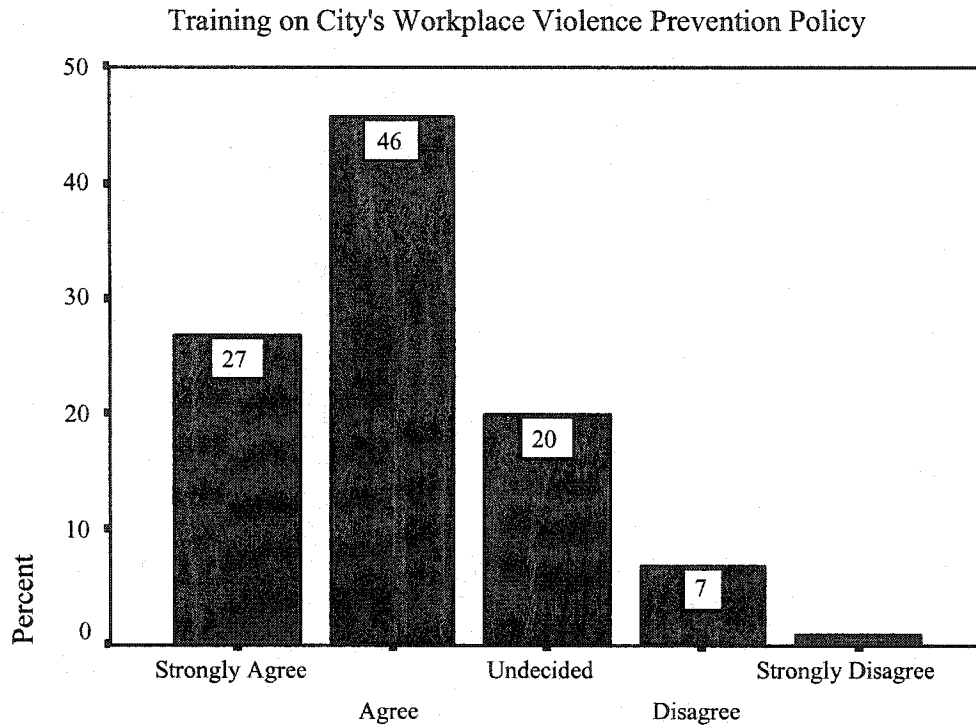
Training on City's Workplace Violence Prevention Policy

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	31	26.7%
Agree	53	45.7%
Undecided	23	19.8%
Disagree	8	6.9%
Strongly Disagree	1	.9%
Total	116	100%

As demonstrated in Table 31 and Figure 26, more than 72% of the cities that have workplace violence prevention plans said their employees have been trained and educated on workplace violence prevention policies. The majority of them (45.7%) gave an agree rating to this statement, and 26.7% of the respondents gave a strongly agree rating. Only 8% of human resources or personnel directors disagreed with this

statement. While 7% gave a disagree answer, only 1% gave a strongly disagree rating. Almost one-fifth of the respondents chose to be neutral.

Figure 26



Training on Causes of Workplace Violence. The third chapter of this dissertation discusses extensively the causes of workplace violence. While there is no indication that causes of occupational violence will change, training city employees on the risk factors that cause or contribute to workplace violence can increase employee awareness of this problem. It can also provide supervisors and managers with the tools necessarily to avoid provoking and instigating violence. Table 32 and Figure 27 demonstrate the results.

Positive results have been seen with regard to training on causes of workplace violence. While a little over half of the respondents (55.2%) gave an agree (14.7%)

and a strongly agree (40.5%) ratings, there was a slight increase in those who gave an undecided rating (28%) in comparison with the previous training element. Seventeen percent of respondents gave a disagree or strongly disagree ratings.

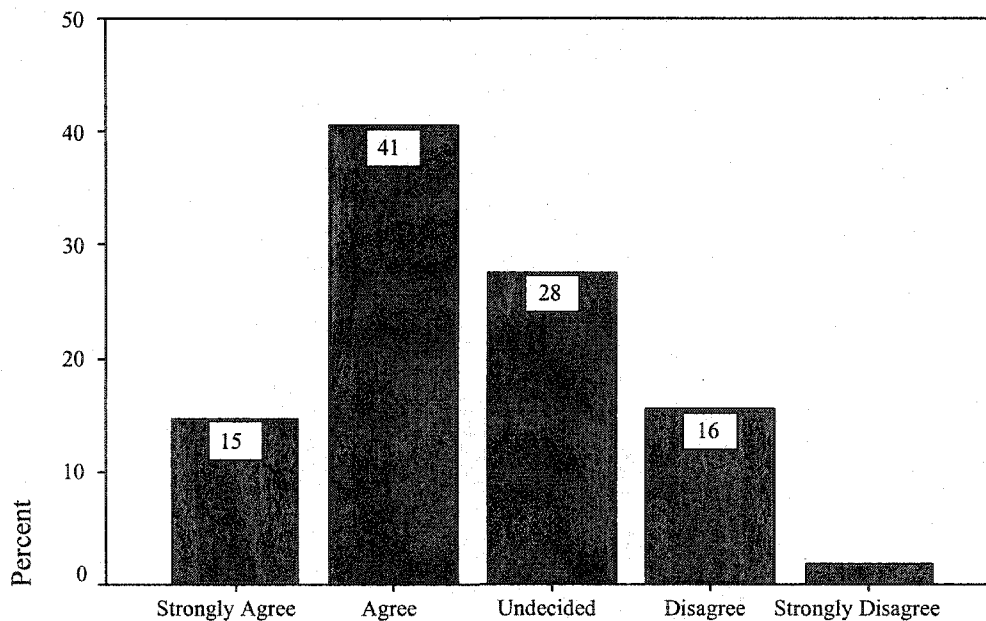
Table 32

Training on Causes of Workplace Violence

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	17	14.7%
Agree	47	40.5%
Undecided	32	27.6%
Disagree	18	15.5%
Strongly Disagree	2	1.7%
Total	116	100%

Figure 27

Training on Causes of Workplace Violence



Training on Workplace Conflicts and Dispute Resolutions in the Workplace.

A previous study found local governments are quite active in providing employee support and training as part of the cities workplace violence prevention programs. Conflict management and resolution training for supervisors was a feature of almost 70% of these programs. More than 30% reported their training programs do not cover conflict resolution (Nigro & Waugh, 1998b).

Table 33

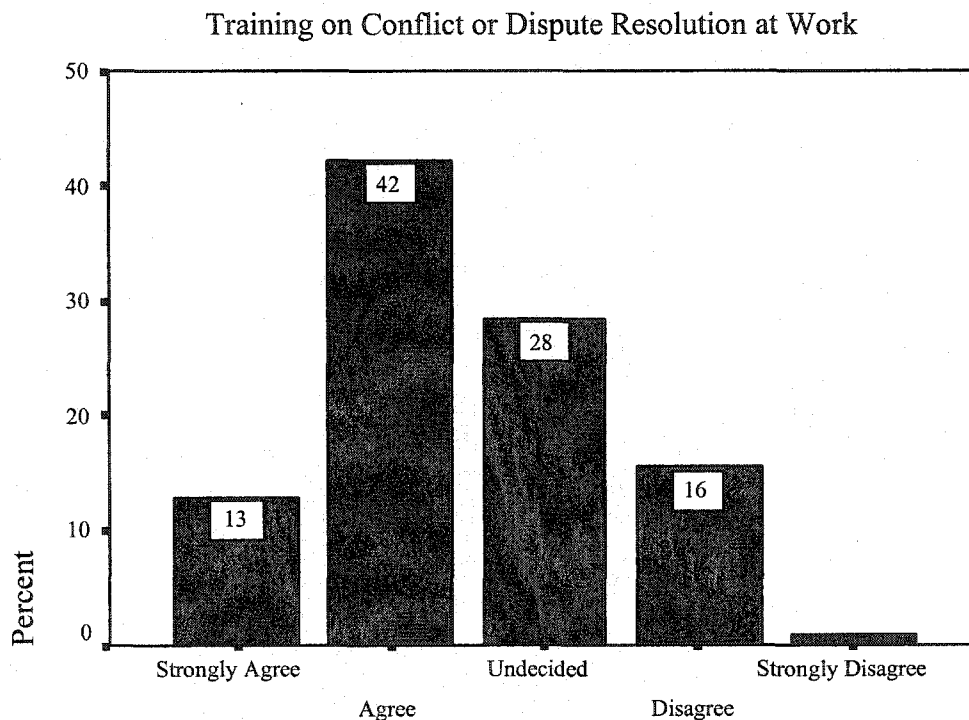
Training on Conflict or Dispute Resolution in the Workplace

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	15	12.9%
Agree	49	42.2%
Undecided	33	28.4%
Disagree	18	15.5%
Strongly Disagree	1	.9%
Total	116	100%

As shown in Table 33 and Figure 28, human resources directors surveyed felt positively about training city employees on conflict resolution in the workplace. Sixty-four respondents (55%) agreed, of which fifteen (13%) strongly agreed, that their city employees were trained in conflict resolution. While almost 16% of the respondents disagreed, only one human resource director strongly disagreed with this statement. Again, as was the case with training on causes of workplace violence, 28% of the respondents chose not to give an answer, instead marking undecided. A comparison between these results and what Nigro and Waugh (1998b) found in a

previous study shows that the number of cities that did not have training programs on conflict management has decreased. The number of cities which conduct such programs has decreased as well. Budgetary problems that face cities and local governments might be the reason behind these falling numbers.

Figure 28



Training on Leadership and Communication Skills. Leadership and communication skills should be part of the training effort. Managers and leaders in public organizations must serve a role models, showing how to communicate effectively, how to manage stress, how to listen, and how to deal with controversy and conflict. People in organizations learn much by what they observe and it is important that they see people in positions of influence behaving rationally, considerately and ethically.

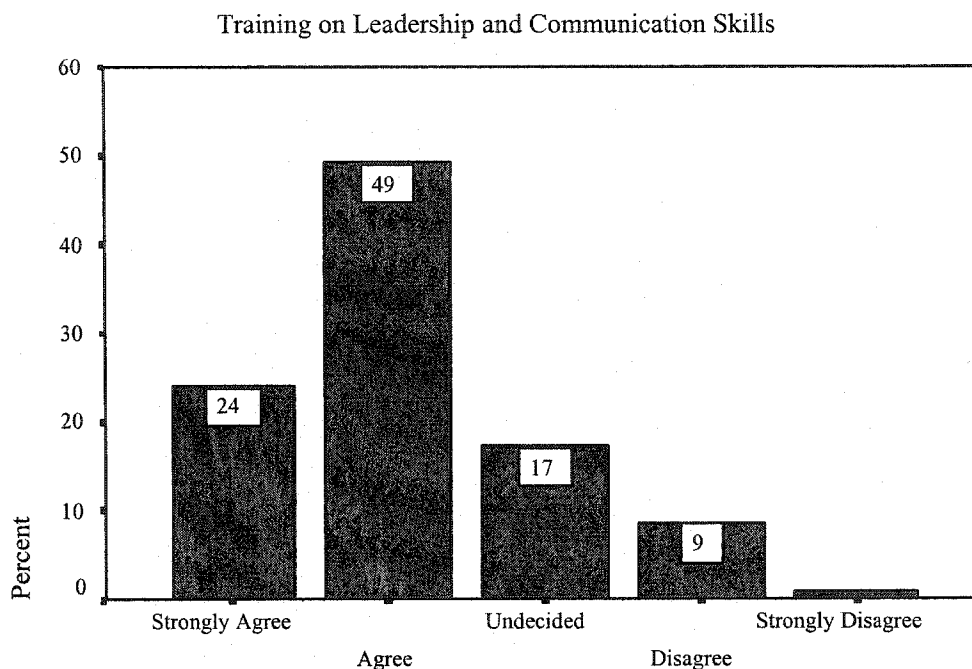
Table 34

## Training on Leadership and Communication Skills

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	28	24.1%
Agree	57	49.1%
Undecided	20	17.2%
Disagree	10	8.6%
Strongly Disagree	1	.9%
Total	116	100%

Improving communication skills will allow employees to vent stress and handle problems in constructive ways. Violence is a destructive form of communication, often used as a perceived last resort. A previous study found that public contact workers are not always the innocent victims of client aggression and may even be a contributing factor in their own victimization through poor interpersonal skills and poor services (Swanton, 1998). Some service workers are intuitively good communicators. They are innately sensitive to the moods and needs of others and operate to satisfy them. However, others, particularly workers dealing with stressed clients or having to enforce unpopular policies, may find that their natural ability is insufficient. Training is needed to ensure interpersonal contacts are both controlled and well conducted. To put a client at ease and promote a productive atmosphere are skills that need to be taught, and all service agencies must address this need.

Figure 29



As demonstrated in Table 34 and Figure 29, a high proportion of respondents (73%) indicated that they agree or strongly agree that their city departments conduct training programs on leadership and communications skills. This represents an 18% increase over the previous two issues (training on causes of workplace violence and training on conflict resolution). It is the same percentage of cities that conduct training programs on workplace violence prevention policies. Increasing the number of respondents who gave positive rating led to a decrease in the number of respondents who gave an undecided rating (17%).

Training on Stress Management. Stress management training benefits both employees and employers. Employees learn how to cope with stressors. Employers would have a safer and probably more effective work environment. For instance, inadequate job skills is an issue that can cause job stress. Having a clear

understanding of what job skills are lacking and getting the required training to compensate is an important step toward job satisfaction and the reduction of stress (Pihulyk, 2001a). However, ineffective training programs can lead to a wide array of stressors in the workplace.

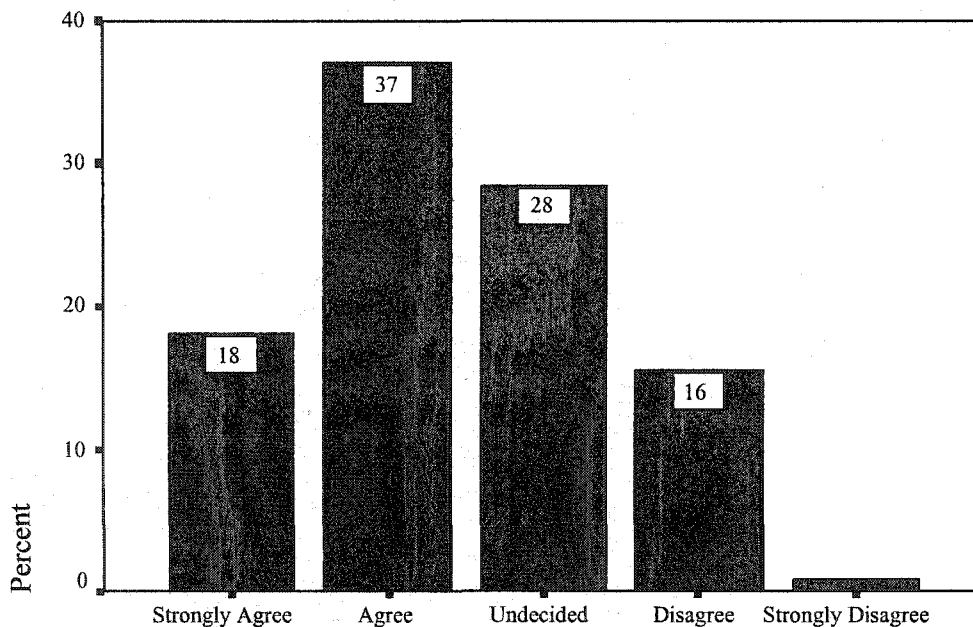
Table 35

Training on Stress Management

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	21	18.1%
Agree	43	37.1%
Undecided	33	28.4%
Disagree	18	15.5%
Strongly Disagree	1	.9%
Total	116	100%

Figure 30

Training on Stress Management





As demonstrated in Table 35 and Figure 30, 21 respondents (18%) strongly agreed and 43 (37%) agreed that city employees were trained on stress management. Eighteen respondents (15.5%) disagreed that their city departments conduct these training programs, and 1% disagreed strongly. Almost one-third of respondents (28.4%) gave an undecided rating, which is generally high percentage.

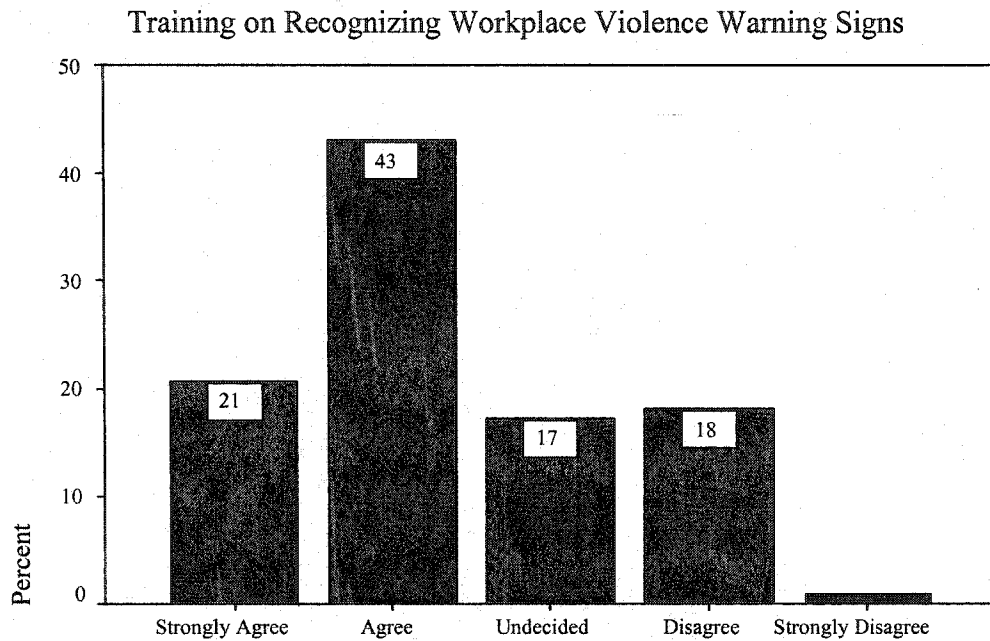
Training on Workplace Violence Warning Signs Recognition. Employers can help deal with workplace violence by providing employees with the required knowledge about potential offenders and the early warning signs of violence. It is crucial for HR and personnel department directors to be sensitive to behaviors that might signal a propensity for violence. Therefore, public employers should organize training programs on early recognition of escalating behavior and recognition of warning signs or situations that may lead to assaults. Employees and supervisors can prevent violence if they know what to look for (Grossman, 2002).

Table 36

Training on Workplace Violence Warning Signs Recognition

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	24	20.7%
Agree	50	43.1%
Undecided	20	17.2%
Disagree	21	18.1%
Strongly Disagree	1	.9%
Total	116	100%

Figure 31



Results from previous survey conducted by RIMS and ASSE found over half (58%) of those organizations surveyed provided training to help identify warning signs leading to potentially violent behavior. Training was provided by human resources departments (24%), safety departments (14%), risk management departments (13%), security departments (13%), and legal departments (3%). To help prevent violence in the workplace, more than half (58%) of the respondents refer potentially violent employees to their employee assistance programs. Forty percent offer training to managers to identify warning signs of violent behavior and 35% provide employee training on conflict resolution. Only 24% offer training to non-management employees to identify warning signs of violent behavior (ASSE, 1999).

Comparably, this study found a greater percentage of public organizations had training programs on identification of workplace violence early warning signs. A

higher proportion of respondents said that the supervisors and managers in their city departments were trained to recognize the warning signs of workplace violence and potentially violent employee and violent employee profiling. 64% of the respondents gave strongly agree (21%) and agree (43%) ratings. However, 21 respondents (18%) disagreed with this statement, one (1%) strongly. The remaining 17% gave an undecided rating as shown in Table 36 and Figure 31.

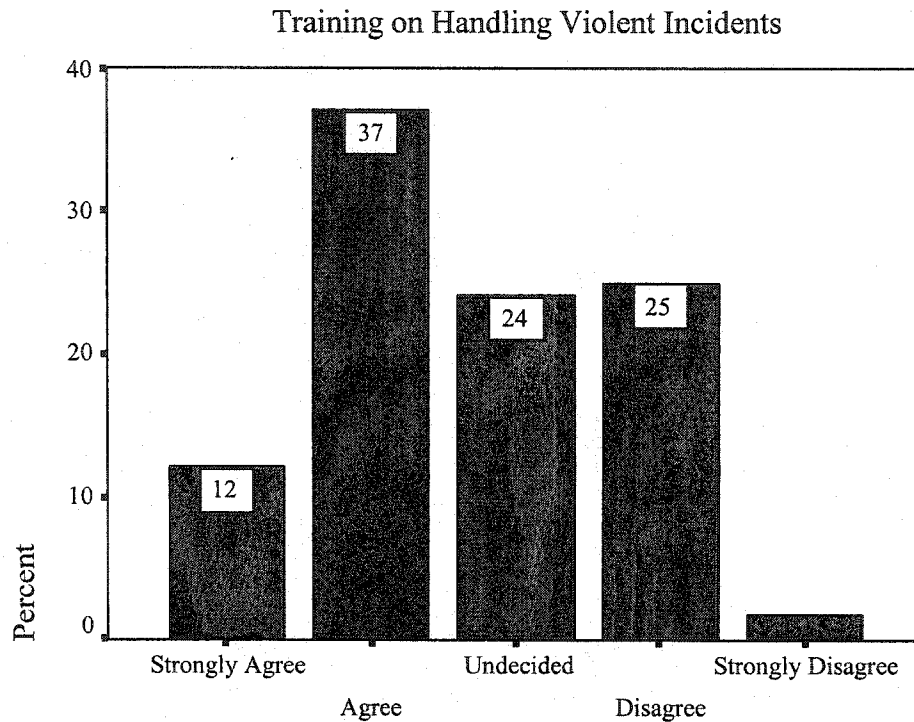
Training Supervisors and Managers on Handling Violent Incidents and Intervening with Potentially Violent Employees. Handling violent or potential violent situations and dealing with violent employees require skills that need to be taught in well-designed training programs. Knowledge of conditions and triggers for aggressive behavior will help employees and supervisors anticipate and defuse potentially violent situations. Also, supervisors should be trained on how to deal with troubled employees, when and how to intervene in a crisis, as well as on debriefing people after incident.

Table 37

Training on Handling Violent Incidents and Potentially Violent Employees

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	14	12.1%
Agree	43	37.1%
Undecided	28	24.1%
Disagree	29	25%
Strongly Disagree	2	1.7%
Total	116	100%

Figure 32



Training on handling violent employees and violent incidents in the workplace was not as positively perceived by human resources directors as any of the previously discussed training programs. As demonstrated in Table 37 and Figure 32, less than 50% of the respondents gave a strongly agree or agree rating. Only 43 directors agreed (37%) and 14 (12%) strongly agreed that supervisors and managers in their city received training programs on this topic. More than one-fourth of the respondent disagreed (25%), or strongly disagreed (2%) that their city departments provide or offer supervisors and managers training programs on how to handle workplace violence or when to intervene with potentially violent employees. Over 24% of the respondents gave an undecided rating.

Training on Diversity Issues and Equitable Treatment. Growing workforce diversity increases the possibility of aggression or violence in the workplace (Tsui, Egan & O'Reilly, 1992). Diversity may lead to misunderstandings, mistrust and resentment that could easily lead directly or indirectly to aggression or even violence. Violation of norms or guidelines of certain ethnic groups may produce resentment or hostility that can eventually lead to violence (Nydegger, 2000).

Increasing ethnic, linguistic, cultural and gender diversity is likely to foster inter-group tension. One factor is the accelerating pace of immigration. The percentage of foreign-born in the U.S. population has doubled since 1970. During the 1990s, the immigration rate reached its highest level in almost 60 years (8.7%). In heavily impacted regions, the proportion is much higher. Nearly 25% of Californians, for example, were born outside the U.S. This phenomenon is radically altering the demographics of the workplace and increasing the risk of pervasive inter-group tension.

Added to that is the increasing number of working women. For women, health and safety issues with regard to harassment are well known. They continue to be victimized in high numbers. Additionally, the Bureau of Labor Statistics points out that 40% of women who died at work during the eighties and early nineties were murdered. Despite increased awareness, harassment levels remain quite high-19%, or 16,100,000 female workers, according to Northwestern National Life. The same study reports that less than half of employees who have been harassed report the incident (Denenberg, Denenberg & Braverman, 1996; Braverman & Braverman, 1994).

Therefore, human resources departments and other city departments should develop and administer a workforce diversity training program that creates an inclusive work environment which values the contribution of each employee and promotes awareness of and respect for employee differences.

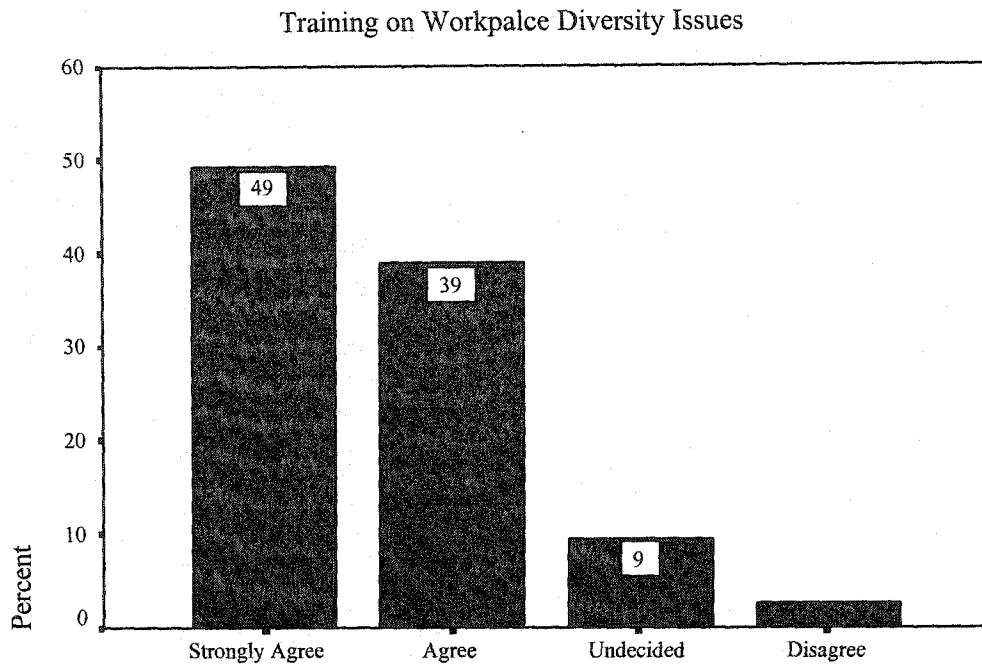
Table 38

Training on Diversity Issues and Equitable Treatment

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	57	49.1%
Agree	45	38.8%
Undecided	11	9.5%
Disagree	3	2.6%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Total	116	100%

As shown in Table 38 and Figure 33, the study results show that cities give a high degree of attention to the diversity issue and equitable treatment. A high proportion of respondents (88%) indicated that they agree or strongly agree that supervisors and managers were trained on diversity issues and equitable treatment. Forty-nine percent strongly agreed, and 39% agreed with this statement. While there was a decrease in number of respondents who gave an undecided rating (9.5%), there was a significant decrease in those who gave a disagree rating. No respondent strongly disagreed.

Figure 33



Training on Detecting, Documenting and Reporting Workplace Violence

Incidents. During training programs, employees should be made aware that the employer encourages reporting violent employees, potentially violent situations and any threats made. There should be no fear of retaliation for providing this information. Employers may need to consider a confidentiality policy for workplace violence reporters or provide reporters with some protection. Organizations can use hotlines or a toll free number accessible to all employees. All threats of violence should be investigated in a manner similar to harassment prevention guidelines.

Although only 30% of the study respondents reported having a workplace violence tracking and reporting system, the majority of them provided very positive feedback when asked about training employees how to detect, document and report workplace violence. Three quarters of the respondents reported that their city

departments offered training programs to supervisors and managers relating to this topic. While 18% strongly agreed, 57% agreed with this statement. Almost 14% of respondents disagreed (11%) or strongly disagreed (2.6%) with this statement. The remaining 11% gave an undecided rating. Table 39 and Figure 34 show these results.

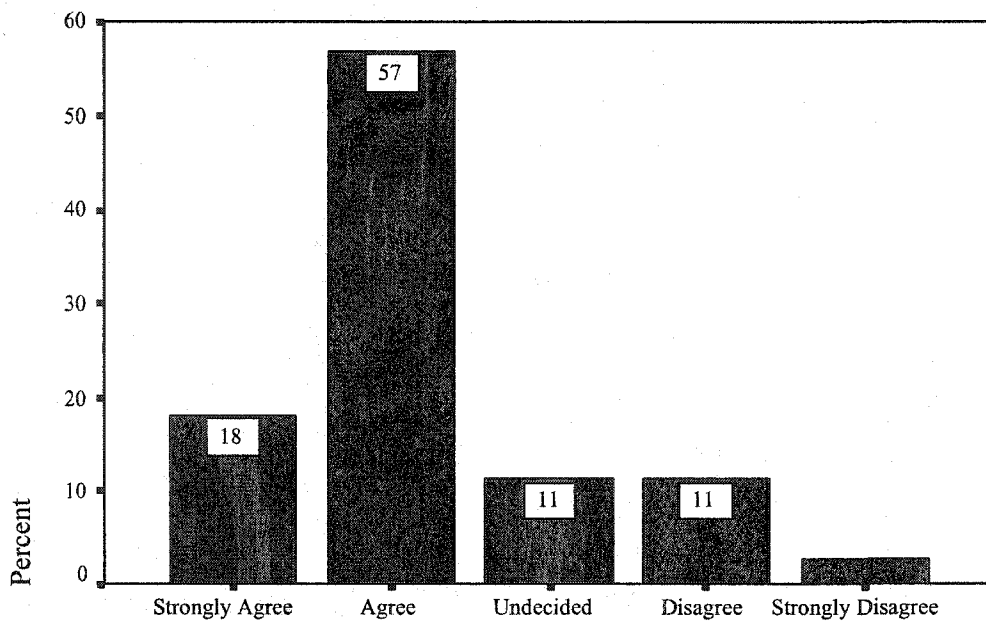
Table 39

Training on Detecting, Documenting and Reporting Violent Incidents

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	21	18.1%
Agree	66	56.9%
Undecided	13	11.2%
Disagree	13	11.2%
Strongly Disagree	3	2.6%
Total	116	100%

Figure 34

Training on Detecting, Documenting and Reporting Violence Incidents





Training on Conducting Safe Employee Termination. Termination is a very difficult process, as I will discuss later in this chapter. Supervisors and managers should be trained on how to conduct safe termination procedures. Termination training helps city staff better understand the legal issues surrounding terminations and avoid costly mistakes. It also provides city supervisors and department managers with the required knowledge on how to be aware of any threats made at the end of a termination interview. Threats made at this stage may be more serious than any expressed earlier and should be taken seriously.

Table 40

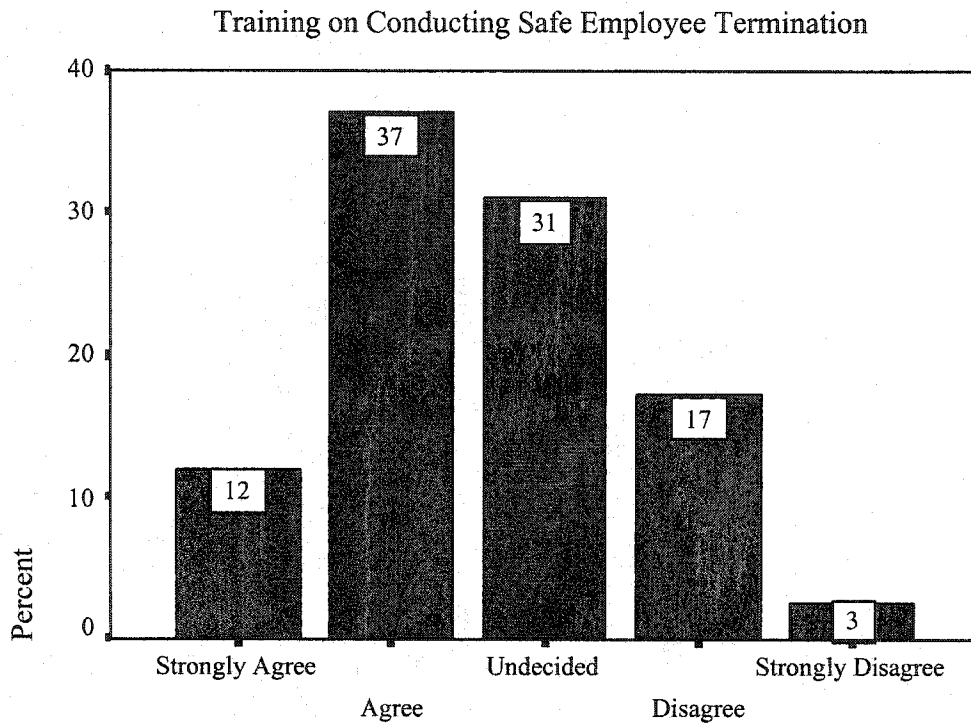
Training on Conducting Safe Employee Termination

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	14	12.1%
Agree	43	37.1%
Undecided	36	31.0%
Disagree	20	17.2%
Strongly Disagree	3	2.6%
Total	116	100%

As shown in Table 40 and Figure 35, less than half of the respondents gave a positive rating on training city department managers and supervisors on conducting safe employee termination. While 37% of the respondents agreed with the statement, 12% strongly agreed. Almost one fifth of the respondents gave a negative rating on this issue, 17 % gave a disagree rating and 2.6% strongly disagreed. For the first time

in the study, the number of undecided respondents surpassed one-third of the total respondents.

Figure 35



Training on Conducting Effective and Fair Performance Evaluations.

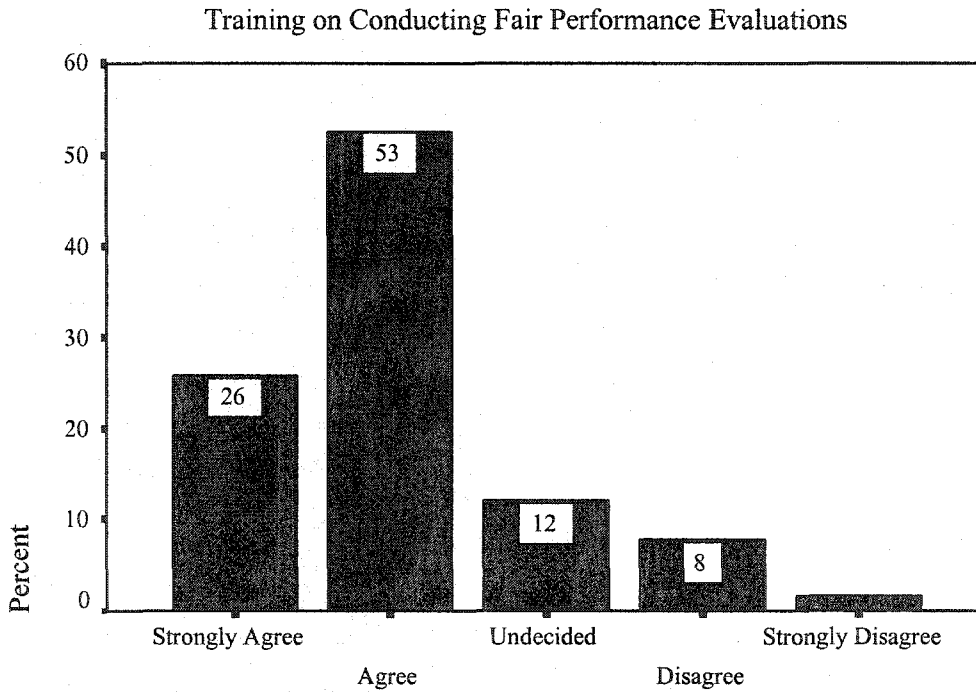
Performance evaluation training would prepare supervisors and managers on how to conduct fair and effective performance evaluations. As illustrated in Table 41 and Figure 36, a high proportion of respondents (78%) indicated that they agree or strongly agree that supervisors and managers were trained on how to conduct an effective and fair performance evaluation or review. While 53% agreed, 26% strongly agreed with this statement. Twelve percent chose an undecided rating. About 10% of respondents disagreed (8%), or strongly disagreed (2%) with this statement.

Table 41

Training on Conducting Effective and Fair Performance Evaluations

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	30	25.9%
Agree	61	52.6%
Undecided	14	12.1%
Disagree	9	7.8%
Strongly Disagree	2	1.7%
Total	116	100%

Figure 36



Performance Evaluation

To explore city practices in the area of employee evaluation, participants were given two statements and asked to identify their answers on a five-point scale. The first was about the treatment of city employees, “city employees feel fairly treated

and respected.” The second statement explored managerial handling of poor employee performance, “city departments handle poor performance directly, constructively and on time.” The researcher assumed that training city supervisors and managers would assist them in conducting fair evaluation reviews. They would know what kind of problems are associated with this process and how to conduct more objective evaluations. Data analysis found moderate positive correlations between these two elements of performance evaluation processes.

Fair Treatment. Over 68% of the respondents thought that their city employees felt fairly treated and respected. While 12% strongly agreed with this statement, the majority of the respondents agreed (65%). Less than 10% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. Less than a quarter of the respondents gave an undecided rating.

Handling Poor Performance Effectively. Assuming that employees are impartially evaluated based on their performance and job-related issues, not all of them get the same performance evaluation rating. Both organizations and low performing employees should make some adjustment to meet the required organizational goals and to turn city employee performance around, since poor performance has undesirable consequences. Approaches organization can use to enhance retention include shift in responsibilities and probation.

As shown in Table 42 and Figure 37, study respondents gave relatively positive feedback on this issue. Almost 65% of the respondents agreed (50%) and strongly agreed (14.7%) that their city departments and human resources departments

handle poor city employee performance directly, constructively and on time. One respondent commented that poor performance handling was “not consistent or in a timely manner.”

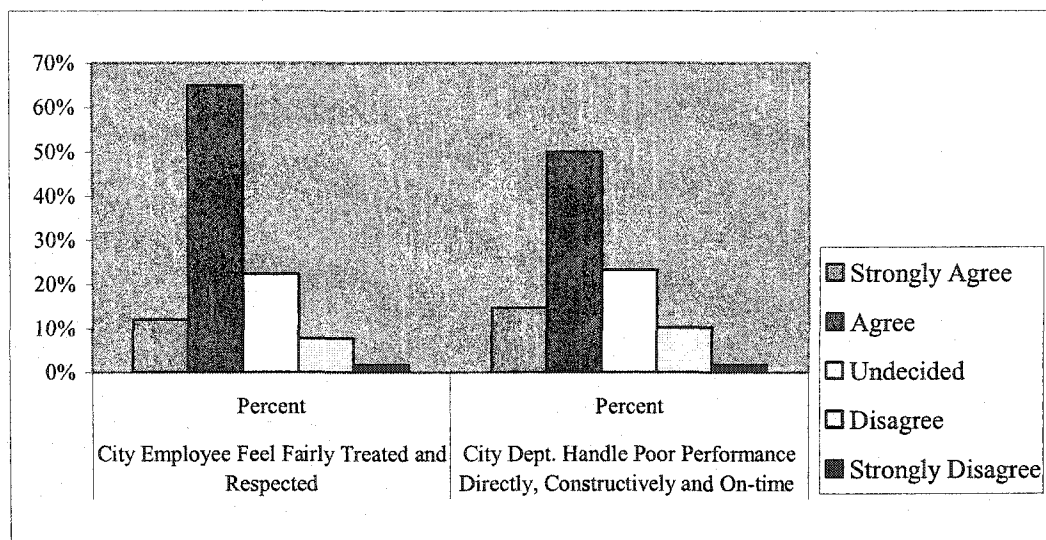
Table 42

City Departments and Performance Evaluation Processes

	City Employee Feel Fairly Treated and Respected		City Depts. Handle Poor Performance directly, Constructively and On Time	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	14	12.1%	17	14.7%
Agree	65	65.0%	58	50.0%
Undecided	26	22.4%	27	23.3%
Disagree	9	7.8%	12	10.3%
Strongly Disagree	2	1.7%	2	1.7%
Total	116	100%	116	100%

Figure 37

City Departments and Performance Evaluation Processes



### Incentive and Compensation Systems

The study identified four components of incentives and compensation systems. Respondents were asked to respond to each statement using a five-point scale. These four areas or elements are fair and effective compensation system; workers' compensation system that covers workplace violence victims; fair and equitable promotions; and other methods to reward good employees. Using the information in Table 12, a crosstabulation analysis found that the association between these four elements ranged from moderate to strong.

Fair and Effective Compensation System. In order to reduce and prevent workplace violence, public employers should dry out sources of workplace violence to insure a safer work environment. Recognizing the city compensation system as unfair is one of these sources. It could lead to job dissatisfaction, which in turn, may increase stress at work. There are several methods organizations can use to learn what employees think of the compensation system, including employee surveys and complaints.

O'Leary-Kelly, Griffin and Glew (1996) claimed that organizations have great influence on employees and that may ignite aggression. They wrote: "Organizations that control the rewards and opportunities that insiders have available to them, as well as the policies under which they must operate, may at times take actions that are perceived as aversive by employees (aversive treatment)" (p.240). The authors indicated that aggressive acts -from the employees' perspective- are a reaction to the authorities that control and disperse rewards and other resources. Employees may

view these disbursements as unfair, what the authors call “aversive treatment” (p. 240). Michael Diamond and Stephen Furbacher (1997) argued that employees’ perceptions of unfair treatment might trigger hostilities between and among them. Often, individuals who commit workplace violence are described as disgruntled and frequently mention resentment.

Table 43

Fair and Effective Compensation System

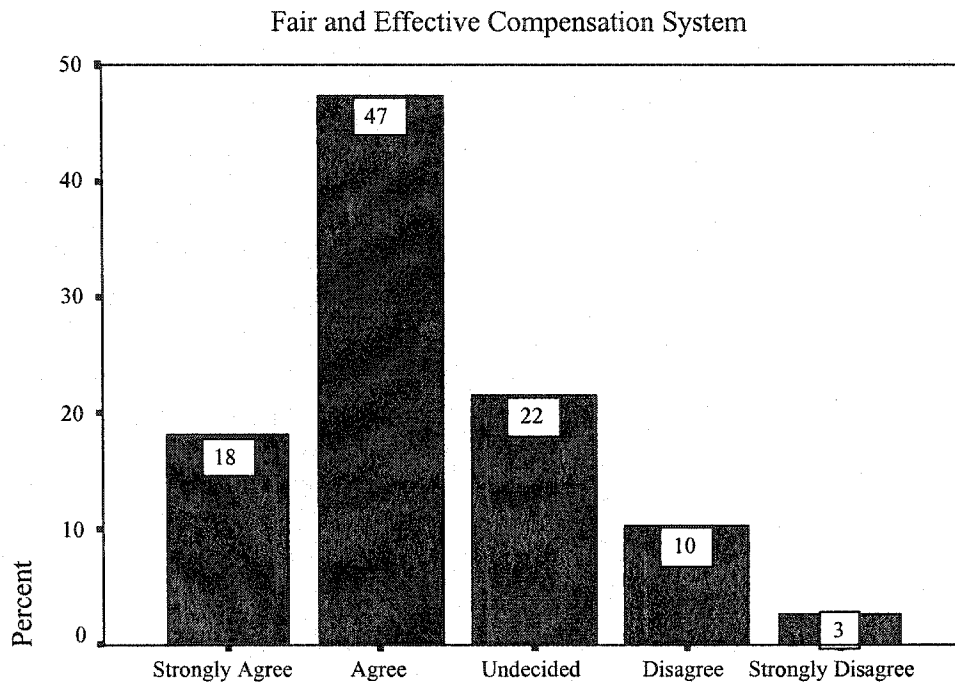
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	21	18.1%
Agree	55	47.4%
Undecided	25	21.6%
Disagree	12	10.3%
Strongly Disagree	3	2.6%
Total	116	100%

Employees may experience ambivalence and feel resentment surrounding such incentive inducements and react aggressively to what might be perceived as excessive infringement of their entitlement to freedom and independence. Others might take a more severe view of these common tactics, viewing incentive inducements as a method of indoctrination. On the other hand, some employees might be willing to accept these controls. Such acceptance carries expectations of job security, career development, and just treatment (Diamond & Furbacher, 1997).

As shown in Table 43 and Figure 38, the majority of the respondents agreed (47%) that city employees perceived the city compensation system as effective and

fair. Eighteen percent of them strongly agreed. While more than one-fifth of the respondents gave an undecided rating, less than 13% disagreed and strongly disagreed that their city employees view city compensation systems as neither fair nor effective.

Figure 38



Workers' Compensation Covers Employee Injuries Resulting From Workplace Violence. According to Waugh and Nigro (1996), researchers usually use workers' compensation claims data to conduct studies on workplace violence. Ultimately, the troubled employee will encounter discipline, termination, or an adversarial injury compensation system as his or her difficulties result in unsatisfactory performance, unacceptable behavior, or health problems. Braverman and Braverman (1994) mentioned that workplace violence perpetrators often interact with the occupational health care or injury compensation systems prior to becoming



threatening or violent. If these systems fail to provide effective interventions, violence becomes increasingly likely. As a result, it is in the interests of labor, government, and employers alike to ensure that there is an effective “safety net” in place for those employees who show the danger signs of emotional or behavioral breakdown.

Table 44

Workers’ Compensation System Covers Workplace Violence Victims

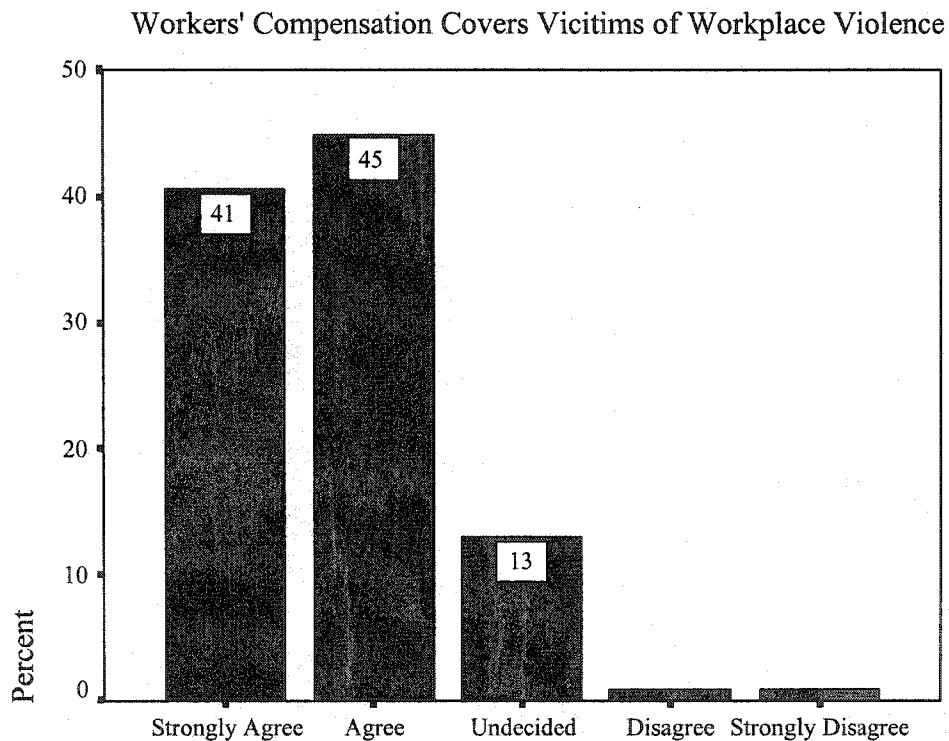
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	47	40.5%
Agree	52	44.8%
Undecided	15	12.9%
Disagree	1	.9%
Strongly Disagree	1	.9%
Total	116	100%

A very high proportion of the study population gave a strong positive rating with regard to covering employee’s injuries through workers’ compensation and other insurance policies. More than 85% agreed and strongly agreed that their city does so. About 13% gave an undecided answer. Only 2 respondents out of 116 (less than 2%) disagreed and strongly disagreed with this statement, making up the lowest disagreement rate so far in this study. Table 44 and Figure 39 show these results.

However, the highly positive answer to this question does not mean that employees get treated or compensated for injuries resulting from violent incidents at work. Generally, considering injuries compensable depends on whether or not the

injuries arise out of and in the course of employment. That can have numerous meanings across the states. Individual states differ on whether physical, mental and/or cumulative injuries are covered. The general rule based on case law is that workplace assaults that are unrelated to employment are not usually covered under workers' compensation. Also, most states' workers' compensation programs do not cover psychological trauma due to workplace violence.

Figure 39



Add to all that, every state normally has a restriction under the workers' compensation laws that prohibit employees from suing their employers directly, unless there is negligence. If an employee is injured on the job, the exclusive remedy is workers' compensation.

Fair and Equitable Promotions. According to organizational behavioral and personality literature, an employee should have the ability and desire to work. Promotion to a higher position in the organizational hierarchy is considered one method of motivating and inspiring an employee to work hard and to do his/her best. As mentioned earlier, 69% of the respondents said that their cities inform new employees about the possibility of advancement in their jobs. Employees should recognize advancement as a fair process. Advancement should depend only on job-related criteria and be as objective a process as possible. Usually, organizations rely on performance evaluations to reward hard workers. That explains why it is important to train supervisors and managers on how to conduct fair evaluation reviews.

Table 45

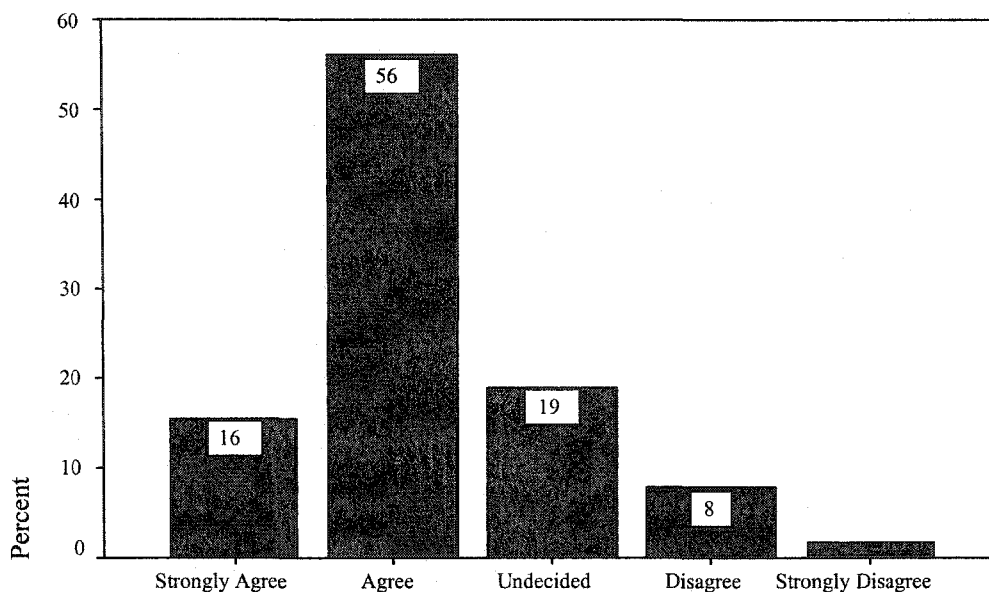
Fair and Equitable Promotions

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	18	15.5%
Agree	65	56%
Undecided	22	19%
Disagree	9	7.8%
Strongly Disagree	2	1.7%
Total	116	100%

As illustrated in Table 45 and Figure 40, the majority of the respondents (71.65%) either agreed (56%) or strongly agreed (15.5%) that city employees view promotion as a fair process. Only 9.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Again about one-fifth of the respondents gave an undecided rating.

Figure 40

Fair and Equitable Promotions



Other Incentives and Rewarding Methods. Public employers have several methods for rewarding good employees. Incentives could be monetary such as salary increases, overtime, and more paid holidays. Or, non-monetary such as vacations or enhancing someone's role in the organization by delegating more power or authority.

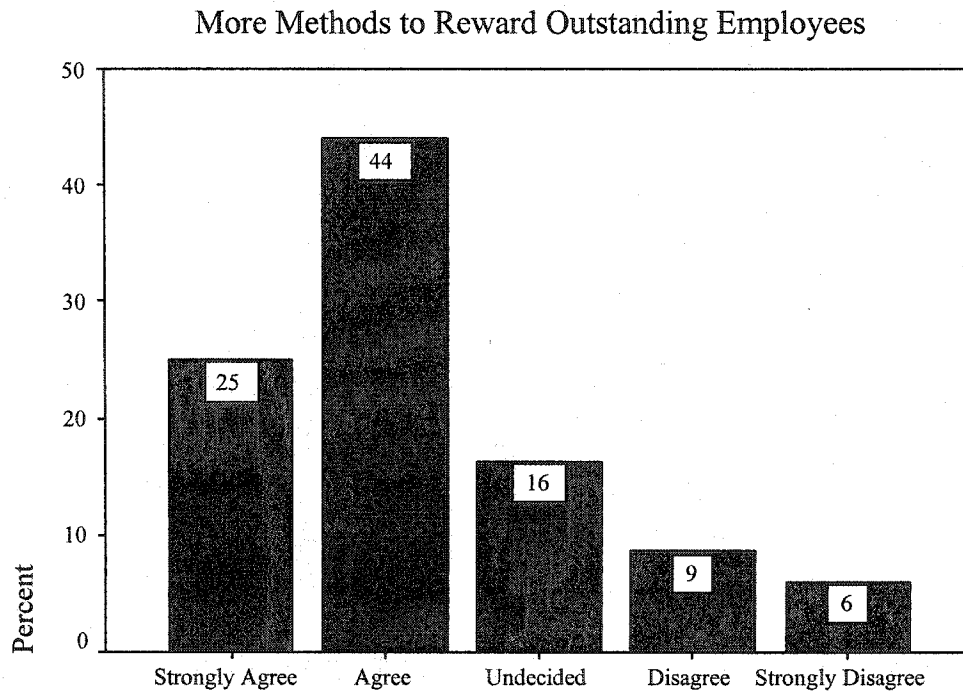
Table 46

Other Methods of Rewarding Outstanding Employees

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	29	25.0%
Agree	51	44.0%
Undecided	19	16.4%
Disagree	10	8.6%
Strongly Disagree	7	6.0%
Total	116	100%

Since it is almost impossible to promote all employees because of the traditional pyramidal hierarchy of most governmental organizations, where there are fewer positions at the top, it becomes necessary to develop other incentive methods to retain good employees. As shown in Table 46 and Figure 41, almost 70% of the respondents thought that their city departments develop such means to acknowledge and reward outstanding employees. About 15% disagreed and strongly disagreed with this statement. Sixteen percent gave an undecided rating.

Figure 41



#### Disciplinary Policies and Procedures

Organizations should have a clear disciplinary process that includes progressive punishment. The rules, violations and consequences should manifestly be spelled out. Progressive punishment suggests that subsequent infringements of the

rules will be dealt with more severely. However, employers can use tougher disciplinary actions after considering other ways to improve the performance of a problematic employee, and generally only after exhausting other available methods, since aggression often stems from people feeling as if they are being treated unfairly (Nydegger, 2000; Flynn, 1996). Therefore, care should be taken to ensure strict organizational justice. City departments should apply justified and legal disciplinary measures.

Disciplinary Actions Comply with Applicable Laws. As shown in Table 47 and Figure 42, 95% of the respondents agreed (50%) and strongly agreed (45%) that the disciplinary actions in their city departments are in line with city ordinances and state and federal regulations. The rest of the respondents (5%) were distributed between undecided (3.4%), disagree and strongly disagree (less than 1% each).

Table 47

Disciplinary Actions Comply with Applicable Laws

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	52	44.8%
Agree	58	50.0%
Undecided	4	3.4%
Disagree	1	.9%
Strongly Disagree	1	.9%
Total	116	100.0%

City Departments Take all Threats of Workplace Violence Seriously. A very high proportion of the respondents (96%) either agreed (50%) or strongly agreed (46%) that their city employees know that all violent threats are taken seriously and

will be investigated in a thorough manner. While less than 2% gave an undecided rating, a little over 2% disagreed that their city departments follow this method of workplace violence prevention. However, none of the respondents strongly disagreed with this statement.

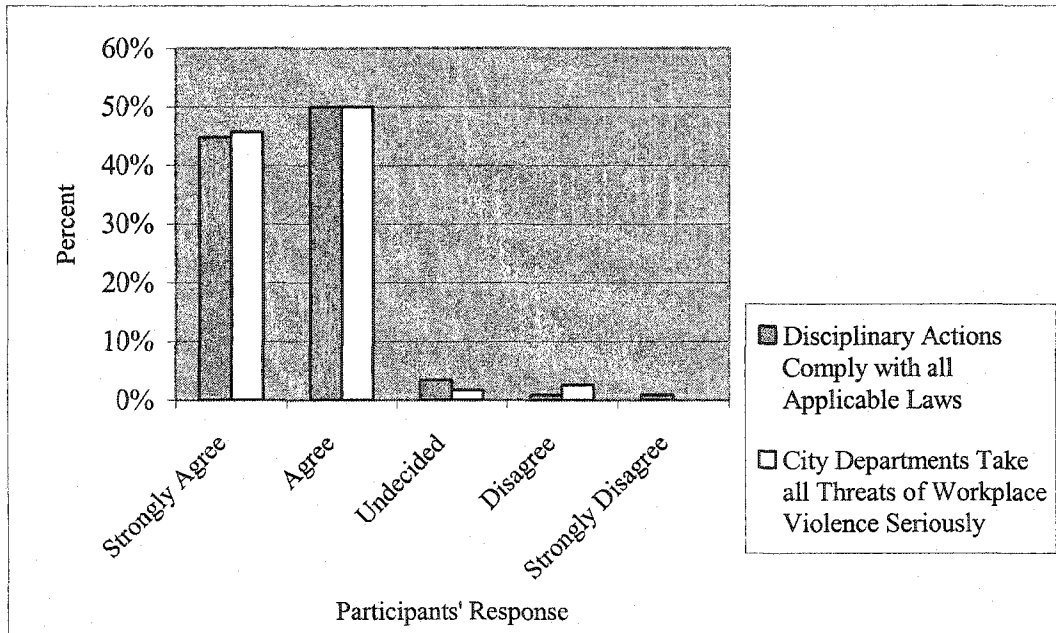
Table 48

City Departments Take all Threats of Workplace Violence Seriously

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	53	45.7%
Agree	58	50.0%
Undecided	2	1.7%
Disagree	3	2.6%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Total	116	100.0%

Figure 42

Disciplinary Policies and Procedures



The results, as shown in Table 48 and Figure 42, explicitly suggest that city governments are aware of the importance of taking threats of violence seriously. Public employers should assure any complaining worker that reporting an incident is the proper precautionary procedure. Additionally, the employer should assure a worker that a prompt, thorough investigation will occur and should ask him/her for any suggestions on minimizing the risk of a violent act.

#### Termination and Layoff Processes

Four components related to the termination and layoff processes were identified. The study sought to explore city departments' practices from a human resources management prospective. These four components include informing city employees of city layoffs and job cut plans, ensuring fair and legal layoff decisions, humane layoffs and termination procedures, and employee outplacement strategies. By using the information in Table 12, moderate to very strong associations between these four factors were found.

Informing City Employees of City Layoff and Job Cuts Plans. During economic difficulties and budgetary problems, governments at all levels start to cut public programs and services. The governments' need to save money strongly affects the public workforce. Governments launch significant changes such as limiting working hours, benefit cuts, job hiring freezes, layoffs, and downsizing.

As shown in Table 49, a high proportion of the study population somehow positively graded the city policies with regard to layoffs and job cuts. Seventy-two percent of the respondents agreed (47%) and strongly agreed (25%) that their cities'



plans for layoffs and job cuts or downsizing are discussed openly to keep city employees well informed. Little over 15% of the respondents gave an undecided rating and only 12% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

Table 49

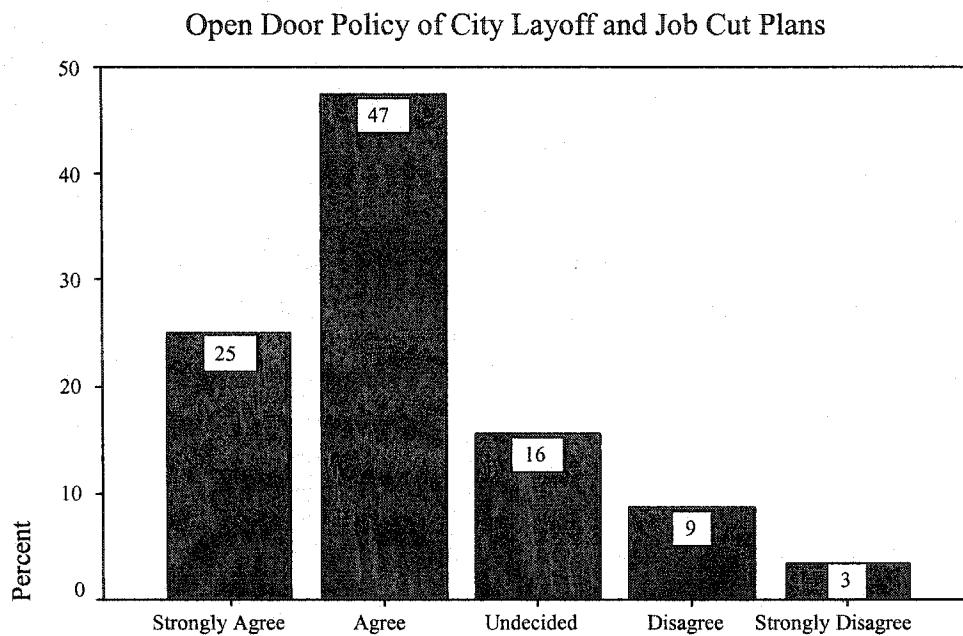
Open Door Policy of City Layoff and Job Cut Plans

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	29	25%
Agree	55	47.4%
Undecided	18	15.5%
Disagree	10	8.6%
Strongly Disagree	4	3.4%
Total	116	100%

These results -as demonstrated in Figure 43- show that city governments are aware of the layoff issue and its impact not only on city employees but also on the city population at large. Although announcing and publicizing city plans for job cuts trouble the community and cause bewilderment and bitterness, it generates the possibility for brain storming among employees and residents. For example, when city employees have knowledge about these plans, they may have some suggestions or alternatives about how to help cities retain staff and at the same time reduce the burden the city budgets. In fact, there are several alternatives such as leaves of absence, cross training, attrition (voluntary early retirement or leave), and a “*share the pain!*” notion, where employees agree to take more unpaid days off, defer the payment for a number of working days or weeks, or even take a temporary reduction in salaries or wages. However, this concept, which depends on a “*help me now and I*

*will help you later!"* or *"work for me now and I will pay you later!"* strategy, requires that no one -from the city top executives to maintenance workers- is immune from the strategies for saving money (Maurer, 1999). More importantly, city government has to be trustworthy for such strategies to work.

Figure 43



A survey of more than 1,200 recently laid-off workers found that 86% had no opportunity to apply for other positions in the organization and 71% blamed organizational leadership for the layoff. Furthermore, 70% would not recommend that others work for the organization and 67% would never work for it again if they received a job offer. Fifty-four percent said they would not recommend the organization's products or services to others based on the way the layoff was handled. Forty-nine percent felt that the layoff was done in a manner inconsistent with the organization's values, and 44% thought the organization failed to communicate the

rationale for the layoffs. Effective communication about job cuts was more important to survey respondents than additional benefits such as job search support or extended health care (“If you must”, 2002).

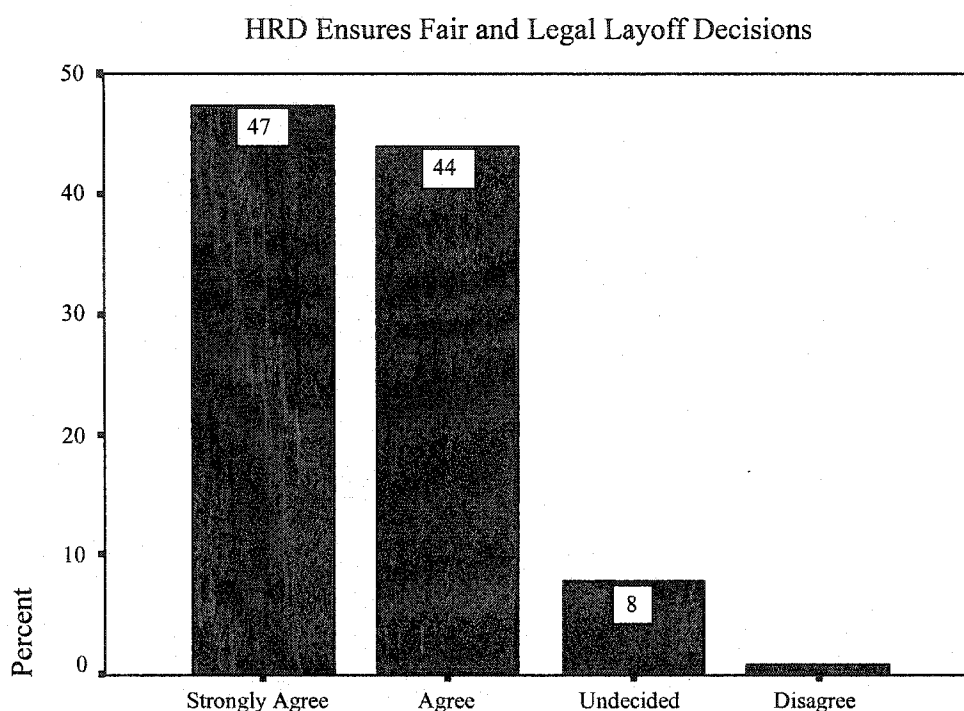
Fair and Legal Layoff Decisions. There are two important laws public employers should consider when it comes to layoffs and terminations: employment standards legislation and common law. Employment standards laws outline the minimum standards to which employees in the applicable jurisdiction (e.g., a particular province or federally regulated) are entitled. If an employer provides a greater right, such as a longer notice period on termination, the greater right will prevail. Employees cannot agree to waive their entitlements under employment standards legislation. They are guaranteed the protections that are offered in the legislation. Common law refers to the laws that are created and applied by the courts. This type of law exists in conjunction with written laws like employment standards legislation. Also, it fluctuates and applies differently in each jurisdiction.

Table 50

HRD Ensures Fair and Legal Layoff Decisions

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	55	47.4%
Agree	51	44%
Undecided	9	7.7%
Disagree	1	.9%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Total	116	100%

Figure 44



As shown in Table 50 and Figure 44, over 91% of the respondents gave positive feedback on the issue of conducting fair and legal layoffs policies. While 47% strongly agreed that human resources and other city departments ensure that layoff decisions are made in a fair and legal manner, 44% agreed. Almost 8% gave an undecided rating. While no single respondent strongly disagreed with this statement, only one respondent disagreed.

Humane Layoffs and Terminations Process. If conducting legal layoffs and termination policies is important, managing them humanely is essential. Saving terminated or fired employees' dignity is paramount. Public managers have to understand that termination and layoff come with a heavy weight of worries and

fears. HR staff must understand the typical distresses and concerns of employees being terminated and assess the risk factors and potential for violence. When faced with termination, employees must usually adjust to a difference in perception -- how they perceive the reason for termination versus how the company views it. For example, employees are concerned about how coworkers and significant others will view them and may have to adjust to the shame of failure and its ramifications for self-esteem and confidence. It is not uncommon for employees to experience intense emotions, such as anger, resentment, fear and perhaps blaming.

In addition to these emotional reactions, human resources staff should expect terminated employees to be preoccupied with practical, pragmatic concerns and fears about providing for themselves and their families. They may worry about what potential employers may be told about them and be uncertain about job search skills and opportunities for future employment. These concerns may lead to additional short and long-term stress generated by the termination. Stress that may increase the problem behaviors that initially led to the termination (Maurer, 1999; Johnson & Indvik, 1996a).

When study participants were asked about whether or not necessary layoffs or termination of city employees are done in a humane manner with adequate support services, their answers were very positive. Almost 84% of them agreed (45%) and strongly agreed (39%) that their city departments follow this rule when they terminate any city employee. Only 4% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with

this statement. Twelve percent answered undecided. Table 51 and Figure 45 show these results.

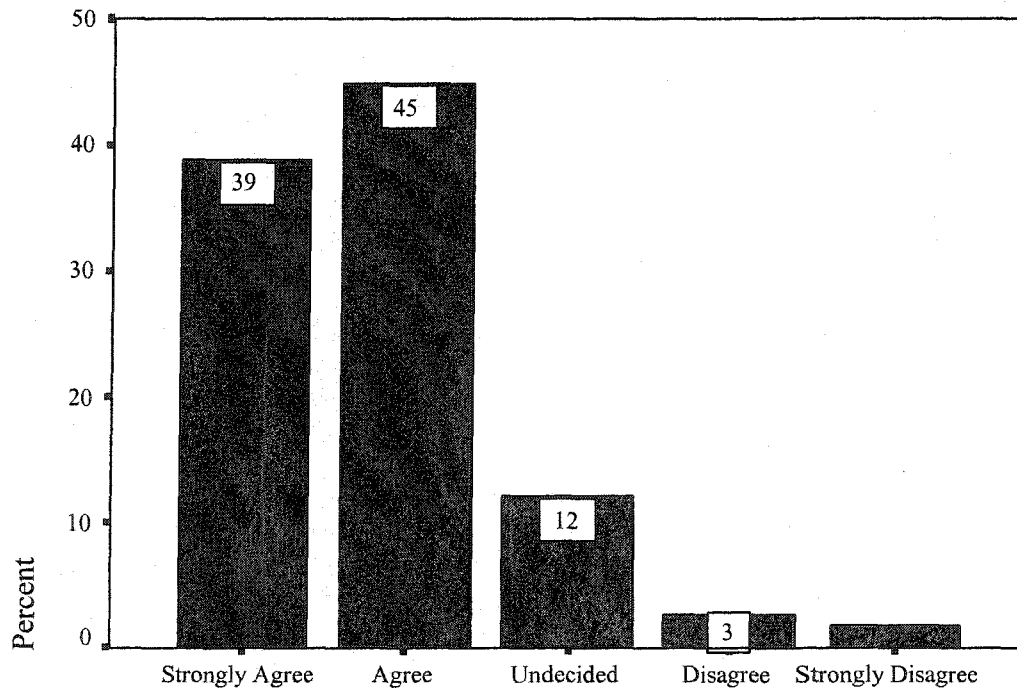
Table 51

Humane Layoff and Termination Processes

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	45	38.8%
Agree	52	44.8%
Undecided	14	12.1%
Disagree	3	2.6%
Strongly Disagree	2	1.7%
Total	116	100%

Figure 45

Humane Layoff and Termination Process



Employee Outplacement Strategies. Former employees make up 22.5% of workplace homicide cases in the last 10 years. Thus, almost a quarter of these incidents are committed by people who have already been terminated (Gatewood, 2002). Public employers should provide outplacement, rehabilitation training, job search support and counseling services appropriate for the employee's level. Literature reviewed suggested improving the severance programs and that employers should consider the contributions made by the individuals being let go and the difficulty they may have finding another job. Therefore they should provide laid off employees with transition services. Transition-type services cost little compared to an overall severance package and can give people not only a cushion but also direction on their next steps ("The new rules", 2001).

Table 52

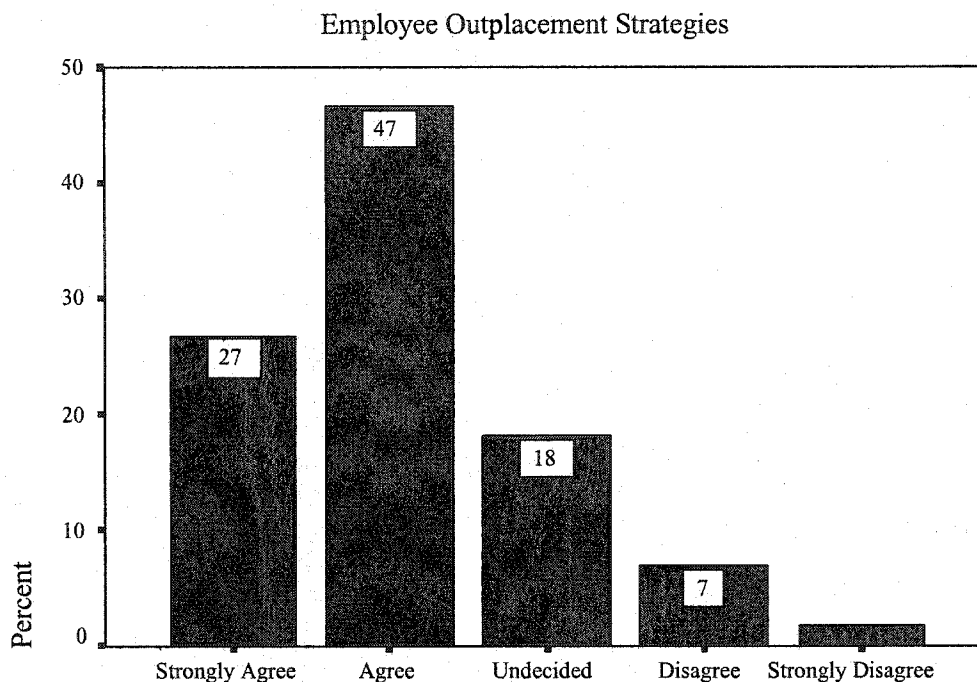
Employee Outplacement Strategies

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	31	26.7%
Agree	54	46.6%
Undecided	21	18.1%
Disagree	8	6.9%
Strongly Disagree	2	1.7%
Total	116	100%

As a result of increased outplacement services, almost three-quarters of the human resources directors surveyed responded positively. More than 46% of the respondent agreed and 26.7% strongly agreed that their city outplacement strategies include elements that preserve employee dignity, including counseling and

outplacement services. While a little less than 20% gave an undecided rating, less than 9% disagreed (7%) or strongly disagreed with this statement (1.7%). Table 52 and Figure 46 show these findings.

Figure 46



### Grievance and Complaint Systems

Conflict among employees or between employees and non-employees may erupt in violence. A prevention plan should include effective grievance or complaint mechanisms. The study identified three areas or components of grievance or complaint systems: 1) well-publicized grievance and complaint processes, 2) swift grievance and complaint procedures and actions, 3) a functional grievance and complaint systems. A crosstabulation analysis revealed strong positive correlation between them.

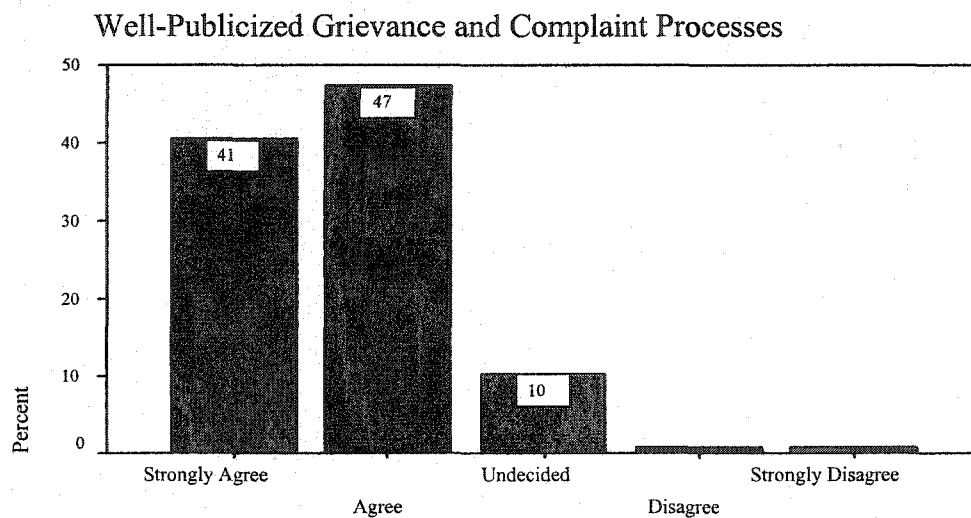


Publicizing Grievance and Complaint Processes. There is little difference between having a grievance or complaint systems no one knows anything about and not having them at all. Informing city employees about the city grievance and complaint system -and any changes- through training programs is very important. Airing an employee's grievances may diffuse the volatile situation. Also, personnel, human resources, employee assistance and security departments must work as a team in the handling of grievances and problems.

Table 53  
Well-Publicized Grievance and Complaint Processes

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	47	40.5%
Agree	55	47.4%
Undecided	12	10.3%
Disagree	1	.9%
Strongly Disagree	1	.9%
Total	116	100%

Figure 47



As shown in Table 53 and Figure 47, the greatest part of the study population gave a positive rating to the city practices in that regard. About 88% of the respondents said that their city departments publicized the grievance and complaint processes. While 47.4% agreed, 40.5% strongly agreed with this statement. Therefore, one can assume that city departments make their grievance and complaint systems public and, as a result, city employees have the required knowledge on how to report or file a complaint. Only 10% gave an undecided answer. The number of respondents who disagreed or disagreed strongly is very small (less than 2%).

Swift Grievance and Complaint Procedures and Actions. Public employers should develop reasonable grievance handling and internal complaint procedures so employees can discuss their problems with management. Knowledgeable human resources and line managers should be equally concerned about the chronic complainer who has already filed a number of grievances, then suddenly becomes quiet. Or, someone who often gives verbal expression to complaints about and to management but then stops. A complainer who views the management as persecutor and feels that no one in the organization will do anything to solve the problem, might think it is a payback time.

Organizations should be sensitive to employee complaints and take swift action to help resolve them. It is believed that organizations with a higher number of complaints will more likely experience a higher number of violent acts. The U.S. Postal Service is a good example. In Florida, for instance, one-fourth of the complaints filed in 1992 with the National Labor Relations Board against all

employers and unions in the state were filed against U.S. Postal Service managers (Bensimon, 1994).

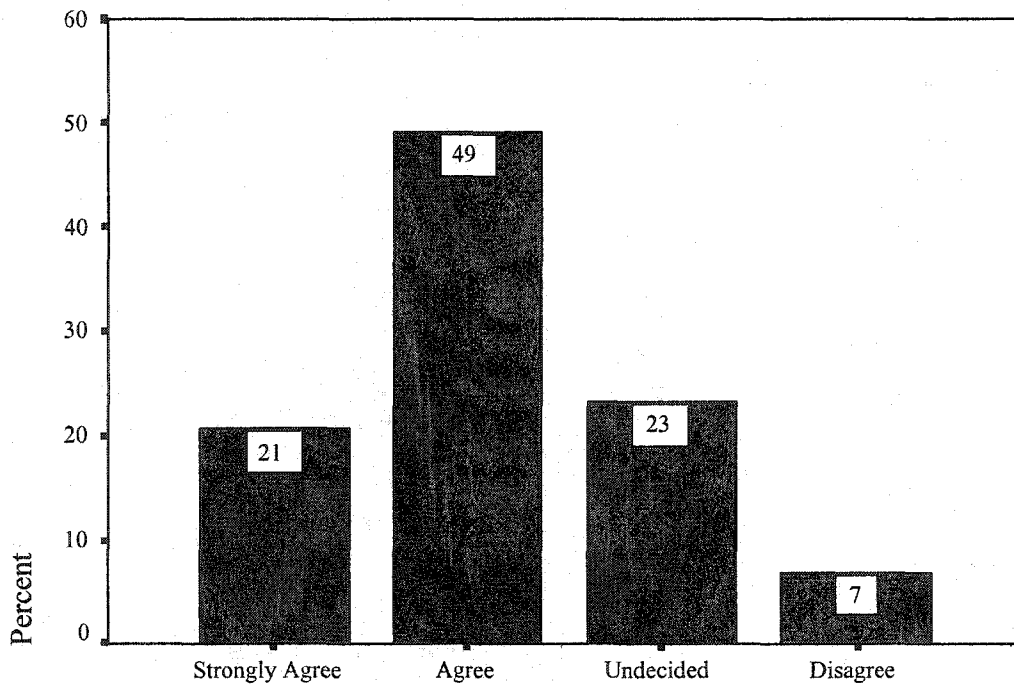
Table 54

Swift Grievance and Complaint Procedures

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	24	20.7%
Agree	57	49.1%
Undecided	27	23.3%
Disagree	8	6.9%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Total	116	100%

Figure 48

Swift Grievance and Complaint Procedures



As demonstrated in Table 54 and Figure 48, almost 70% of the respondents said their grievance and complaints systems are associated with swift actions. More than 49% agreed and 21% strongly agreed with this statement. However the number of undecided responses is more than twice that of the preceding question. While no one gave a strongly disagree rating, 7% disagreed with this statement.

Functioning the Grievance and Complaint Systems. Grievance and complaint systems in any organization offer a peaceful method of communication between employees and management. This channel of communication should be clear and accessible to all employees. The study participants were asked to comment on whether their grievance and complaint systems were viewed as an alternative method to relieve employee dissatisfaction and curb potential violent acts.

Table 55

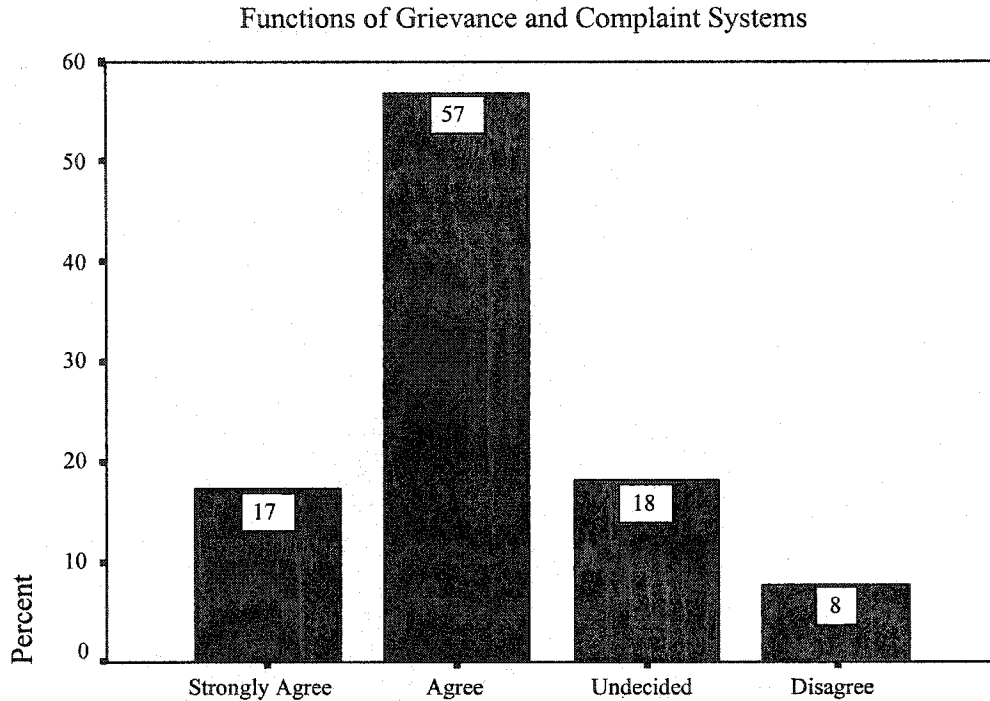
Functions of Grievance and Complaint Systems

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	20	17.2%
Agree	66	56.9%
Undecided	21	18.1%
Disagree	9	7.8%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Total	116	100%

As shown in Table 55 and Figure 49, nearly three-quarters of the respondents agreed (57%) or strongly agreed (17%) that city departments use grievance and complaint systems as an alternative method to relieve employee dissatisfaction and

curb potential violent acts. Eighteen percent of the respondents were undecided about this statement. The remaining 8% disagreed. No one strongly disagreed.

Figure 49



Employee Safety

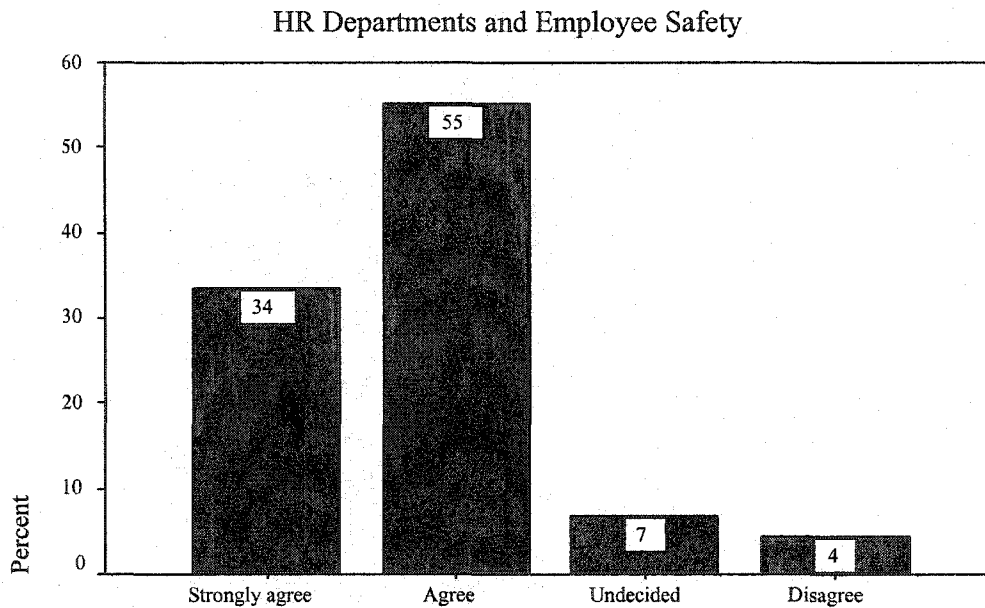
An employer's willful attack on an employee is not a risk or a condition of employment, so an employer's intentional assault on an employee is compensable under workers' compensation and may also be redressed in a civil action for damages. Furthermore, where an employee acts as the employer's agent in harming another employee, the employer can be liable for damages in a civil action. Employee safety is the responsibility of each employer and workplace violence is an occupational health and safety issue. Therefore, organizations should value employee safety by creating systems that defuse violence at work.

Table 56

Human Resources Departments and Employee Safety

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	39	33.6%
Agree	64	55.2%
Undecided	8	6.9%
Disagree	5	4.3%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Total	116	100%

Figure 50



The results (Table 56 and Figure 50) showed that human resources departments pay more attention to the issues of employee safety than to other issues covered in the survey such as grievance and complaint systems. About 89% of the respondents agreed (55%) and strongly agreed (34%) that employee safety is a core issue for the human resources department in their cities. While 7% gave an undecided rating, only 4% disagreed with this statement. No one strongly disagreed.

## Testing the Hypotheses

In this section the relationship between human resources department directors' perception of workplace violence (dependent variable) with number of city employees, city government preparedness plan components, and human resources management functions will be tested. It is very important to confirm that the data of workplace violence is not actual data but rather the perception of the human resources directors of the extent of this problem in their workplace. Also, determination of the magnitude of relationships will be based on Table 12, p. 155.

### Number of City Government Employees and Workplace Violence

Spearman's Rho correlation coefficients was used to measure the relationship between the number of city government employees or the size of city government and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence. The correlation table displays the correlation coefficients significance values and significance level. Also, for validity and accuracy purposes, the researcher used Gamma as a measure of association. But since there is no difference between the findings from both measures of association-as shown in Table 57, the analysis focused only on Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient.

According to the correlation table, a significant relationship was found between the number of city government employees (independent variable) and the human resources directors' perception of the following types of workplace violence:

terror attack or threat of terror attack, physical attack, rape, harassment, threat, psychological violence and overall workplace violence (dependent variables).

Table 57

Number of City Government Employees and Workplace Violence Correlations

Dependent Variable (s)	Measure of Association	Number of City Government Employees			
		Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Terror attack or threat of terror attack	Gamma	.260	.109	2.347	.019
	Spearman Correlation Coefficient	.212*	.091	2.312	.023
	N.	116			
Homicide	Gamma	.166	.116	1.425	.154
	Spearman Correlation Coefficient	.133	.039	1.432	.155
	N.	116			
Physical attack/assault	Gamma	.297	.106	2.754	.006
	Spearman Correlation Coefficient	.253**	.092	2.795	.006
	N.	116			
Rape	Gamma	.270	.121	2.149	.032
	Spearman Correlation Coefficient	.195*	.090	2.126	.036
	N.	116			
Harassment (sexual, racial, religious, etc.)	Gamma	.281	.113	2.427	.015
	Spearman Correlation Coefficient	.220*	.090	2.405	.018
	N.	116			
Threat (verbal or written)	Gamma	.342	.103	3.218	.001
	Spearman Correlation Coefficient	.289**	.089	3.220	.002
	N.	116			
Psychological violence	Gamma	.243	.116	2.070	.038
	Spearman Correlation Coefficient	.200*	.097	2.179	.031
	N.	116			
Overall workplace violence (all types)	Gamma	.295	.114	2.518	.012
	Spearman Correlation Coefficient	.236*	.092	2.592	.011
	N.	116			

\* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Although the low significance values ( $p = >.005$ ) indicate that there is a significant relationship between the two variables, the low values for the test statistics



( $r = .212, .133, .253, .195, .220, .289, .200, .236$ ) indicate that the relationship between the two variables is a weak one. According to Table 12 (p. 155), weak relationships occur when r-value is greater than .10 but less than .30.

Gamma values show stronger relationships between these variables. For example there is a moderate relationship between number of city employees and perceived workplace harassment (.342). However, the rest of Gamma values indicate the relationships between the two variables are weak ( $>.30$ ).

Also, no relationship was found between the number of city government employees and the HR director's perception of workplace homicide (a dependent variable).

To conclude, since there is a significant correlation between number of city employees and all types of workplace violence (except homicide), including overall workplace violence, I accept the first research hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis ( $H_01$ ) saying there is no relationship between the two variables.

#### Number of City Government Employees and Terror Attack

The significance level (or p-value) is .023, which indicates the correlation is significant and the two variables are linearly related. In other words, the more employees, the greater the HR directors' perception that an attack or a threat of terror attack will occur. The Spearman's rho correlation coefficient for number of city employees and terror attack is .212, meaning the two variables have positive weak relationships.

#### Number of City Government Employees and Homicide

The significance level is .155, thus, the correlation is not significant and the two variables are not linearly related. Thus, number of city employees has no relationship with HR directors' perception of workplace homicide. In other words, homicide could happen at any workplace and number of employees is not viewed as a contributing factor.

#### Number of City Government Employees and Physical Assault

The significance level (p-value) is very small (.006). Thus, the correlation is significant and the two variables are linearly related. In other words, the greater the number of city employees, the greater the possibility that someone will be physically attacked or assaulted at the workplace. Most people are assaulted at work by someone they know as we mentioned earlier. If 90% of our time is spent either at home or work, then the likelihood is greater of being assaulted at either one of them. As a result, a weak positive ( $r = .253$ ) relationship between number of city employees and HR directors' perception of physical assault at work was found.

#### Number of City Government Employees and Rape at Work

The significance level is .036, which means the relationship between the two variables is significantly correlated. Thus, the study found a positive relationship between the number of city employees and the perceived level of rape. But again this relationship is weak since r- value is .195.

### Number of City Government Employees and Harassment

The relationship between the number of city employees and HR directors' perception of workplace harassment is significant at .018. However this relationship is weak since the correlation coefficient value is .220. We mentioned earlier that co-workers, former employees and supervisors commit more than 80% of the workplace harassment, then the larger the number of city employees, the greater the possibility that harassment against an employee will occur.

### Number of City Government Employees and Threat

Since, the significance level (.002) is very small, the correlation is significant and the number of city employees and HR directors' perception of threat are linearly related. In other words, the larger the number of city employees, the greater the likelihood that HR directors perceived that threats could occur in the workplace. The value of the correlation coefficient is small (.289). This value is the closest one to a moderate relationship. Accordingly, data analysis indicates to the existence of a positive weak relationship between the number of city employees and HR directors' perception of written or verbal threat of violence.

### Number of City Government Employees and Psychological Violence

Since, the significance level is .031, then the correlation is significant and the two variables are linearly related. The value of the correlation coefficient is .200. Based on that, a weak positive relationship between the number of city employees and the perceived psychological violence has been proven to exist.

### Number of City Government Employees and Overall Workplace Violence

The relationship between number of city employees and HR directors' perception of the overall workplace violence is significant at .011. However this relationship is a weak one since the value of the correlation coefficient is .236. Based on that, a weak positive relationship between the number of city employees and the perceived overall workplace violence has been proven to exist.

### City Government Preparedness Plan Components and Workplace Violence

Chi Square was used to test the relationship between components of city government preparedness and HR directors' perception of the level of workplace violence. Since the data collected for one variable (components of city government preparedness) is nominal, Chi Square is the most appropriate test for this level of data.

It is important to mention that finding a significant relationship between workplace violence preparedness plan components and any perceived workplace violence type or with overall workplace violence will lead to a rejection of the null hypotheses. Researchers and city government officials do not differentiate between types of violence because all have a negative impact on the organizations. A method or a component proven to be statistically connected to any type of violence should be recognized and used by city governments to curb this unwanted phenomenon. Such an approach would increase the city's ability to combat this problem. At the same time, more studies would have to be conducted to test further relationships. Also, the large number of tested relationships (416 as mentioned earlier) justifies this approach.

Written Policy or Program and Workplace Violence

The analysis found no relationship between written workplace violence policies and all types of workplace violence except harassment. Here, a crosstabulation analysis revealed that the likelihood that a written policy existed was associated with a respondent's perspective of the level of workplace harassment of any kind as shown in Table 58. A low significance value of Chi-Square ( $p = 0.042$ ) indicated that there might be some relationship between the two variables.

Table 58

Harassment and Written Workplace Violence Policy Crosstabulation

Count		Written Workplace Violence Policy		Total
		Yes	No	
Harassment (sexual, racial, religious, etc.)	Not a problem	2	2	4
	Small problem	53	9	62
	Moderate problem	35	3	38
	Serious problem	9	2	11
	Very serious problem	0	1	1
Total		99	17	116

Table 59

Workplace Violence Policy and Harassment Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.138*	1	.042
Continuity Correction	1.729	1	.189
N of Valid Cases	116		

\* 2 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .59.

The nominal symmetric measures below indicate both the strength and significance of the relationship between the row and column variables of a crosstabulation. Therefore, and as shown in Table 60, there is a significant relationship between written workplace violence policy and harassment. This relationship is negative and weak since  $\phi = -.189$ . In other words, having written workplace violence prevention plans increase the possibilities that HR directors do not perceive workplace harassment as a problem. Thus, I cannot accept the null hypothesis ( $H_02$ ) saying no relationship exists between written workplace violence policy and workplace violence.

Table 60

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal	Phi	-.189	.042
by			
Nominal	Cramer's V	.189	.042
N of Valid Cases		116	

Harassment Policies and Workplace Violence

While no relationship seems to exist between having a harassment policy and the following types of workplace violence from the HR directors' perspective: terror attack, homicide, physical violence, rape, threat, psychological violence and overall workplace violence, a relationship has been found between having a harassment policy and HR directors' perception of workplace harassment. Workplace harassment is a systematic conscious likely more to be affected by policies.

Inspection of the crosstabulation table shows that, as the human resources and personnel director perceptions moved from workplace violence as “no problem” to workplace violence as “a serious problem”, the likelihood increased that a policy for harassment prevention existed. As shown in Table 61, the P value (0.002) is very low, which indicates there is a relationship between the two variables.

Table 61

Harassment Policy and Workplace Harassment Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	14.559*	3	.002
Likelihood Ratio	11.030	3	.012
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.050	1	.044
N of Valid Cases	116		

\*5 cells (25.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .28.

In the following Table 62, the value of Phi ( $\Phi V = -.321$ ;  $p = .001$ ) indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between having a harassment policy and workplace harassment of any kind. Based on the Phi value, there is negative moderate correlation between the two variables. Therefore, I reject the null hypothesis ( $H_03$ ) saying there is no relationship between the two variables.

Interestingly enough, there was no relationship between having a written workplace violence policy or program and HR directors’ perception of workplace violence. Yet, there was a relationship between this policy and workplace harassment as a type of violence. Also, there was a significant negative relationship between having harassment policy and HR directors’ perception of workplace harassment. So,

the perception of the seriousness or the level of workplace harassment declined whenever there was a harassment policy, or it was included in the workplace violence prevention policy. Over 93% of respondents stated they have a harassment policy that prohibits harassment of any kind and 85.3% stated they have developed a written workplace violence prevention policy. However, this influence is weak since only 3.4% of respondents said that harassment is not a problem in their workplaces.

Table 62  
Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal	Phi	-.321	.001
by			
Nominal	Cramer's V	.321	.001
N of Valid Cases		116	

#### Zero Tolerance Policy and Workplace Violence

The analysis failed to find a relationship between zero tolerance policies and HR directors' perception of any type of workplace violence. Thus, I accept the null hypothesis ( $H_04$ ) saying there is no relationship between the two variables.

There may be several reasons no relationship was found between such policies and the perception of HR directors of workplace violence. One may be that a person acting violently is not completely rational at the moment. This is particularly true of physical violence. Incidents may escalate into violence, without premeditation. The perpetrator may not be considering consequences. Zero tolerance policies promise



punishment, but at that moment the perpetrator is only considering his or her own anger or pain. Also, Zero tolerance policies also have little meaning for terrorists and those bent on killing with premeditation. When dealing with felonies, where legal sanctions are greater, office policies tend to have little significance. In addition, there is no unified definition of zero tolerance policy or as Greengard stated “zero tolerance means different things to different people” (1999, p. 28). As a result two organizations with the same policy might deal with a problem in radically different ways. Zero tolerance policy is a concept that sounds straightforward and simple, but is inherently complex.

#### Risk Assessment Team and Workplace Violence

Again no relationship was found between having a risk assessment team and HR directors’ perception of any type of workplace violence. However, a very close connection between risk assessment and psychological types of violence ( $p = 0.05$ ) seems to exist, but this connection falls short of being significant. As a result of this analysis, I cannot accept the study hypothesis (H<sub>5</sub>) saying there is a relationship between the two variables.

#### Security Systems and Workplace Violence

While no connection between security systems and HR directors’ perception of the level of workplace homicide, rape, harassment, psychological violence and the overall (all types of) workplace violence, a relationship does seem to exist between security systems and each of the HR directors’ perception of the following workplace violence types: terror attack or threat of terror attack, physical violence, and threat.

Therefore, I reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) saying no relationship exists between implementation of security systems by city governments and workplace violence.

Phi values for the relationship between security system and HR directors' perception of terror attack, physical violence and threat, respectively -.207, -.206, -.243, indicate to a weak negative relationships. In other words, HR directors view security system as a factor in influencing these types of violence.

Security Systems and Terror Attack. In Table 63, the low significance values indicate that there is a relationship between the two variables. The ordinal symmetric measures in Table 64 indicate the significance, strength and direction of the relationship. The relationship is weak and negative. Accordingly, there is a statistically strong negative relationship between security systems and physical violence in the workplace.

Table 63

Security System and Terror Attack Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.963	1	.026		
Continuity Correction*	4.071	1	.044		
Likelihood Ratio	5.001	1	.025		
Fisher's Exact Test				.035	.022
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.920	1	.027		
N of Valid Cases	116				

\* 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 14.70.

One explanation for this finding might be that HR directors did, however, feel that security had reduced the perceived threat of terrorism. It was noted that in a number of cities, security measures specifically targeted to prevent terrorism were implemented after September 11, 2001. Immediately following September 11, American cities implemented an employee I.D. program, security guards at parking gates and building entrances, remote cameras, closed buildings and provided visitor escorts, among other measures.

Table 64  
Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal	Phi	-.207	.026
by			
Nominal	Cramer's V	.207	.026
N of Valid Cases		116	

Security Systems and Physical Violence. Table 64 exhibits the low value of Chi-Square ( $p = .027$ ), which indicates that there is a relationship between the two variables. This relation is significant not only at the one-tailed test ( $p = .027$ ) but also at the two-tailed test ( $p = .048$ ). The symmetric measures in Table 65 show the value of Phi and Cramer's V. According to this table, the relationship between the variables is statistically significant. However, this relationship moves in opposite directions. Therefore, the analysis found a negative significant relationship between security systems and physical types of violence as perceived by HR directors.

There are several possibilities for this relationship. When security measures are available, physical violence tends to decrease in the workplace or to be exact the perception of HR directors of the physical violence. This may be a factor of visibility, the violent acts may simply not occur in front of a security guard or camera. Or, employees may feel safer if they can ask for an escort, or call on security when feeling threatened. HR directors may also perceive that more incidents are defused by the actual presence of security guards or the threat of using security guards before they escalate. By handling security internally, incidents can be downplayed and there is lesser need to call on outside authorities.

Table 65

Security Systems and Physical Violence Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.906	1	.027		
Continuity Correction*	3.880	1	.049		
N of Valid Cases	116				

\* 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.48.

Table 66

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	-.206	.027
	Cramer's V	.206	.027
N of Valid Cases		116	

Security systems and threat. The Chi-Square value (or  $X^2$ ) is significantly low (.009), which indicates a connection between having security systems and verbal or written violence threat from the HR directors' perspective. Also, the symmetric measures table shows a weak negative significant relationship between the two variables ( $\phi = -.243$ ).

Table 67

Security Systems and Threat Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.829*	1	.009
Continuity Correction	5.147	1	.023
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.770	1	.009
N of Valid Cases	116		

\* 1 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.21.

Table 68

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	-.243	.009
	Cramer's V	.243	.009
N of Valid Cases		116	

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and Workplace Violence

According to the tables below, the study found a relationship between employee assistance programs and rape at workplace from HR directors' perspective.

However the data analysis proves no relationship exists between employee assistance programs and other types of workplace violence as perceived by HR directors. The value of Chi-Square is less than 0.05 (.030), which shows a connection between the variables.

Table 69

Employee Assistance Program and Rape Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.964	3	.030
Likelihood Ratio	4.418	3	.220
N of Valid Cases	116		

Table 70 demonstrates that the association between employee assistance programs and HR directors' perception of rape at work is statistically significant and weak ( $\Phi = .278$ ). Although the nature of the relationship between employee assistance programs and workplace rape was fairly weak, I reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) saying there is no relationship between employee assistance programs and workplace violence.

This relationship between EAP and rapes may be evidence of the enhanced role that the EAP programs are playing in other aspects of an employee's non-work life -such as domestic violence and other family problems (Zarkin, Bray & Karuntoz, 2001). Rape tends to be the one type of workplace violence that is not an outgrowth of the traditional public workplace such as office buildings where large numbers of

people work together for long hours, unlike harassment, threats, and psychological violence. Even homicide and physical attack are generally motivated by workplace-generated problems involving co-worker interaction. Rape is situational issue not organizational. As discussed earlier, when the workplace is not secure (a visiting nurse or social worker going to a residence) the employee's safety is no longer under the direct control of the employer.

Table 70

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal	Phi	.278	.030
by			
Nominal	Cramer's V	.278	.030
N of Valid Cases		116	

Workplace Violence Incidents Tracking System and Workplace Violence

The study failed to find a connection between having workplace violence incidents tracking and reporting systems and HR directors' perception of the level of workplace violence. Thus, I accept the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) saying there is no relationship between the two variables.

Emergency Response Team and Workplace Violence

Similar to the previous component, the study failed to find a relationship between the existence of an emergency response team or crisis management team and

HR directors' perception of the level of any type of workplace violence. Hence, I accept the null hypothesis ( $H_09$ ) saying no relation exists between the two variables.

Counseling Services for Violent Incidents Victims and Witnesses and Workplace Violence

Chi-Square tests showed no relationship between counseling services for workplace violence victims and witnesses and HR directors' perception of the following types of workplace violence; terror attack, homicide, physical and psychological types of violence, rape, or with the overall workplace violence. However, the Chi-Square value (.036) indicates a connection between counseling services provided by city government to victims and witnesses of workplace violence incidents and HR directors' perception of workplace harassment of any kind. As a result, I cannot accept the null hypothesis ( $H_010$ ) saying there is no connection between the counseling services and workplace violence.

Table 71  
Counseling Services and Workplace Violence Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.411*	1	.036
Continuity Correction	2.360	1	.124
Likelihood Ratio	3.867	1	.049
N of Valid Cases	116		

\*\*2 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.14.

In Table 72, despite that the relationship between the variables is statistically significant ( $p = .036$ ), the value of Phi (-.195) indicates that this relation is weak and



negative. In other words, human resources directors tend to view counseling services for victims and witnesses as a preventative method that affects workplace harassment.

Table 72

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	-.195	.036
	Cramer's V	.195	.036
N of Valid Cases		116	

Government Utilization of all Available Resources and Workplace Violence

No connection exists between city government's utilization of the available resources to prevent violence and HR directors perception of any type of workplace violence. Accordingly, I accept the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and reject the study hypothesis claiming the existence of such a relationship.

But the question remains: Why did the study fail to prove more relationships between workplace violence, as perceived by HR directors, and city government components of prevention plans? First, due to the relatively low number of responses ( $N=116$ ) and the nature of the data collected (nominal level data), the majority of the minimum expected frequencies were very small. Because the calculation of Chi-Square involves divisions by these expected cell frequencies, the value of Chi-Square became greatly inflated ( $>0.05$ ). In the few cases where the level of significance was low ( $<0.05$ ), relationships were proven to exist. Although the researcher tried to recode the data collected, no major changes occurred.

The findings of this section of the study do not contradict the literature reviewed. In their study of the relationship between city and county prevention policies and programs and workplace violence, Waugh and Nigro (1998b) found a relationship between the two variables. However, the relationship was not strong even though the number of responses exceeded by fourfold the current study ( $n = 471$ ). Also, the researchers did not specify whether the proven relationship (s) was statistically significant between workplace violence polices and all types of workplace violence, or only with one or more type.

Additionally, the use of security systems still rises above all other methods of workplace violence prevention. The study found relationships between security systems and the HR directors' perception of three types of workplace violence. Human resources directors and city governments in general seems to have greater confidence in security systems and their effectiveness in preventing and reducing workplace violence.

#### Human Resources Management Functions and Workplace Violence

The study failed to find a relationship between three human resources functions (job analysis and design process, disciplinary policies, and the importance of employee safety to human resources and personnel departments) and HR directors' perception of workplace violence. However, relationships have been statistically proven between workplace violence from HR perceptive and the majority of human resources functions. These functions include: hiring process, training and

development, performance evaluation process, incentives and compensation systems, termination and layoff processes, and grievance and complaint systems.

#### Job Analysis and Workplace Violence

According to the correlation table of job analysis or job design and perceived workplace violence types, the level of significance is larger than 0.05 in all cases. But, job descriptions include requirements for job-related interpersonal behaviors as an independent variable and overall workplace violence, where the p-value is .033.

It is worth mentioning that with the same independent variable, three dependent variables fell short of having a significant relationship to them; harassment, terror attack and psychological violence, where p-values were .070, .081 and .094 respectively. Despite the relationship between one element of the job design process and HR directors' perception of overall workplace violence, I accept the null hypothesis. Generally, because the significance level is relatively large ( $>0.05$ ), the correlation is not significant and the variables are not linearly related. Therefore, it is very difficult to accept the study hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) saying there is no relation between job description -as an HR function- and workplace violence.

Increasing the number of elements related to job design and analysis process may increase the likelihood of finding more relations with workplace violence. Also, the researcher suggests that involving intermediate variables such as job dissatisfaction, organizational changes, and job performance, which have a direct relation with job analysis according to the previous literature, may alter the results.

Table 73

## Job Analysis and Workplace Violence Spearman's Rho Correlations

Independent Variables		Job descriptions focus on observable and measurable behaviors	Job descriptions include requirements for job-related interpersonal behavior
Job descriptions focus on observable and measurable behaviors	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.410**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	116	116
Job descriptions include requirements for job- related interpersonal behavior	Correlation Coefficient	.410**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	116	116
Terror attack or threat of terror attack	Correlation Coefficient	.133	.163
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.155	.081
	N	116	116
Homicide	Correlation Coefficient	-.033	.058
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.728	.535
	N	116	116
Physical attack/assault	Correlation Coefficient	.030	.084
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.749	.372
	N	116	116
Rape	Correlation Coefficient	.104	.112
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.266	.230
	N	116	116
Harassment (sexual, racial, religious, etc.)	Correlation Coefficient	.075	.169
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.426	.070
	N	116	116
Threat (verbal or written)	Correlation Coefficient	.054	.132
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.567	.159
	N	116	116
Psychological violence (humiliation, bullying, etc.)	Correlation Coefficient	.049	.156
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.602	.094
	N	116	116
Overall workplace violence (all types)	Correlation Coefficient	.119	.198*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.202	.033
	N	116	116

\* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

### Hiring Process and Workplace Violence

The study found a relationship between some of the hiring processes elements and some types of workplace violence. As illustrated in correlation Table 74, a significant relationship was found between checking personal and professional references and inquiries about any prior incidents of violence and HR directors' perception of workplace violence. The significance levels or p-value between this independent variable and terror attack, homicide, verbal and written threats, and overall workplace violence are less than 0.05 (consecutively, .008, .034, .013, .032).

Also, there is a relationship between conducting thorough background checks as a major human resources function and HR directors' perception of overall workplace violence (all types) where the p-value is .005. In other words, the greater the perception of the extent of the workplace violence problem, the more often human resources departments conduct preemployment background checks. It is no longer acceptable to hire an employee based solely on a provided résumé or vitae.

In fact, if false hiring occurs, the liability rests squarely on the shoulders of the human resources department. The expectation is that by conducting thorough background and records checks, as well as checking personal and professional references, those individuals most prone to violence (especially those who have acted violently in the past) will not become part of the organizational community (Messmer, 2000; Rohlander, 1999; DiLorenzo & Carroll, 1995).

Table 74

Hiring Process and Workplace Violence Spearman's Rho Correlations

Variables		Terror Attack	Homicide	Physical Attack	Rape	Harassment	Threat	Psychological Violence	Overall WV (All Types)
HRD reviews job applications carefully	Correlation Coefficient	.112	.043	.105	.058	.085	.149	-.017	.146
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.232	.646	.260	.534	.363	.110	.857	.117
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
HRD compares résumés and applications	Correlation Coefficient	.065	.055	.161	.012	.071	.171	.025	.115
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.487	.557	.084	.896	.447	.067	.788	.219
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
HRD contacts former employers and verify academic records	Correlation Coefficient	.054	.104	.085	.147	.048	.054	-.096	.065
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.566	.265	.362	.115	.607	.562	.305	.485
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
HRD checks personal and professional references	Correlation Coefficient	.245**	.197**	.153	.164	.149	.230*	.069	.199*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.034	.101	.078	.110	.013	.459	.032
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
HRD conducts thorough background checks	Correlation Coefficient	.144	.082	.162	.108	.078	.152	.076	.256**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.124	.382	.082	.247	.403	.103	.416	.005
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
Job interviews focus on job-related behavioral issues	Correlation Coefficient	.079	-.043	.067	.050	.126	.150	.098	.157
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.402	.646	.478	.591	.179	.108	.294	.093
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
City departments conduct behavioral tests	Correlation Coefficient	.005	-.075	-.024	.002	.009	.107	.116	.051
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.961	.423	.796	.979	.920	.251	.215	.584
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116

Table 74—Continued

Variables		Terror Attack	Homicide	Physical Attack	Rape	Harassment	Threat	Psychological Violence	Overall WV (All Types)
All prospective employees must take drug-screening tests	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.017 .856 116	-.097 .301 116	-.071 .446 116	.048 .607 116	-.132 .157 116	-.076 .415 116	-.042 .656 116	.050 .592 116
HRD staff cooperates with other organizations	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.073 .435 116	.154 .099 116	.029 .759 116	.147 .116 116	-.030 .747 116	.069 .465 116	.023 .809 116	.134 .151 116
Using employee assessment during the probationary period to correct hiring mistakes	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.069 .462 116	.083 .376 116	.135 .147 116	.075 .421 116	.063 .499 116	.170 .069 116	.075 .426 116	.004 .968 116
City pre-employment screening processes comply with all applicable laws	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.033 .723 116	-.003 .974 116	.121 .195 116	.067 .475 116	-.026 .785 116	.058 .536 116	.052 .578 116	.186* .046 116
HRD gives prospective employee accurate information about the job future	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.011 .906 116	-.002 .980 116	-.037 .695 116	-.052 .582 116	-.064 .498 116	.019 .838 116	-.045 .628 116	.008 .934 116

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Similarly, the low significance level between HR usage of employee assessment during the probationary period to correct hiring mistakes and perceived overall workplace violence ( $p = .046$ ) proved a significant relationship between the two variables. By using the measure of association Gamma, the same findings were produced, however a significant relationship between city preemployment screening processes complying with all applicable laws (independent variable) and perceived verbal and written threat at workplace ( $p = .045$ ) was found.

The correlation coefficient values ranged from .186 and .256, which indicate to weak positive relationship between these variables.

As a result, since several elements of the hiring process have a relationship with workplace violence, I reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$  13) saying there is no relationship between the selection and hiring process and workplace violence.

#### Training and Development Process and Workplace Violence

Training on causes of workplace violence, leadership and communication skills, stress management, warning signs recognitions, careful termination processes and training on conducting effective and fair performance reviews proved to have a significant relationship with different types of workplace violence as perceived by HR directors. The study proposed 11 elements of training programs thought to be necessary for a successful workplace prevention plan. Six of these training programs have statistically significant relations with different types of workplace violence. Accordingly, I reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ 14) claiming no relationship between training programs and workplace violence. Table 75 shows these results.



Table 75

Training and Development Process and Workplace Violence Spearman's Rho Correlations

Variables		Terror Attack	Homicide	Physical Attack	Rape	Harassment	Threat	Psychological Violence	Overall WV (All Types)
Training Employees on City Violence Prevention Plan	Correlation Coefficient	-.040	.006	-.015	.042	-.057	-.057	-.088	.030
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.668	.953	.872	.654	.545	.544	.345	.750
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
Training on Causes of Workplace Violence	Correlation Coefficient	-.188*	-.076	-.198*	-.024	-.127	-.156	-.226*	-.137
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.048	.418	.047	.795	.173	.096	.015	.143
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
Training on Workplace Dispute Resolutions	Correlation Coefficient	-.060	.018	-.015	.019	-.052	.000	-.079	-.043
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.521	.850	.874	.844	.582	.997	.398	.650
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
Training on Leadership and Communication Skills	Correlation Coefficient	-.051	-.127	-.109	-.190*	-.107	-.041	-.153	-.124
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.584	.174	.244	.041	.251	.665	.101	.186
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
Training on Stress Management	Correlation Coefficient	-.025	-.112	-.132	-.187*	-.176	-.043	-.198*	-.185*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.789	.233	.159	.045	.059	.648	.033	.049
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
Training on Violence Warning Signs Recognition	Correlation Coefficient	.032	.112	-.012	-.198*	.029	.045	-.009	.054
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.731	.232	.901	.033	.753	.632	.924	.567
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
Training on Handling Violent Incidents	Correlation Coefficient	.003	.044	.042	.097	.056	.047	.013	.043
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.972	.640	.654	.302	.553	.616	.893	.645
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116

Table 75—Continued

Variables		Terror Attack	Homicide	Physical Attack	Rape	Harassment	Threat	Psychological Violence	Overall WV (All Types)
Training on Diversity Issues and Equitable Treatment	Correlation Coefficient	-.082	-.036	.066	.008	-.121	-.089	-.142	-.061
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.380	.703	.480	.931	.195	.344	.128	.519
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
Training on Documenting and Reporting Workplace Violence Incidents	Correlation Coefficient	-.093	.049	.036	.016	.048	.032	-.101	.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.320	.598	.703	.866	.610	.734	.281	.598
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
Training on Conducting Safe Employee Termination	Correlation Coefficient	-.003	-.012	.053	-.036	.081	.045	.050	.189*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.972	.896	.571	.698	.387	.630	.594	.042
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
Training on Conducting Effective and Fair Performance Review	Correlation Coefficient	.036	.072	.026	.042	.050	.079	.040	.219*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.700	.445	.783	.651	.592	.400	.669	.018
	N	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116

\* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Training on the causes of workplace violence. The analysis found a connection between training city employees on the risk factors and causes of workplace violence (dependent variable) and HR directors' perception of terror attack, physical, and psychological types of workplace violence (independent variables). The Spearman's correlations coefficient for training programs on causes of violence and terror attack, physical violence and psychological violence are -.188, -.198, -.226 respectively. This indicates that the variables are negatively correlated and the relationships are weak. Since the significance levels are less than 0.05 (respectively 0.048, .047, and .015), then correlations are significant and the variables are linearly related.

Training on leadership and communication skills. Data analysis revealed a significant relationship between training on leadership and communication skills and HR directors' perception of rape ( $p = .041$ ). However, the Spearman's correlation coefficient for both variables is relatively far from 1. This indicates that training on leadership and communication skills and rape are negatively correlated and the relationship is weak.

Training on stress management. This independent variable had a statistically significant relationship with HR directors' perception of rape, psychological violence and overall workplace violence ( $p$  values = .045, .033, and .049).

The Spearman's correlation coefficient indicated that the variables are negatively correlated. However the relationships are weak because they ranged from (-.176 and -.198). Also, stress management training programs had a negative

relationship with perceived harassment, however this relation is not significant because the p-value is higher than 0.05 (0.059).

Training on workplace violence warning signs recognition. The negative relationship between training on warning signs and homicide fell short of being significant because the p-value is 0.065. However, a weak significant relationship between this type of training and HR directors' perception of rape was found. The significance level of this correlation is .033 and the Spearman's correlation coefficient indicates the negative direction of this relation.

Training on conducting safe employee termination. The analysis found a significant weak relationship between this independent variable and HR directors' perception of overall workplace violence (all types). This relation is significant at the .042 level.

Training on conducting effective and fair performance reviews. Similarly, overall workplace violence (all types), as perceived by HR directors, had another significant relation with training on conducting effective and fair performance evaluations. The significance level of this correlation is .018. But since the correlation coefficient value is less than .30, then the relationship is weak.

To explain these results, Employee training on causes of workplace violence is negatively associated with human resources perception of the extent of workplace violence against city government employees. This means that the more often employee training is provided, the safer the workplace becomes, according to human resources managers. Training on causes of workplace violence, stress management,

and violence early warning signs recognition, all are associated with less workplace violence.

Interestingly, training of managers in leadership and communications is specifically related to a perceived decline in the level of workplace rape. A decline in workplace rape is also associated with training in stress management and early warning signs recognition. It appears that training helps management become aware of the seriousness of these issues, as well as better able to recognize warning signs and defuse violence. As a result, the workplace environment is perceived as being safer, with fewer incidents of violence.

Training on stress management also negatively affects psychological violence and overall violence. Training of line managers and supervisors is perceived to help reduce overall workplace violence. Therefore, according to this research, training on every aspect of workplace violence positively affects the workplace environment, making it appear safer. Education and training affect the manager's perception of their ability to recognize problems, provides them with a template for dealing with volatile situations, and helps defuse potential violence. It provides the employee with an understanding of what constitutes violence and other inappropriate activities.

Communication and knowledge are key tools for human resources departments, as evidenced in the other positive relationships with violence policies discussed earlier.

As reported by the 300 respondents to The Institute of Management and Administration (IOMA) survey, supervisor training seems to lead directly to

reductions in employee-on-employee violence. Among the organizations that train supervisors to identify and address troubled workers, 20.2% reduced the number of violent incidents between employees. Only 17.9% of companies that do not conduct such training have been able to cut these incidents. Providing workplace violence training to all employees as opposed to just supervisors seems to make an even bigger difference. About 22% of organizations that provided more extensive training reduced employee-on-employee violence, compared to 15.7% of companies that do not provide such training (IOMA, 2002).

#### Performance Evaluation Processes and Workplace Violence

According to the correlation table, all the values of the correlation coefficient between the variables of performance evaluation process and perceived workplace violence are positive which indicate the positive direction of the relationship. The significance levels of the correlation between fair treatment (independent variable), and HR directors' perception of terror attack, homicide, physical violence, rape, and threat (dependent variables) are larger than 0.05 which indicate the correlations are not significant and the variables are not linearly related. However, p-values between fair treatment and both psychological violence and overall workplace violence are relatively small (.018, .031 respectively), so the correlation is significant but the relationship is weak since the values of the correlation coefficient ranged between .10 and .30.

To conclude, while no relationship seems to exist between fair treatment and the first six types of workplace violence, a positive relationship was found between

fair treatment and overall workplace violence (all types), and between fair treatment and psychological violence.

Table 76

Performance Evaluation and Workplace Violence Spearman's Rho Correlations

Variables		Fair Treatment	Handling Poor Performance Effectively
City employees feel fairly treated and respected	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.450**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	116	116
HRD and other city individual departments handle poor performance directly, constructively, and on time	Correlation Coefficient	.450**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	116	116
Terror Attack or threat of terror attack	Correlation Coefficient	.050	.117
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.597	.211
	N	116	116
Homicide	Correlation Coefficient	.052	.071
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.582	.450
	N	116	116
Physical attack/assault	Correlation Coefficient	.131	.147
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.160	.116
	N	116	116
Rape	Correlation Coefficient	.068	.087
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.466	.354
	N	116	116
Harassment (sexual, racial, religious, etc.)	Correlation Coefficient	.104	.150
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.268	.108
	N	116	116
Threat (verbal or written)	Correlation Coefficient	.160	.243**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.086	.009
	N	116	116
Psychological violence (humiliation, bullying, etc.)	Correlation Coefficient	.220*	.207*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.018	.026
	N	116	116
Overall workplace violence (all types)	Correlation Coefficient	.201*	.236*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	.011
	N	116	116

\* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

According to the data analysis, effective handling of poor employee performance had no significant relationship with HR directors' perception of terror attack, homicide, physical violence, rape, and harassment. However a positive relationship had been found between this variable and the remaining violence types.

The small p-values of the correlation between effective handling of poor performance and threat (.002), psychological violence (.031), and overall workplace violence (.011), indicate a significant correlation and thus these variables are linearly related. However, the correlation coefficient values for these variables, respectively .243, .207 and .236, indicate that the relationships are weak. But, since the study found a relationship between the performance evaluation process and some types of workplace violence, we must reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) that no relationship between the two variables exists.

#### Incentive and Compensation Systems and Workplace Violence

The study failed to find any relation between the two components of incentive and compensation systems and HR directors' perception of any types of workplace violence. These two variables are: 1) workers' compensation covers employee injuries resulting from workplace violence incidents, and 2) city has developed other means to acknowledge and reward outstanding employee performance. The researcher assumes that a survey targeting only victimized employees or victims of workplace violence may produce different results with regard to the relation between workers' compensation systems and workplace violence.



Table 77

## Incentives and Compensation Systems and Workplace Violence Spearman's Rho Correlations

Variables		Fair and effective compensation system	Workers' compensation covers violence injuries	Fair and Equitable Promotions	Other rewarding methods
Fair & effective compensation system	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.273**	.630**	.396**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.003	.000	.000
	N	116	116	116	116
Workers' compensation covers violence injuries	Correlation Coefficient	.273**	1.000	.164	.182
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.	.079	.051
	N	116	116	116	116
Fair and Equitable Promotions	Correlation Coefficient	.630**	.164	1.000	.544**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.079	.	.000
	N	116	116	116	116
Other Rewarding Methods	Correlation Coefficient	.396**	.182	.544**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.051	.000	.
	N	116	116	116	116
Terror attack or threat of terror attack	Correlation Coefficient	.073	.118	.130	-.066
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.433	.205	.164	.481
	N	116	116	116	116
Homicide	Correlation Coefficient	.033	.057	.126	-.059
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.724	.545	.178	.529
	N	116	116	116	116
Physical attack/assault	Correlation Coefficient	.111	.015	.307**	.071
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.237	.872	.001	.452
	N	116	116	116	116
Rape	Correlation Coefficient	.081	.109	.151	.014
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.387	.244	.106	.879
	N	116	116	116	116
Harassment (sexual, racial, religious, etc.)	Correlation Coefficient	.144	.010	.241**	.065
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.124	.914	.009	.491
	N	116	116	116	116
Threat (verbal or written)	Correlation Coefficient	.233*	-.028	.330**	.030
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	.769	.000	.749
	N	116	116	116	116
Psychological violence	Correlation Coefficient	.258**	-.093	.213*	.012
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.319	.021	.896
	N	116	116	116	116
Overall workplace violence	Correlation Coefficient	.230*	.034	.260**	.053
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	.720	.005	.571
	N	116	116	116	116

\* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Not finding a significant relationship between workplace violence and city methods to reward outstanding employees may implicitly indicate that those employees are not considered a source of violence in the organizations. Also, it may indicate that those people (outstanding employees) use the available legitimate channels of communications to voice their claims and express their complaint against the organization's decisions.

Significant positive relationships between recognizing compensation system as fair and effective by employees and HR directors' perception of threat, psychological and overall workplace violence were found. The low significance values and the Spearman's rho correlations coefficient exhibit that these relationships are moderate with physical violence and threat ( $r > .30$ ), and weak with harassment and overall workplace violence ( $r = .241$ ). The analysis produced another group of fairly positively strong relationships between employee's recognition of the fairness of promotions and workplace violence.

Two of the three strongest correlations within this study occurred between having fair and equitable promotions, and what is perceived as a higher level of threat of violence and physical types violence within the organization. The use of threats tends to be a natural precursor to violence. According to the Behavior theories discussed in chapter 2, if a threat works once to obtain a promotion, for instance, then the employee is more likely to repeat the behavior and follow that same pattern in the future. It would also appear that wages and promotions, in the government sector, which are often mandated by civil service laws, could correlate more directly with an

impersonal system that causes someone to take the next logical step of violence as a way of making a difference.

The significance levels of the relations between these variables are relatively low (consecutively .001, .009, .000, .021, .005). Thus, the correlations are statistically significant and the variables are linearly related. Accordingly, I cannot accept the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ 16) stating no relationship between incentives and compensation systems and workplace violence.

#### Disciplinary Policies and Procedures and Workplace Violence

As shown in the correlation table, p-values are larger than .05, thus there no single significant relationship was found between the statement that disciplinary actions in city departments are in line with city ordinances and state and federal regulations, and city employees know that all violent threats are taken seriously (as independent variables) and any type of workplace violence as perceived by HR directors. Therefore, I accept the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ 17) claiming no relationship between disciplinary procedures and workplace violence.

Notably, lowering the level of the data collected from ordinal to nominal produced three significant relationships between the variables by using the same measure of association. The researcher recoded the perceived level of workplace violence against city employees from a 5-point scale to two: workplace violence a problem or not a problem. By running Chi-Square and Spearman's rho tests, several relationships revealed to be significant existed; legality of the disciplinary process (independent variable) and harassment (dependent variable), and taking threats of

violence seriously (independent variable) and psychological violence, and overall violence (as the dependent variables).

Table 78

Disciplinary Policies and Procedures and Workplace Violence Correlations

Dependent Variables		Disciplinary actions comply with applicable laws	All workplace violence threats are taken seriously
Spearman's Rho	Disciplinary actions comply with applicable laws	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	1.000 .527** .000 116
	All workplace violence threats are taken seriously	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.527** .000 116
	Terror attack or threat of terror attack	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.020 .831 116
	Homicide	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.062 .507 116
	Physical attack/assault	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.116 .214 116
	Rape	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.088 .347 116
	Harassment (sexual, racial, religious, etc.)	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.079 .401 116
	Threat (verbal or written)	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.097 .302 116
	Psychological violence (humiliation, bullying, etc.)	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.096 .308 116
	Overall workplace violence (all types)	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.141 .131 116

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Despite these findings, accepting the null hypothesis rescued the researcher from committing Type I Error--the worst possible error. This error occur when a researcher accept the null hypothesis and reject the research hypothesis without

enough and strong evidence from the data analyzed. In other words, the data do not support this conclusion and a researcher mistakenly concludes there is a relationship although there is none (Meier & Brudney, 1997).

#### Termination and Layoff Processes and Workplace Violence

No significant relationship was found between ensuring the legality and fairness of layoff decisions and HR directors' perception of workplace violence. Implementing an open door policy regarding layoff issues by informing city employees of city layoff and job cut plans had a significant relationship with physical attack, threat, and overall workplace violence. The levels of significance for these relations are .012, .015, and .024 respectively. The Spearman's rho correlations coefficient values (.234, .226, and .210) indicate that these relations are positive but weak.

Also, a significant relationship between conducting humane layoffs and termination processes and overall workplace violence (all types) was found. However it was a weak relationship too since r-value is .194 as shown in Table 79.

Additionally, the analysis revealed the existence of significant relationships between employee outplacement strategies for laid-off employees and not only HR directors' perception of physical attack and assault, but also threat and overall workplace violence. The low significance of each correlation coefficient as displayed in the correlation Table 78, led to the conclusion that the correlations are significant and the variables are linearly related.

Table 79

## Layoff and Termination Processes and Workplace Violence Spearman's Rho Correlations

Variables		Informing City Employees of Layoffs and Job Cuts	HRD Ensures Fair and Legal Layoff Plans Decisions	Humane Layoffs and Termination Process	Employee Outplacement Strategies
Informing city employees of layoff and Job Cut plans	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.456**	.542**	.508**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	116	116	116	116
HRD ensures fair and legal layoff decisions	Correlation Coefficient	.456**	1.000	.672**	.542**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	116	116	116	116
Humane layoffs and terminations process	Correlation Coefficient	.542**	.672**	1.000	.789**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	116	116	116	116
Employees outplacement strategies	Correlation Coefficient	.508**	.542**	.789**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	116	116	116	116
Terror attack or threat of terror attack	Correlation Coefficient	-.009	.019	.025	.029
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.925	.836	.786	.757
	N	116	116	116	116
Homicide	Correlation Coefficient	.124	.122	.054	.079
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.185	.191	.564	.400
	N	116	116	116	116
Physical attack/assault	Correlation Coefficient	.234*	.136	.157	.208*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	.146	.092	.025
	N	116	116	116	116
Rape	Correlation Coefficient	.171	.158	.079	.078
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.067	.091	.402	.403
	N	116	116	116	116
Harassment (sexual, racial, religious, etc.)	Correlation Coefficient	.157	.039	.106	.085
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.092	.675	.257	.366
	N	116	116	116	116
Threat (verbal or written)	Correlation Coefficient	.226*	.094	.106	.197*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.315	.259	.034
	N	116	116	116	116
Psychological violence (Humiliation, etc.)	Correlation Coefficient	.166	.120	.109	.077
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.075	.200	.244	.409
	N	116	116	116	116
Overall workplace violence	Correlation Coefficient	.210*	.181	.194*	.185*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.024	.052	.037	.046
	N	116	116	116	116

\* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

The significant levels of these relations are: .025, .034, and .046, which indicate that the variables are also significantly positively correlated. Based on these findings that support the research hypothesis, I reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ 18), which denies the existence of a relationship between layoffs and termination process and HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

It is important to mention that, the questionnaire asked human resources directors to state whether they have humane layoff and termination processes. It would be expected that most would say their processes were humane. Most also had employment outplacement strategies. Yet, there was a positive correlation to workplace violence. This is probably an artifact related to the issues of termination and layoffs, more than the strategies used to handle them.

#### Grievance and Complaint Systems and Workplace Violence

The study found no relationship between publicizing grievance and complaint procedures and workplace violence. The significance values of the correlations are higher than .005.

A significant relationship between swift grievance and complaint actions and a functional grievance system (independent variables), and workplace violence (dependent variable) was found as illustrated in Table 80. Swift actions had positive relationships with physical attacks, threat, and overall workplace violence. Also, a functional grievance and complaint processes was proven to have a weak positive relationship with HR directors' perception of physical attack and threat. Accordingly, I reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ 19), claiming no relationship between the variables.

Table 80  
Grievance and Complaint Systems and Workplace Violence Spearman's Rho  
Correlations

Variables		Publicizing Grievance and Complaint Systems	Swift Grievance and Complaint Actions	Functioning Grievance and Complaint Systems
Publicizing grievance and complaint systems	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.552**	.482**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
	N	116	116	116
Swift grievance and complaint actions	Correlation Coefficient	.552**	1.000	.585**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
	N	116	116	116
Functioning grievance and complaint systems	Correlation Coefficient	.482**	.585**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
	N	116	116	116
Terror attack or threat of terror attack	Correlation Coefficient	-.116	.035	-.007
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.214	.709	.940
	N	116	116	116
Homicide	Correlation Coefficient	.102	.123	.074
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.277	.188	.427
	N	116	116	116
Physical attack/assault	Correlation Coefficient	.151	.211*	.198*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.106	.023	.033
	N	116	116	116
Rape	Correlation Coefficient	.042	.091	.070
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.653	.329	.457
	N	116	116	116
Harassment (sexual, racial, religious, etc.)	Correlation Coefficient	.038	.122	.016
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.683	.190	.861
	N	116	116	116
Threat (verbal or written)	Correlation Coefficient	.089	.235*	.219*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.344	.011	.018
	N	116	116	116
Psychological violence	Correlation Coefficient	.030	.099	.009
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.749	.291	.926
	N	116	116	116
Overall workplace violence (all types)	Correlation Coefficient	.062	.195*	.143
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.509	.036	.126
	N	116	116	116

\* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).



The same duality as was discussed earlier in results of the termination and layoff processes, appears to be at work with HR director responses to the grievance and complaint system. While the human resources managers stated they have swift grievance and complaint actions and a functional grievance and complaint system, both of these strategies were associated with higher levels of threat, physical violence and overall workplace violence as perceived by the HR directors. Complaining and presenting grievances is the first step in what could eventually become a violent situation. The number of workplace killers who complained about mistreatment, misunderstanding or inequities, then chose to solve their problems via violence, is well documented.

So, human resources managers take grievances and complaints seriously. They may choose to follow up and treat the complaining individual as a potential problem. Complaints are a sign of unhappiness and any suggestion of dissatisfaction on the part of employees may lead to the perception of a less safe environment.

#### Importance of Employee Safety and Workplace Violence

According to correlation Table 81, the significance levels (p-values) of the relationship between the importance of employee safety to HR and workplace violence are relatively large (.346, .959, .735, .624, .972, .900, .661, .919). Thus, the correlation is not significant and the variables are not linearly related. Accordingly, I accept the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) saying no relationship exists between the importance of employee safety to human resources departments and HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

Table 81

Importance of Employee Safety to HR and Workplace Violence Spearman's Rho  
Correlations

Variables		Employee Safety is a core Issue for the HR Departments
Employee safety is a core issue for the Human Resources Departments	Correlation Coefficient	1.000**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.
	N	116
Terror attack or threat of terror attack	Correlation Coefficient	-.088
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.346
	N	116
Homicide	Correlation Coefficient	-.005
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.959
	N	116
Physical attack/assault	Correlation Coefficient	.032
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.735
	N	116
Rape	Correlation Coefficient	.046
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.624
	N	116
Harassment (sexual, racial, religious, etc.)	Correlation Coefficient	-.003
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.972
	N	116
Threat (verbal or written)	Correlation Coefficient	-.012
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.900
	N	116
Psychological violence (Humiliation, bullying, etc.)	Correlation Coefficient	-.041
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.661
	N	116
Overall workplace violence (all types)	Correlation Coefficient	.010
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.919
	N	116

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

To summarize, this study tested 416 relationships. While no relationships were proven to be significant between the majority of the variables, 55 relationships were found as shown in Table 82. As discussed earlier, only three correlations were moderate and the rest were weak relationships.

Table 82

Summary of the Tested Relationships

The Independent Variables		Dependent Variable	Strength and Direction of the Relationship
		HR Directors' Perception of Workplace Violence	
Number of City Government Employees or Size of City Government		Terror attack	Positive weak
		Physical assault	Positive weak
		Rape	Positive weak
		Harassment	Positive weak
		Threat	Positive weak
		Physical violence	Positive weak
		Overall workplace violence	Positive weak
City Government Preparedness Plan Components	<b>Workplace Violence Policy</b>	Harassment	Negative weak
	<b>Harassment Policy</b>	Harassment	<b>Negative moderate</b>
	<b>Security System</b>	Terror attack	Negative weak
		Physical violence	Negative weak
		Threat	Negative weak
	<b>Employee Assistance Program</b>	Rape	Positive weak
<b>Counseling Services</b>	Harassment	Negative weak	
Human Resources Management Functions	<b>Hiring Processes</b>		
	HRD checks personal and professional references	Terror attack	Positive weak
		Homicide	Positive weak
		Threat	Positive weak
		Overall workplace violence	Positive weak
	HRD conducts thorough background checks	Overall workplace violence	Positive weak
	City pre-employment comply with all applicable laws	Overall workplace violence	Positive weak
	<b>Training and Development Processes</b>		
	Training on causes of workplace violence	Terror attack	Negative weak
		Physical violence	Negative weak
		Psychological violence	Negative weak
	Training on leadership and communications	Rape	Negative weak
	Training on stress management	Rape	Negative weak
		Psychological violence	Negative weak
		Overall workplace violence	Negative weak

Table 82—Continued

Training on workplace violence early warning signs recognition	Rape	Negative weak
Training on termination and layoff	Overall workplace violence	Positive weak
Training on conducting fair performance evaluation	Overall workplace violence	Positive weak
<b>Performance Evaluation Processes</b>		
Fair treatment	Physical violence	Positive weak
	Overall workplace violence	Positive weak
Handling poor performance effectively	Threat	Positive weak
	Psychological violence	Positive weak
	Overall workplace violence	Positive weak
<b>Incentives and Compensations Processes</b>		
Fair and effective compensation systems	Threat	Positive weak
	Psychological violence	Positive weak
	Overall workplace violence	Positive weak
Fair and equitable promotions	Physical violence	<b>Positive Moderate</b>
	Harassment	Positive weak
	Threat	<b>Positive Moderate</b>
	Psychological violence	Positive weak
	Overall workplace violence	Positive weak
<b>Termination and Layoff Processes</b>		
Informing city employees of any layoff and job cut plans	Physical violence	Positive weak
	Threat	Positive weak
	Overall workplace violence	Positive weak
Humane layoff and termination	Overall workplace violence	Positive weak
Employee outplacement strategies	Physical violence	Positive weak
	Threat	Positive weak
	Overall workplace violence	Positive weak
<b>Grievance and Complaint Systems</b>		
Swift grievance and complaint actions	Physical violence	Positive weak
	Threat	Positive weak
	Overall workplace violence	Positive weak
Functional grievance and complaint system	Physical violence	Positive weak
	Threat	Positive weak

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter gives information pertaining to the findings of this research study. It also presents several recommendations to city governments in general, and human resources management in particular, on ways in which preventing workplace violence might be improved in their public agencies and departments. Finally, additional recommendations for further research and studies will be suggested.

This study investigated the workplace violence problem in the most populated cities in the United States, (those with more than 100,000 residents each) from the perspective of human resources or personnel directors. It probed the city governments and human resources or personnel departments' endeavors to combat this increasingly serious problem. The study established a theoretical model for organizations to follow to ensure safer public workplaces by encouraging them to move from violence-prone to violence-prepared. However, more effort needs to occur to transform these organizations from being just prepared to be very well prepared. The study suggested that the final goal of any organization is to be violence-free. However, this goal is far from agency reach, because achieving this end depends on external factors that organizations may have little influence over or may not be able to alter completely. Violence is, by human nature, often not rational or predictable. However, it can be anticipated and mitigated through planning and preparation.

The data collected from the survey was analyzed using a variety of statistical means. The findings are broken down into three categories: 1) demographic, 2) city government preparedness components, and 3) human resources functions. Figures, tables, and correlations were used to better illustrate the variables and the relationships.

### Summary of the Findings

The following findings resulted from the study:

#### I. Demographic

1. There was a significant relationship between number of city employees or the size of city governments and the human resources (HR) directors' perception of the level of workplace violence.

#### II. City Governments' Preparedness Plan Components

2. There was a significant relationship between written workplace violence policies and programs and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.
3. There was a significant relationship between having harassment policies that prohibit all kinds of harassment and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

4. No significant relationship was found between having zero tolerance policies toward violent acts and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence. As a result, the null hypothesis was accepted.
5. No significant relationship was found between having risk assessment teams and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence. Thus, the null hypothesis could not be refuted.
6. There was a significant relationship between cities which had security systems in place and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.
7. There was a significant relationship between employee assistance program (EAP) and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.
8. No significant relationship was discovered between having workplace incidents tracking and record keeping or reporting systems and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence. Therefore, we accepted the null and rejected the research hypothesis.
9. No significant relationship was supported by the data analysis between emergency response team or crisis management teams and post-event recovery plans and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence. Hence, the research hypothesis was rejected.
10. There was a significant relationship between counseling for workplace violence victims and witnesses and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

11. No significant relationship between city governments' utilization of all available resources to prevent workplace violence and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence was found. As a result, the null hypothesis was accepted.

### III. Human Resources Functions

12. No significant relationship between job analysis and job design process and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence was established. The null hypothesis cannot therefore be rejected.

13. There was a significant relationship between selection and hiring processes and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

14. There was a significant relationship between training and educational development programs and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

15. There was a significant relationship between performance evaluation processes and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

16. There was a significant relationship between incentives and compensation systems and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

17. No significant relationship was found between disciplinary policies and procedures and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

18. There was a significant relationship between termination and layoff processes and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.



19. There was a significant relationship between grievance and complaint systems and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

20. No significant relationship was found between the importance of employee safety to human resources departments and the HR directors' perception of workplace violence. This, in turn, led to rejecting the research hypothesis.

#### Recommendations for City Governments and Human Resources Management

Based on the data analysis, the following prevention techniques or methods were proven to have a relationship with the perceived workplace violence. It is strongly suggested, therefore that city governments give more attention to these elements. They should also evaluate the effectiveness of each technique by studying their impact on the level of workplace violence in their own jurisdictions.

1. Provision of legally vetted, written workplace violence policies which prohibit all violent behaviors at work.
2. Development of strong workplace harassment policies that interdict workplace harassment of any kind.
3. Effective security systems to ensure the safety of city employees.
4. Employee assistance programs (EAP).
5. Provision of counseling services to victims and witnesses of violent incidents at work.

Human resources or personnel departments should also focus on the following functions in their endeavors to combat workplace violence:

1. **Hiring Process:** It is essential for HR departments to check personal and professional references and inquire about any previous violent incidents. HR must conduct thorough background checks or outsource this task to a third party. In cases where the wrong person is hired, HR has to use the employee assessment process during the probationary period to correct this mistake. Additionally, city pre-employment screening and hiring processes should comply with all applicable federal, state or local laws and regulations.
2. **Training and Development Processes:** City departments should emphasize training in the following areas: causes of workplace violence, leadership and communication skills, stress management, workplace violence warning signs recognition, conducting effective and fair performance reviews, and conducting safe employee termination and layoffs. Training in these areas had a negative relationship with the HR directors' perception of workplace violence and thus would be expected to curb violence in the workplace.
3. **Performance Evaluation:** It is important to have a good performance evaluation system, however, employees' recognition of this system as fair and effective is even more important. Organizations should handle poor performance directly, constructively and on time. Failing to provide low performance employees with adequate feedback serves neither organizations nor employees.
4. **Incentives and Compensation:** It is fundamental for city departments to have fair incentive and compensation systems. They should emphasize that all

employees are treated with respect and dignity. Also, promotions should be based strictly on merit, not a spoil system. City employees have to appreciate that promotions are made in a fair and equitable manner.

5. Layoffs and Termination Processes: City governments should announce any plans for workforce reductions. Such announcement was proven to be correlated with reduced workplace violence. Layoff decisions should be fair and appropriate, and conducted in a humane manner. Finally, city governments should offer outplacement services to laid-off employees to alleviate worries and anger which may accompany this event.
6. Grievance and Complaint Systems: It is essential for city agencies and departments to have an effective grievance and complaint system. This system should work as an alternate method for relieving city employee dissatisfaction and curb potential violent acts. City employee complaints should be associated with swift follow through, and fair treatment.

While recommendations 1 and 2 are more related to the work of human resources departments and other departments that offer training programs, recommendations 3 through 6 affect the work of all city departments. These latter recommendations reach to the heart of dealing with the roots of workplace violence. They would help organizations create work environments which encourage safer workplaces. They would produce an organizational culture that values the humanity of employees.

Figure 51

A Modified Model of Workplace Violence Prevention

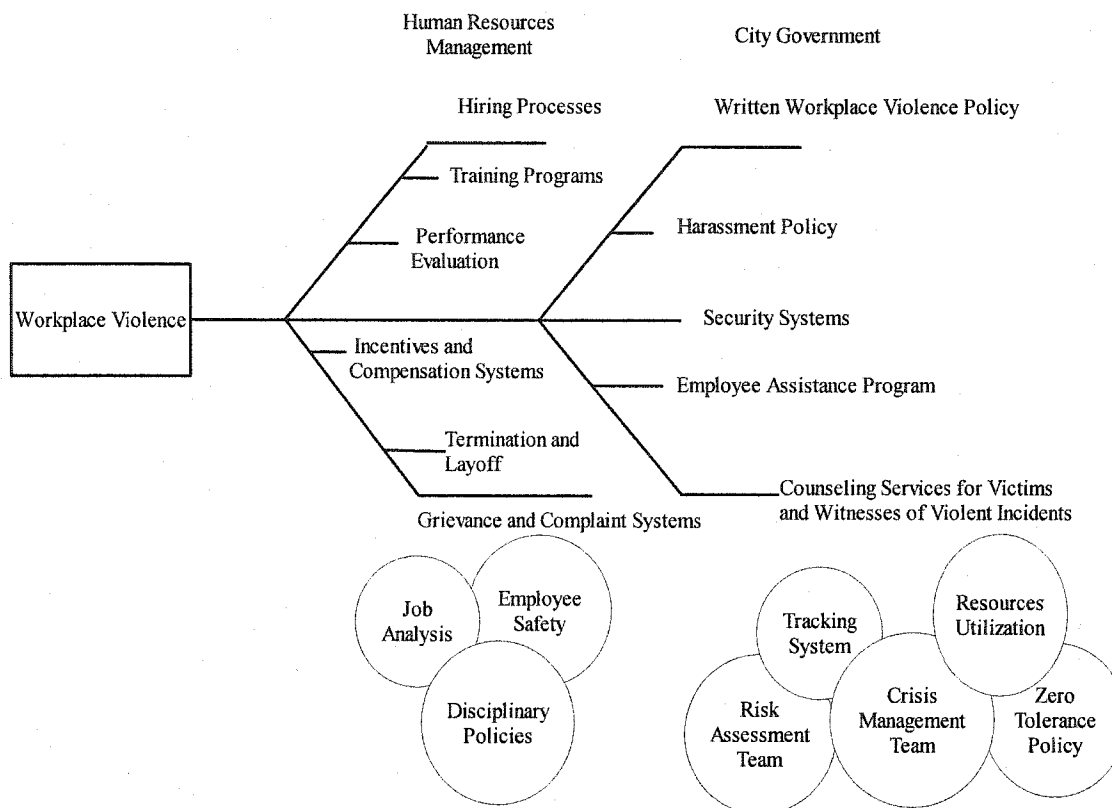


Figure 51 shows the elements of the prevention model suggested by this study, which had significant relationships with the HR directors' perception of workplace violence. The falling circles represent the elements that had no relationships with the perceived workplace violence. As in the original model of violence prevention, there are elements related to city government preparedness plan components and some elements related to human resources management. Five out of ten elements related to the government plan were found to have a significant relationship with HR directors' perception of workplace violence. Also, 6 out of 9

human resources management functions were found to have a relationship with HR directors' perception of workplace violence.

### Recommendations for Further Research

Recommendations for future studies are as follows:

1. The current research focuses on studying workplace violence and city governments' plans and HR practices. It was not the goal of this study to examine the effectiveness of plan components or to evaluate the impact of HR practices on workplace violence. In chapter 3 the study suggested a model for workplace violence prevention. However, no presumptions or preassumptions were made that the study could measure the effectiveness of these plans and practices. Or, that such practices would reduce the level of workplace violence, since the level of workplace violence and the length of time plans and policies were in place was unknown. I do not know the nature of the relationship between these plans and practices and workplace violence. In other words, I do not know whether workplace violence was high and that is why city governments and HR started to adopt these plans and practices or because of the existence of these plans and practices, the level of workplace violence is low. This study is closer to being a snapshot of the current situation. Therefore, more research is needed in the future to examine the impact and effectiveness of city governments' plans and HR practices (and all the elements in the model of the study) on violent incidents in the workplace.

For example, more research should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the workplace violence prevention policies, harassment policies, security systems, employee assistance programs and counseling services for victims of violent incidents. More research should be conducted on evaluating the effectiveness of hiring processes, training programs, performance evaluation processes, incentives and compensation systems, disciplinary policies, termination and layoff policies, and grievance system to know to what extent they do reduce workplace violence.

2. It is highly recommended to conduct the same study without using any code numbers on surveys. Or using the actual data instead of the perception of one group.
3. It is recommended to survey employees rather than the human resources and personnel directors. A comparison study between the findings of these studies would be very beneficiary to the research in the area of workplace violence.
4. Conducting comparison studies between the findings of using sample of employees or human resources directors and the results of research based on the actual data.
5. Future studies are recommended to measure the change in city policies and plans and level of workplace violence. Researchers can use the current study as the base to conduct more comparative studies. The researcher recommends another study within 3-5 years from now. By using time series analysis, new

findings would help predict the future of the problem and the effectiveness of the efforts to curb it.

6. Although the study suggested a definition of workplace violence, further research is needed in this area to achieve consent on the definition. It is difficult to provide comparative studies of workplace violence without agreement about what it does mean.
7. The current study suggested development of a more comprehensive model to address workplace violence and to transform organizations from being violence-prone to violence-prepared. The current study focused only on two elements -- city governments' plans and HR practices. Thus, more research should be conducted to measure the relationship between the following factors and workplace violence: Top management or executives, employees, managers and supervisors, unions, employee assistance programs, risk management departments, risk assessment, security departments and law enforcement staff, and conflict resolution staff. Future studies could examine the impact of these factors on the workplace violence, or the roles associated with each one of them to curb this problem.
8. Building a strong and stable workplace violence database. Organizations should keep records of workplace violence incidents and should make them accessible to researchers.

9. There is a need to study the impact of economic changes on workplace violence. In particular, the impact of unemployment rates, budget difficulties and its consequences such as services and job cuts.
10. It is very important to study workplace violence problems at other public organizations at federal, state and local levels. For instance, the sample for this study included cities with 100,000 residents or more. Further studies should be conducted at the state and county level, as well as with cities with less than 100,000 residents.
11. It is highly recommended to conduct more studies on workplace violence against women and other minorities.
12. There is a need to examine workplace violence problem in the private and non-profit sectors using the suggested model by the researcher.
13. It is highly recommended to conduct further research to compare workplace violence before and after the terror attack on September 11, 2001.
14. The researcher would like to see in the future more empirical research in the area of workplace violence. For instance, the current study found moderate relationships between two preventative strategies (harassment policies and incentives and compensation systems) and workplace violence. Further studies are recommended to focus on and explore the relationships between these elements.



15. The researcher encourages government agencies, private sectors, and non-profit organizations to allocate more funds to conduct empirical studies on workplace violence prevention.

Workplace violence is a serious problem today and is probably a reflection of the mounting violence in society generally. The U.S. Department of Justice has described violence as a public health emergency and even an epidemic. Indeed, the statistics regarding workplace violence are alarming.

A number of preventive strategies to deal with workplace violence were proposed in this study. The first of these is to insure that there are effective organizational workplace violence policies, as well as harassment policies, that build upon an adequate assessment of the potential for violence. This comes from understanding the peculiar risks of the employment setting and accurate reporting of violent incidents and threats. A formal policy for violence prevention should be regularly reviewed and updated. The cost of this strategy is a fraction of what violent episodes can incur to the organization. Establishing security systems to protect employees from violence or other risky behaviors is also an important part of an overall violence prevention approach. Once a risk is identified, it is necessary to design an environment that is safe. This can be through surveillance, control of access to the workplace, enhanced lighting and low profile landscaping, reinforcement of territorial boundaries of the work site, and security patrols. Also, having employee assistance programs in place and providing counseling services to victims and witnesses of workplace violence incidents assists in creating a healthy environment.

Secondly, human resources management has a crucial role in preventing workplace violence. There should be adequate employee screening. Since it is difficult even for professionals to identify a potentially violent individual by using available profiles, employers are even more at a disadvantage. However, minimum screening of employee applicants for this possibility should be considered. This can include checking personal and professional references for job applicants, conducting thorough background checks by obtaining a criminal record history, credit check, verifying education and professional credentials, and obtaining the driving record. It is important that pre-employment and screening processes comply with all applicable laws.

Human resources also can benefit from using training and development programs to increase awareness of workplace violence problems and to encourage peaceful ways of organizational communication. In the current study, several training programs were proven to influence workplace violence. These programs include training on: causes of workplace violence, leadership and communications, stress management, workplace violence early warning signs recognition, termination and layoff processes, and conducting fair performance evaluation.

It is essential that organizations have a fair evaluation process that satisfies employee needs and expectations through an effective system of incentives and compensation. Grievance and complaint systems should be available to all employees to allow them to raise their concerns when they feel they are being treated unfairly. Peaceful expression of their demands and needs is crucial in saving lives and assets.

Managers may be afraid to respond or prefer to deny that a violent episode will ever occur. It is imperative that threats are responded to adequately and in a timely manner. In contrast, an inappropriately angry response is also ineffective and may reinforce the violence. A concerned response that tries in good faith to understand and help the threatening individual, while at the same time focusing on inappropriate behaviors, offers the proper balance. Looking for solutions rather than blame is a constructive and useful philosophy. Unfortunately, solutions are not always readily available and, therefore, workplace violence will continue to challenge governments, organizations, managers, employees, lawyers, researchers, and psychologists in the years ahead.

Appendix A

Questionnaire

(This questionnaire was designed and developed by the researcher of this study)

## From Violence-Prone to Violence-Prepared Organizations: Assessing the Role of the Human Resources Management in Preventing Workplace Violence in the American City Governments

This questionnaire is designed to generate a better understanding of the nature and types of workplace violence prevention programs and policies within medium- to large-size city governments in the United States.

1. In total, how many are employed by your city government?

- Less than 500
- 500-999
- 1,000-1,999
- 2,000-4,999
- 5,000-9,999
- Greater than 10,000

2. Based on your knowledge of factors influencing the workforce of your city government (e.g. social conditions, economic circumstances, organizational and managerial culture and environment, past violent incidents in or outside the organization, number of complaints and dispute cases...etc), to what extent do you consider the following workplace violence types to be a problem in your city workplaces?

Type of Violence	Not a problem	Small problem	Moderate problem	Serious problem	Very serious problem
Terror attack or threat of terror attack	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Homicide	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical attack/assault (By using body parts or objects)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rape	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Harassment (Sexual, racial, religious..etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Threat (By using any methods verbally or written)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Psychological violence (Humiliation, bullying..etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall workplace violence (All Types)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Please check all the workplace violence prevention components that are in place in your city government:

- Written workplace violence policy that prohibits any acts of violence

- Written workplace policy that prohibits harassment of any kind
- Zero tolerance policy (All violent behavior are taken seriously and may lead to termination)
- Risk Assessment Team
- Security system (Such as metal detectors, ID badges, cameras and alarming system)
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Workplace violence incident tracking and record keeping system and reporting system
- Emergency Response Team or Crisis Management Team and Post-event recovery plans.
- Counseling for workplace violence victims and witnesses
- City government utilizes all the available resources to prevent workplace violence
- Ot her (Please Write in) \_\_\_\_\_

Human resources departments perform or ensure the performance of the following tasks or functions. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about human resources management practices **in your city government?** (Please mark one box for each statement where SA is strongly agree, A is agree, Und. is undecided or neutral, D is disagree, and SD is strongly disagree.

Statement/ Human Resources Function or Practice	SA	A	Und	D	SD
4. Job descriptions focus on observable and measurable behaviors that are expected from employees.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Jobs descriptions include requirements for job-related interpersonal behavior, including non-violent behavior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Human Resources Department reviews employment applications carefully and inquires about employment gaps.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Human Resources Department carefully compares information on the résumé and application.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Human Resources Department requests written permission to contact former employers and to verify academic records.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Human Resources Department checks personal and professional references and inquires about any prior incidents of violence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Human Resources Department conducts thorough background checks on criminal convictions and driving records where applicable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Our Job interviews focus on job-related behavioral issues.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Our city departments conduct behavioral tests designed to uncover how job candidates react to certain situations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. All prospective employees must take drug-screening tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement/ Human Resources Function or Practice	SA	A	Und	D	SD
14. The Human Resources Department staff cooperates with other organizations when they are asked about the behavior of former employees.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Our city departments regularly use employee assessments during the probationary period to correct hiring mistakes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Our pre-employment checks and screening processes comply with all applicable laws.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Prospective employees are given accurate information about performance requirements and advancement before they are hired.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. City employees have been trained and educated on our workplace violence prevention policy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. City employees are trained on risk factors that cause or contribute to workplace violence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. City employees are trained on conflict or dispute resolution in the workplace.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. City employees are trained on leadership and communication skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. City employees are trained on stress management.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. Supervisors and managers are trained to recognize the warning signs of potentially violent employee and violent employee profiling.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. Supervisors and managers are trained on handling violent incidents and on intervening with potentially violent employees.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. Supervisors and managers have been trained on diversity issues and equitable treatment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. Supervisors and managers have been trained to detect, document and report violent incidents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. Supervisors and managers have been trained on conducting safe employee terminations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. Supervisors and managers are trained on how to conduct an effective and fair performance evaluation or review.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29. City employees feel fairly treated and respected.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. Our human resources department and other city individual departments handle poor performance directly, constructively, and within a reasonable time frame.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31. Our compensation system is recognized as fair and effective	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement/ Human Resources Function or Practice	SA	A	Und	D	SD
32. Employee injuries from workplace violence are covered by workers' compensation or other city insurance policies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33. Promotions are recognized as being made in a fair and equitable manner.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34. In addition to promotion, your city has developed other means to acknowledge and reward outstanding employee performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35. Disciplinary actions in city departments are in line with our city ordinances and stated policies and with the state and federal regulations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36. City employees know that all violent threats are taken seriously and will be investigated in a thorough manner.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37. City plans and policies on layoffs and job cuts are discussed openly to keep city employees well informed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
38. Human Resources Department ensures that layoff decisions are made in a fair and legal manner.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
39. Necessary layoffs or terminations are done in a humane manner with adequate support services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
40. Our employee displacement strategies include elements that preserve employee dignity, including counseling and outplacement resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
41. Our grievance process is well publicized in city departments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
42. Our grievance procedures are associated with swift actions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
43. Our grievance system is an alternative method to relieve employee dissatisfaction and curb potential violent acts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
44. Employee safety is a core issue for the Human Resources Department.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Thank you for taking the time to respond to this questionnaire.**



**Appendix B**

**Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board's  
Approval and the Consent Letters**

# WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: September 12, 2003

To: Matthew Mingus, Principal Investigator  
Saleh Ahmed, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Mary Lagerwey, Chair *Mary Lagerwey*

Re: HSIRB Project Number 03-08-22

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "From Violence-Prone to Violence-Prepared Organizations: Assessing the Role of the Human Resources Management in Preventing Workplace Violence in American City Governments" has been approved under the exempt category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may **only** conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: September 12, 2004



SEP 12 2003

x *Mary Tazewell*  
HSIRB Chair

## The Consent Letter

As one of the human resources or personnel department directors in one of the most populated cities in the country - cities that have over 100,000 residents each, according to the 2000 census- you are invited to participate in a study entitled "From Violence-Prone to Violence-Prepared Organizations: Assessing The Role of The Human Resources Management in Preventing Workplace Violence in American City Governments". This study will investigate your perception of what human resources directors and staff can do to reduce and prevent workplace violence, and also examines your department's activities and functions in that regard. Dr. Matthew Mingus and Saleh Ahmed from Western Michigan University, School of Public Affairs and Administration, are conducting this research. The study is being conducted as part of the dissertation requirements for the latter.

If you decide to participate, please answer the enclosed survey and return it in the stamped envelope. We estimate that it will take you 20 minutes to fill it out. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and any information you provide will be completely anonymous. Because we will only release summary of the information we collect. Returning the survey indicates your consent for use of the information provided. However, your responses will not be identified with you or your department or city in any way and you will not be named in any report. You may choose not to answer a question or the entire survey. If you choose not to participate, please return the blank survey in the stamped envelope provided to eliminate any follow-up correspondence. The code number on the form will be used for follow-up with nonrespondents. Once we get your survey -filled out or blank- your information will be deleted from the mailing list, however, we will send reminders to those whose surveys were not returned.

The results of the survey will be available at your request by the end of 2003. So feel free to contact us via email at [Stopviolence@collegeclub.com](mailto:Stopviolence@collegeclub.com) and get a copy of the results. You do not have to participate in the study to get a copy of the results.

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact Dr. Matthew Mingus (269-387-8942), Saleh Ahmed at (517-887-7523), the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (269-387-8293), or the vice president for research at Western Michigan University (269-387-8298). Do not participate if the stamped date is more than one year old.

Thank you in advance for your assistance with this valuable undertaking.

Matthew S. Mingus, Ph.D.  
School of Public Affairs and Administration  
Western Michigan University

Saleh Ahmed, M.Sc.  
Project Researcher

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