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**Psychological Resilience in the Face of Occupational Trauma:  
An Evaluation of a Multidimensional Model**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
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## ABSTRACT

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The occupation of a police officer is considered to be stressful. However, police personnel, like those in a number of other occupations, do not routinely develop pathogenic consequences, such as posttraumatic stress, psychological distress, and poor physical health, when exposed to traumatic events. In fact, when police officers are exposed to traumatic events most are psychologically resilient. For this reason, traumatic events are referred to as potentially traumatic events. This study attempted to answer the question of why some police officers develop pathogenic consequences when exposed to potentially traumatic events and others do not. This study developed a psychological resilience model based on the five-part model, which involves cognitions, emotions, behaviours, physical activities, and an individual's environment. The model, referred to as the 5-PR model, included the constructs of adaptive coping, optimism, emotional competence, adaptive health practices, and social support. A sample of 176 police officers, who had been surveyed at the commencement of training at the Royal New Zealand Police College in 1997 and 1998 and resurveyed 1 year later, were surveyed with a web-based or paper questionnaire to test the 5-PR model. This study involved testing the hypotheses that greater exposure to potentially traumatic events would be related to pathogenic outcomes, that the 5-PR model would be negatively related to pathogenic consequences, that the 5-PR model would moderate the relationship between exposure to potentially traumatic events with pathogenic consequences, the relationship between emotional competence and pathogenic consequences would be mediated by adaptive health practices, and there

would be no difference between the levels of pathogenic consequences between those participants who had consulted a psychologist. Multiple regression analyses to test these hypotheses found that the components of 5-PR model that contributed to the psychological resilience of police officers were optimism, adaptive coping, adaptive health practices, and social support from colleagues. These results suggested that the three aspects of the 5-PR model, cognitions, behaviours, and environment, contributed to psychological resilience, and that the model should be redefined as the three part model of psychological resilience (3-PR model). Emotional competence had a minimal contribution to psychological resilience. Additional analyses showed that the psychological support was being sought appropriately by members and whilst current employees had a higher level of exposure to potentially traumatic events in comparison to former employees there were no significant differences regarding pathogenic consequences. From this study, it was found that the components of optimism, adaptive coping, adaptive health practices, and peer social support contributed to the multidimensional nature of psychological resilience. The theoretical framework of psychological resilience was reconceptualised as the 3-PR model.

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