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# Stress Management Treatments among Police Departments

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Cedrick D. Crockett

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Walden University  
2018

Abstract

Stress Management Treatments among Police Departments

by

Cedrick D. Crockett

MA, Albany State University, 2011

BS, Albany State University, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

November 2018

## Abstract

The police profession is viewed as one of the most stressful occupations in the world. Police officers are responsible for handling calls for service, serving and protecting the community, enforcing laws, and preventing and solving crimes. These responsibilities along with many others can become overwhelming and lead to police stress and trauma. Police stress has been linked to adverse effects on the performances and health of police officers. The purpose of this mixed methods study was to describe the internal and external factors of police stress through their lived experiences as police officers, and the stress management techniques used by police departments to treat police stress. The theoretical framework was based on Kingdon's multiple streams approach. The research questions were designed to examine the factors of police stress and the treatments offered by police departments to help officers manage police stress. Data were collected through surveys and interviews with 15 police officers and 2 human resources department employees from 2 police departments in a southern state. Quantitative results from the surveys were analyzed using Intellectus Statistics software. Qualitative results from the face to face interviews were organized and analyzed using Nvivo 12. The findings indicated that death, time away from family, and trust were main stress factors affecting officers and that Employee Assistance Programs were treatments police departments offer to officers to help manage stress. The implications for social change is improving police officer job performance, the overall mental and physical health of police officers as well as strengthening police-citizen relationships.

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this accomplishment to my wife, Dr. Jasmine Crockett, and our children, Chloe and Alex. You all have inspired me to do things I never thought I was capable of. I want to thank you for all the sacrifices you've made just so I could complete this dissertation. I know that this degree bears my name only, but without you, I could not have done this. Seeing your faces kept me going when I thought of quitting so many times. When things got hard, you were that driving force that keep me moving. Words cannot express how grateful I am to have you all in my life.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The police profession ranks as one of the most stressful jobs in the United States (Brooks, 2016). Police officers face many challenges and demands throughout their tour of duty. They are responsible for handling calls for service, serving and protecting the community, enforcing laws, as well as preventing and solving crimes (Dempsey & Forst, 2014). This can often lead to officers being placed in dangerous situations, violent encounters with citizens, and gruesome crime scenes (Finn, 2000; Roberg et al., 2005; Sheehan and Van Hasselt, 2003). Officers are not only responsible for performing their job duties, but they must also do so without violating the constitutional rights of citizens. All these responsibilities that can lead to police stress.

Police stress can be difficult to recognize by police personnel because it affects officers in different ways. Each officer usually handles stress in their own way (Anderson, 2002). Police stress has been described in three themes: internal stressors, inherent stressors, and external stressors (Statton, 1978). Each of these stressors will be detailed in Chapter 2. Police stress negatively impacts an officer psychologically and physically. Treating police stress so that officers can effectively manage it is just as important as identifying it. In the United States, an estimated 90% of police departments have increased efforts to identify and treat officers who suffer from stress (Page & Jacobs, 2011).

Researchers have tried to find ways to reduce stress over the last three decades (Somunoglu & Ofluoglu, 2012). Several studies have highlighted multiple stress management techniques provided to police officers such as critical incident stress

management, physical fitness, and meditation (Addis and Stephen, 2008; Chapin et al., 2008, Shipley & Baranski, 2002). Additional stress management techniques will be examined in Chapter 2. Police officers may encounter life-threatening situations daily. The fact that a lot of these encounters happen without warning makes them more difficult to handle even though officers' lives could depend on how they are handled. This research was focused on the services offered by police departments to help officers manage job-related stress and how much the services are used. This study also involved exploration of police stress and the impact it has on police officers.

### **Background of the Study**

When an individual decides to pursue a career as a police officer, the nature of police work needs to be considered. The nature of police work is one of the reasons the police profession is one of the most stressful occupations. Police officers are tasked with maintaining public order, protecting life and property, and enforcing the laws of society (Alemika, 2009), which can lead to officers facing dangerous and violent situations (Finn, 2000; Roberg et al., 2005; Sheehan & Van Hasselt, 2003). The constant exposure to these situations can result in police stress. There are several categories of identified police stressors. For example, (a) internal stressors (any stressors that arise from within the police department), (b) inherent stressors (the threat of death or serious injury while performing job duties), and (c) external stressor (negative media coverage; Statton, 1978). Additionally, Finn and Tomz (1997) identified four categories: (a) the law enforcement organization (poor leadership from supervisors), (b) police work (gruesome crime scenes), (c) working in the criminal justice system and with the public (lack of

public support), and (d) life stressors (marital problems). Finally, Wexler and Logan (1983) identified external stressors, organizational stressors, task-related stressors, and life stressors.

Stress is an outside stimulus leading an individual to experience moderate levels of anxiety (Campbell-Sills, Barlow, Brown, & Hofmann, 2006), and stressors are the factors that contribute to stress or emotional discomfort. Researchers have described the harmful impact stress has on an individual physiologically, psychologically, and emotionally (Edelwich & Brodsky, 1980; O'Connor, 2006; Stevens et al., 2006; Stinchcomb, 2004; Wicks, 2005). Though police stress is hard to measure because it impacts each officer differently, there have been several approaches used to measure police stress, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The difficulty in measuring police stress can result in problems treating it. However, there are two categories of stress management interventions provided for police officers: (a) clinical interventions based on techniques like psychological counseling, and (b) interventions to improve coping strategies using stress reduction techniques ranging from exercise to transcendental meditation (Stinchcomb, 2004).

Stress cannot be eliminated in most professions, but studies suggest that stress can be managed (Addis & Stephens, 2008; Waters & Ussery, 2007; Quigley, 2008). Stressors have been found to come from multiple avenues in the police profession. Organizational stress, such stress derived from a supervisor, is one of the stressors that play a significant role in the stress of police officers. Stressors can be alleviated through the actions of administrative personnel (Patterson, 2003). Implementing effective management

strategies that focus on improving leadership could improve an organization and the organizational culture. Effective management strategies are concentrated on practical means of a job task with conditions favorable to those completing the tasks (Engel, 2003; Engel & Worden, 2003; Karpavicius, 2007). These strategies will also need to vary based on police department because of different police cultures that have a significant effect on the department and the community because it affects the attitude and the performance of police officers (Chang, 2007; Karpavicius, 2007; Lambooj, Sanders, Koster, & Zwiers, 2006).

Although there has been an abundance of studies related to police stress and the effects of it (Anderson, Lizenberger, & Plecas, 2002; Basińska & Wiciak, 2012; Senjo, 2011), there is a need for more studies on treatments offered to police officers by their departments and the effectiveness of these treatments (Patterson, Chung, & Swan, 2014), or if departments are implementing any stress management techniques at all. This study helped address the gap in literature related to the availability of stress management treatments among police departments and the extent to which these treatments are being used. This study is needed due to the nature of police stress, and the negative impacts it has on those depended on to protect lives and property.

### **Problem Statement**

Police officers are called to handle different types of situations that they are expected to be able to control. Officers must also perform their responsibilities without violating the constitutional rights of citizens. These responsibilities can lead to police stress. If police stress is not treated and effectively managed, it can negatively affect an

officer's health and job performance. Previous studies show that there is a connection between job stress and the decrease in health and job performance in police officers (Abdollahi, 2002; Kerley, 2005). Gershon (1999) found stress to be related to health issues such as high blood pressure, back pain, migraines, burnout, and fatigue. Fatigue can cause a decrease in officers' physical and mental skills (Beurskens et al., 2000), which are essential to police officers being able to perform their job duties.

Due to the nature of the police profession and culture, there is no way to eliminate police stress. However, there are methods that police departments and agencies can use to help officers manage stress. Managing stress can help officers control stress, preventing stress symptoms from worsening. Stress intervention techniques used by police include but are not limited to: exercise programs, anonymous surveys to determine stress levels among officers, and stress reduction programs (National Institute of Justice, 2012, p.7). This research was conducted to better understand police stress and the methods used by police departments to help officers manage stress. The results of this study may encourage policies from police departments that do not have policies and procedures in place to treat officers who suffer from police stress. This would not only benefit police officers and the police departments, but it could also help the community and the community-police relationship as well.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to describe the internal and external factors of police stress through the lived experiences of police officers and the effects the perceived stressors have on job performance, health, and personal relationships. I also

examined the treatments offered to police officers by their departments to help officers manage police stress. Surveys were used to gather facts about participants' beliefs, feelings, job experiences, and stress management services provided to them. Although police stress cannot be eliminated, identifying and managing it can have positive impacts on officers' work performance, health, and police–community relationships (Blum, 2005; Hurrell & Murphy, 1996; Laur, 2002).

### **Research Questions**

The research questions to better understand police officers' experiences are as follows:

Research Question 1: What methods are used by police departments to identify police officers who may suffer from police stress?

Research Question 2: What are the stress levels of police officers in each department?

Research Question 3: What are the stress management intervention techniques used in each police department?

Research Question 4: How often do officers access the available stress intervention treatments in their department?

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The theoretical framework that for this study was the multiple streams framework. The core of this framework is focused on three concept streams parallel to the policymaking environment: the problem stream, the policy stream, and the politics stream (Kingdon, 1995). The problem stream refers to the issues that capture people's attention.

The policy stream is the processes in which policy ideas and solutions are formed, developed, rejected and selected. Finally, the politics stream refers to public opinion, election results, and the demands of interest groups (Kingdon, 1995). These three streams joining at critical moments results in a policy window. When this window opens, the issue becomes a part of the policy agenda, and policy making steps will follow.

The main underlying assumption of multiple streams framework is the belief that policymaking is dynamic, irrational, and unpredictable (Nutley, Walter, & Davies, 2007). The components of this approach highlight the process that is necessary for policy change to take place. Police departments can use policy to ensure that officers receive treatments to help them effectively manage police stress. Policy making includes

key elements of policy-making include: the importance of problem perception; shifts in elite and public opinion concerning the salience of various problems; periodic struggles over the proper locus of authority; incomplete attainment of legally-prescribed goals; and an iterative process of policy formulation, problematic implementation, and struggles over reformulation. (Sabatier, 1988, p. 130)

The advocacy coalition framework was developed to handle complicated public policy problems (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999). It provides an alternative lens to policy-making frameworks, highlights the magnitude and the nature of political conflicts, and includes a significant role of scientific and technical information in policy and political disputes (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). The framework for this study addresses the goal of bringing awareness to police stress and the need to implement policies for stress

management treatments, because it allows police officers to be the primary source of information in developing and implementing departmental policies. The advocacy coalition approach also offered methods that helped my research in providing data on police stress and treatments that policies can be based on.

### **Nature of the Study**

The focus of my research was police stress and the treatments used to help officers manage police stress. I used a mixed methods research design, as the qualitative method was used to describe the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon (Creswell, 2009), and the quantitative method consisted of the PSQ-op and PSQ-org questionnaire surveys to measure the levels of stress in the workplace. This design allowed the flexibility to explore the thoughts of police officers who have experienced police stress and how it affects them individually. It also allowed me to examine the methods of stress management treatment and how often they are used within each department.

The data collection method commonly used in qualitative research is interviews (Creswell, 2014), which involves the researcher as the instrument of data collection (Patton, 2002). I used face-to-face interviews and surveys to collect data for several reasons. Face-to-face interviews allowed me to observe the body language and other movements during the interviews. It also provided better accuracy about participants' age, gender, and race. To prevent or minimize bias influence on the participants, I developed a rapport with the participant before the interview to help them to become more comfortable (see Creswell, 2014). I also limited my comments to ones used to gain

clarity on what was said by the participant. I formulated my questions to allow the participants to speak truthfully about what and how they feel about their lived experiences. The PSQ-op and PSQ-org surveys were used to gather facts about participants' beliefs, feelings, job experiences, and the services provided to them in relation to stress management. I handed out surveys to participants who agreed to participate and signed an informed consent form. I am the only person with access to the completed or returned questionnaires.

### **Definitions**

*Burnout:* Burnout is correlated with work-related stressors in which police officers are constantly exposed to. Burke and Mikkelsen (2006) defined burnout as “a process in which the individual’s attitudes and behaviors change in the negative ways in response to job stress” (p. 65).

*Police performance:* For the purposes of this study, police performance is the ability or inability of an officer to complete all the duties of a police officer. These duties may vary based on rank or department (Dempsey & Forst, 2014).

*Police culture:* A solidarity among police officers that involves unwritten rules that are built to protect officers from outsiders (citizens, media, and in some cases, supervisors). The blue wall of silence and the blue shield are a part of the police culture (Dempsey & Forst, 2014).

*Police officer:* For the purposes of this study, a police officer is a person who has completed basic mandated training to become a certified police officer and has the legal

capacity to enforce the laws of a province, city, state, or federal government (Smith, 2012).

*Police stress:* For the purposes of this study, police stress is stress that affects police officers due to the nature of police work (Oliver & Meier, 2009).

*Post-traumatic stress disorder:* An anxiety disorder that results from experiencing a traumatic event that leaves the victim feeling helpless and in fear of threatened or actual harm (Psychology Today, 2015).

*Stress management:* For the purposes of this study, stress management refers to the methods used by police departments to help officers effectively cope with stress. These methods can include physical, psychological, or counseling treatments (Hess & Orthmann, 2012).

*Stressors:* Factors that cause or contribute to stress (Mashlach, 2003). For the purposes of this study, stressors are associated with pressures experienced by police officers as the result of job-related duties or the organizational culture of the law enforcement setting.

### **Assumptions**

For this study, the following assumptions were made in this study on the nature of police work, police stress, and stress management treatments used by two different police departments in South Georgia. I assumed that each participant involved in this study provided an accurate and honest portrayal that reveals an authentic representation of their experience with police stress along with whether they received treatments from their departments. I also assumed that the data from the surveys would lead to an accurate

depiction of participants' experiences. Another assumption was that participants would feel comfortable where the interviews took place. However, it was also assumed that due to skepticism of confidentiality, officers would be reluctant to answer questions relating to rank, age, and gender. Due to the police culture, the code of silence/blue shield will be enforced.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

This study involved an examination of police stress, the impacts of police stress and stress management methods used by police departments to help officers manage stress. Participation included male and female officers but was limited to police from two police departments in Georgia. Although the sample population is from two police departments, the results may apply to future research in the criminal justice and psychological fields.

### **Limitations**

The interviews and the data collected may have been influenced by my presence due to prior experience as a police officer. My own experiences could also limit this study due to a personal connection to developing police stress through work as a police officer. Another limitation is the ability to generalize the findings, which may be limited due to the number of participants and because it is specific to the participants and not all police officers/police departments. There could have also been a possibility of resistance to respond truthfully due to the potential to reveal identity (i.e., rank, race, or specific incidents). Additionally, police officers may have answered that exposure to crime scenes or other traumatic events had little to no effect on them when this may not be truthful.

### **Significance of the Study**

Over the years, police stress has been explored, studied, and analyzed in many works of literature, and it continues to be an issue in law enforcement officers today (Bond, 2014). This study is important because it brings awareness to police stress, which has a profound effect on police officers and communities, and the importance of identifying and treating officers who suffer from it. Citizens depend on the police to keep them safe and to protect lives and property. Studies have shown that stress has the potential to negatively affect officers work performance, mental and physical health, and personal relationships (Ivie & Garland, 2010; Westphal, 2016). Because little is known about the treatments police departments use to help police officer's management stress, this research can fill a gap in knowledge. If police departments can identify and treat officers who suffer from police stress, the results can be beneficial to police departments, police officers, and the citizens they serve. This can also improve work performance and the health of police officers.

### **Summary**

The police profession is often viewed as one of the most stressful occupations in the world. Officers are faced with dangerous criminals, placed in life-threatening situations, and are frequently exposed to graphic crime scenes. Research has documented how these and many other duties of police officers lead to police stress and the impact stress has on the human body. More importantly, research correlates police stress to a decrease in police performance (i.e., physical and mental skills). These are skills that are essential to be a competent police officer. Researchers have also identified stress

management techniques that can be used by police departments to assist officers with managing stress. These treatments range from physical fitness, psychological evaluations, and counseling. I sought to bring more awareness to police stress and to explore the stress management treatments offered by two different departments in South Georgia. This chapter will be followed by a review of the related literature in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 will follow with a description of the study design, the participants, procedures, assessments to be used and how information were assessed.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Studies have shown that the stress experienced by police officers while on the job has been linked to below average job performance, low morale throughout police departments, police misconduct, personal relationship issues, and personal health problems including social isolation, drug and alcohol use, hypertension, depression, and anxiety (Aaron, 2000; Bond, 2014; Griffin & Bernard, 2003; Kerley, 2005). Overall, police stress has negative effects on police officers, police departments, and the police–community relationship (Griffin & Bernard, 2003; Morash, Kwak, & Haarr, 2006).

This chapter includes literature on police stress, its impact on police officers, and stress management methods used by police departments to help manage stress. The literature review contextualizes these issues in the law enforcement setting and clarifies relevant points. Exploring these topics related to police stress provides a clearer view on the presence of stress, the effect it has on police officers, and the need for police departments offer some form of treatments.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

Police stress has been researched because of the significance of the problem and its affects. Background information for this study on police stress and stress management techniques was gathered from peer-reviewed articles using the Walden University Library search engines. The following databases were accessed: Academic Search/Premier, Criminal Justice Periodicals, A SAGE Full-Text Collection, Education Research Complete ProQuest, Oxford Criminology Bibliographies, PsycARTICLES, and SocINDEX with Full-Text. Key words *police tress*, *stress management*, *police or law*

*enforcement officer, burnout, police culture, organizational stress, external stress, police training, police performance, stress treatments, coping, police suicide, cynicism, work shifts, leadership, psychological stress, posttraumatic stress, depression, and police stressors* were searched using the databases. These searches were limited within the past 10 years (2007-2017). Google Scholar was also used to locate literature within the past 10 years using the same key terms listed here. Research on methodology included Creswell (2007, 2009), Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008), Janesick, (2011), and Maxwell (2013).

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The theoretical framework was the multiple streams framework, which is focused on three concept streams for policymaking: the problem stream, the policy stream, and the politics stream (Kingdon, 1995). These streams help describe the policymaking process, where people pay attention to an issue, which leads to policy development and selection, and then public opinion, election results, and the demands of interest groups become involved (Kingdon, 1995). The main underlying assumption of the multiple streams framework is the belief that policymaking is dynamic, irrational, and unpredictable (Nutley, Walter, & Davies, 2007). The components of this approach highlight the process that is necessary for policy change to take place.

Police stress is an issue that police departments should become more aware of and attempt, through policy, to ensure that officers receive treatments to help them effectively manage it. Policy making includes the perception of a problem, which involves public and leadership opinions, that involves a process where there are shifts in opinion,

struggles over authority, and issues forming and implementing policies (Sabatier, 1988). The advocacy coalition framework helps address these public policy problems, providing an alternative lens to policy-making frameworks and highlighting political conflicts in a way that can assist in scientific and technical information in policy and political disputes (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). The framework for this study allowed police officers to be the primary source of information, providing data that can help develop and implement department policies involving police stress and treatments for it.

### **Literature Review**

Some individuals decide to become police officers because of what they have seen on television; others are motivated by their desire to improve a community by serving and protecting people in need (Roufa, 2014). Regardless, individuals entering the police profession are becoming members one of the world's most stressful occupations. Officers often begin their careers mentally and physically unequipped to handle the inherent nature of the police profession (Boals, Riggs, & Kraha, 2013). A police officer's primary role is to protect the lives and property of the citizens they serve, but other responsibilities include patrolling a beat, enforcing laws, answering calls for service from the public, arresting suspects, conducting traffic stops, and testifying in court (Stinchcomb, 2004). Performing these duties over time often leads to police stress. Researchers have described the impact stress has mentally, physically, and emotionally on police officers (Arter, 2008; Gershon et al., 2009; Morash et al., 2006; Waters & Ussery, 2007).

Various aspects of police stress have been researched. For example, Ivie and Garland (2010) examined the impact military experience has on stress and burnout in policing by using data from a previous study on police staff from a Northeastern metropolitan city. They found that all law enforcement experiences the impact of burnout at some point due to the demanding and negative exposure aspects that come with the profession (Ivie & Garland, 2010). This study also revealed that the harmful exposures affected the stress levels of officers who did not have military experience. Another study on the differences between police officers was conducted by McCarty, Zhao, and Garland (2007), who examined whether stress factors have a different effect on male and female law enforcement officers to address conclusions that may not apply to female officers. The data were collected from a previous study including 1,100 police officers in Maryland where participants answered information about symptoms of stress and likely stressors, perceived current stress, coping mechanisms utilized, and health outcomes over the course of the past year (McCarty et al., 2007). The results indicated no significantly different levels of occupational stress and burnout between male and female officers, though among all police officers, African American female officers had the highest level of burnout (McCarty et al., 2007). Finally, Anderson, Litzenberger, and Plecas (2002) confirmed previous research that police officers experience both physical and psychosocial stress on the job, anticipate stress as they go about their work, and suffer anticipatory stress at the start of each shift.

One previous study was the first attempt to systematically synthesize over 40 years of empirical research in perceived stress among police officers. Webster (2012)

used 103 previous research studies about the perceived stress among police officers to formulate a quantitative research study on these studies. The results revealed that most studies make equally modest contributions to the complex process of stress and coping. This study also emphasized the need for more studies on perceived stress among police officers (Webster, 2012).

### **The Nature of Police Work**

Police officers, firefighters, and paramedics are generally the first responders to any emergency in the United States. All first responders face pressured situations daily, which can lead to stress. However, Huddleston, Stephens, and Patton (2007) explained that police work might be more trauma-sensitive than all the first responders. For example, when there is an incident in which someone is in critical condition after being shot inside of a home, a police officer must not only render aid to the person shot, they must also make sure that the scene is safe and secure so that other personnel can enter it. Securing the scene involves searching for suspects, which presents a potential danger for police officers, and preventing other unauthorized persons from entering the scene or contaminating evidence.

Police officers are asked to protect and serve the needs of the citizens, even if it means injury or losing their lives. According to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial (2013), there are over 900,000 sworn law enforcement officers in the United States, which has remained about the same for year. An average of 151 police officers are killed in the line of duty each year. In 2015, there were 51,548 assaults against police

officers that resulted in 14,453 injuries. There were 72 police officers killed while responding to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2011 alone.

Answering calls for service is one of the primary duties of being a police officer. A call for service in law enforcement is generally when anyone calls 911 dispatch for police assistance. These calls are unpredictable and can range from less serious to extremely serious. Serious calls consist of but are not limited to shootings, stabbings, and domestic incidents. There are also calls that are not so serious such as assistance with a stalled vehicle not obstructing traffic, assistance with direction, and in some cases transports to a designated place such as work or school. Because these calls are unpredictable, police officers must be alert and prepared for everything. There are times when seemingly harmless calls for service become dangerous and place officers at risk of severe injury or death. Even in the most difficult and pressured situations, police officers are still expected to sound judgments and make good decisions. These factors lead to more potential stress for police officers.

### **Police Culture**

The police culture plays a significant role in the police profession. It has influences on the behaviors and personalities of police officers (Stevens, 2005). Culture is a grouping of individuals who share similar values, behaviors, and beliefs (Crank, 2004). Police culture is shielded from those who are not police officers, and it can be difficult for some officers to live up to. Police culture can cause stress through societal isolation, hindering officers from having healthy relationships with family and friends (Woody, 2006). Isolation can result in an officers' refusal to seek professional help or support. For

example, Woody (2006) described an “us vs. them” mentality reflected in officer statements. One officer stated, “The world is a jungle; there are a lot of people who will harm you and then go home and sleep like a baby; all that stands between good and evil is law enforcement” (Woody, 2006, p.99). Woody attributed this police mentality to intrapersonal dissonances, such as disillusionment with a law enforcement career, physical complaints, and an inability to form and maintain healthy relationships.

Examples of some aspects of police culture include the blue wall of silence, cynicism, and the blue curtain. The blue wall of silence is formed by the belief that police officers should protect each other and even police supervisors when they are investigating an officer for misconduct. Similarly, the blue curtain is a concept that police officers should only trust other nonsupervisory officers and never incriminate another officer during the investigation for police misconduct (Dempsey & Forst, 2014). Police officers often develop an “us against the world” mentality due to the police culture. Cynicism can be described as an attitude of distrust of people and their motives, where humanity is viewed at its worst with no hope of improving (Dempsey & Forst, 2014). It usually develops over time due to the nature of police work.

### **Types of Police Stress**

Stress for an aspiring police officer can potentially begin before they become a police officer. In the state of Georgia, most police departments offer both civilian and police officer jobs. Everyone hired to become a police officer must complete basic mandated training by the Peace Officers Standards and Training council to become certified police officers. This training is also referred to as the “police academy.” This

basic training consists of over 400 course hours over a 4-month period. It includes the teaching of Georgia laws, firearms training, defensive tactics training, police policies and procedures, and traffic enforcement and operations (Della, 2004). During this rigorous training, individuals are tested mentally and physically. If the individual does not pass a course or training section, they not be able to complete the mandated training and therefore will not become certified a police officer.

In many cases, if a person does not complete the police academy, they are fired. In other cases, police departments allow the individual persons who have failed to complete the police academy another opportunity to reenter the police academy in hopes of completing it. This along with the many other aspects of the police academy creates stress before a police career starts. There is only a small amount of literature on the coping methods of police recruits. For example, Violanti (2001) examined 180 police recruits in a U.S. police academy for coping, personal distress, and life stressors. The results indicated that recruits scoring higher on personal distress tended to use more coping strategies than those with lower distress scores.

When an individual starts a police career, stress can come from a variety of sources. Chopko (2010) described acute stress as stress that results from sudden events that occur in shorts bursts. Operational stress comes from the responsibilities and demands of the police occupation. This includes shiftwork, excessive paper, and critical incidents the may include violence (Waters & Ussery, 2007). Shift work is a part of the police profession. Some departments work 8-hour shifts, some work 10-hour shifts, and others work 12-hour shifts. One study found that officers favored 10-hour shifts because

they experienced less fatigue, more quality sleep, and increased overall work satisfaction (National Institute of Justice, 2012, p.7). Shifts can include day shifts, evening shifts, and night shifts. Day shifts usually have the least calls for service because most people are working or sleeping during most of this time frame. Evening shifts typically receive the most calls for service. This shift is the most stressful because it is usually the busiest from beginning to end.

Organizational stress within the police profession comes from within the department. The literature on police stress identifies organizational stress in policing as pressure from supervisors, inadequate equipment, poor leadership, staff shortages, lack of promotional or development opportunities, and increased workloads throughout the department (Beehr, Johnson, & Nievia, 1995; Copes, 2005; Liberman et al., 2002; McCarty et al., 2007; Newman & Rucker-Reed, 2004; Stinchcomb, 2004). These are conditions that can hinder an officer's performance and overall well-being (Noblet, Rodwell, & Allisey, 2009). Therefore, police officers have sometimes identified organizational stress a main source of stress. For example, Evans and Coman (1993) surveyed 271 police officers and found that the death of a partner causes the most stress, but organizational-based stress was cited as the stress most often encountered. Violanti and Aron (1995) also conducted a survey study of organizational and external sources of police stress, finding that organizational sources produced over six times more stress than external factors.

Leadership within police departments can also be a major source of police stress. Supervisory ranks in police departments begin with sergeant and continue on.

Supervisors are responsible for enforcing and managing the policies and assignments police officers are required to follow both on and off duty (Ellison, 2004; Sims, Ruiz, Weaver, & Harvey, 2005). Police supervisors shape the foundation of the department through planning, leadership, attitudes, and their approach to police work (Coulson, 1993). Poor leadership can be destructive throughout an entire department and create stress for those who work in it (Klute & Scrivener, 1995). Many perceived stressors affect police officers; however, police officers have rated interpersonal conflict, criticism from those within and outside of the department, as one of the most significant job stressors (Garner, 2008).

External stress is the stressors that come from sources outside of the police department. The nature of police work can result in police officers having to act as counselors, parents, social workers, and whatever role they are called upon to fulfill. The community-police relationship can produce stress in several ways including lack of support from the community, public complaints against police officers, and frequent exposure to physical and verbal attacks. The levels of these stressors along with others can at times be intensified by negative media coverage.

Police officers today face an added element of stress through media and social media that did not exist 15 years ago. Today it is more common for a police incident to be caught on a cell phone camera. When these police incidents reveal violence and misconduct, the media coverage is usually amplified. Coverage such as this leads to increased scrutiny and criticism towards police along with anger and distrust within the community. Over the past 3 years, there have been several incidents that received

national media attention. For example, on July 6, 2016, Philando Castile was fatally shot during a traffic stop in Minneapolis. He told police during the stop that he had a legal firearm in his possession but did not draw the weapon. On July 5, 2016, Alton Sterling was shot twice by police in Louisiana while pinned to the ground. Sterling had a gun in his pocket, but he never drew the weapon. On April 12, 2015, Freddie Gray suffered a spinal injury while riding in the back of a police transport van in Baltimore, Maryland. He died a week later due to the injury. On April 4, 2015, Walter Scott, who was unarmed, was fatally shot in the back while running away from a police officer in South Carolina. In November 2014, Tamir Rice was shot by police who were responding to call about a juvenile waving a gun at a Cleveland, Ohio park. When the officers arrived, they observed Rice holding a gun, which was later found to be a toy pellet gun. Rice, 12 years old, died the following day. These incidents involved black males being killed by police officers. Whether the deaths were justifiable or not, they magnified the tension between the community, especially the black community, and the police.

One of the most significant challenges within police departments is maintaining an adequate police workforce. The literature describes several reasons for the shortages many U.S. police departments are facing. Raymond, Hickman, Miller, and Wong (2005) explained the difficulties of the general population to meet the minimum qualifications to become a police officer. These qualifications include little to no drug use, a clean criminal record, a decent credit history, and good physical health. In many agencies, there are several officers that near or eligible for retirement (Bloomberg, 2009). Many police departments consist of officers who serve in the military. As a result, departments suffer

shortages when these officers are deployed. Departments also face budget issues which makes it challenging to provide officers with the necessary equipment to adequately perform their job duties as well as compete with other organizations salaries. This supports the fact that there is a great need for police officers, yet the ability to support the officers are minimal. When there is a shortage within a police department both the police officers and community suffer. Police officers are often forced to work extra hours to make up for the deficiency. This can quickly lead to fatigue, burnout, stress, and poor performance. The citizens suffer because there are not enough police officers available to efficiently meet the needs of the community. This effects officer's abilities to respond to calls for service in a reasonable time, patrol neighborhoods effectively, focus on high-crime areas and engage in positive police-citizen contact. Anderson and Lo (2010), found that stress from the police profession can potentially lead to an unstable home and intimate partner violence. Anshel (2000) described acute stress as "unpleasant verbal input, pain or injury, making wrong decisions, shooting inaccuracies, making errors when making arrests, uncertain or dangerous situations, and reprimands from a supervisor" (p. 378).

### **Impact of Police Stress**

The police profession has been shown to have an effect the quality of life of police officers. Stress accumulated throughout the police profession has been linked to problems such as alcohol abuse and violent behaviors by police officers (Gershon, 2009). Over the past decades, literature has connected the stress experienced by police officers directly to the nature of police work (He, Zhao, & Ren, 2005). Researchers have

identified the types of outcomes developed by police stress as physiological, psychological, and behavioral. Stinchcomb (2004) defines physiological outcomes as headaches, stomachaches, backaches, ulcers, and heart attacks; and psychological outcomes as anxiety, depression, flashbacks, and panic attacks. Drinking alcohol, complaints filed by citizens, and ratings of work performance are examples of behavioral outcomes. Tyagia & Dhar (2014), examined the factors that cause of stress in the police departments and the impact that stress has on the health of police officers. The results from the study found that the highest contributor to stress in police officers was workload and that stress had a substantial impact on the health of the police officers. The study also revealed that perceived organizational support, which is the positive support provided by organizations to its members, had a complete opposite effect on police officers regarding stress.

According to the American Institute of Stress, stress is the way the body responds to any demand. That demand can be mental, physical, or emotional. The services provided by police officers are available 24 hours per day and 365 days per year. In fulfilling their daily duties, officers are exposed to life-threatening situation, violence, death, and in some cases evil. The Bureau of Justice Statistics points out that the “exposure to violence, suffering, and death is inherent to the profession of the law enforcement officer” (Schmallegger, 2015). As individuals enter a law enforcement career, many do not recognize or understand the level of stress associated with the profession. In most cases, even if stress related to the profession is described in detail beforehand, it is safe to say that experience is the best teacher. Police officers face many challenges during

their duties as law enforcement officers on a day to day basis. These responsibilities can lead to police stress, which studies have shown, can lead to other issues. Burnout and fatigue and are among these issues. Kop and Euwema (2001) found that police officer burnout was linked to positive use of force attitudes, self-reported use of force, and independently observed use of force (p. 631). The authors also found that officers who often used force were those who experienced significant emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Burke and Mikkelsen (2006) defined burnout as a “process in which the individual’s attitudes and behaviors change in negative ways in response to job stress” (p. 65). Burke and Mikkelsen (2006) explored the potential antecedents and consequences of burnout in a large sample of Norwegian police officers. Data from the study was collected from completed questionnaires that focused on three burnout measures: emotional exhaustion (the depletion of emotional energy); cynicism; and the low professional efficacy (social and non-social aspects of accomplishments at work). The results indicated that the work demands and lack of support were the strongest predictors of each burnout component. With the above-mentioned burnout components predictors, hierarchical regression analysis revealed that burnout components had a significant relationship with a variety of outcomes: work (the feeling of meaningfulness); work-family (the affect work had on marriage or family relationships); psychological health (the symptoms of PTSD, or suicidal ideation); and physical health (headaches, back pain). Euwema Kop and Bakker (2004) conducted a multi-method study to understand better the effects burnout had on the quality of police officers job performance. A questionnaire that measured job demands, rewards, and burnout was

given to a sample of 358 Dutch police officers. The police officers were also observed interacting with civilians over a 122-day period. The results indicated three things: 1). the greater the imbalance between high job demands and low job rewards, the more burnout the police officers reported; 2). Burnout predicted a decrease in dominant behavior during conflict situations; 3). Burnout was related to less dominant behavior when police officers had contact with citizens. A 2012 study on police officer fatigue revealed fatigued officers abuse sick, have difficulties managing successful personal relationships, make more mistakes on departmental and court papers, experience more accidental injuries on duty, and are at a higher risk of being seriously injured or killed because of lack of focus (Basińska & Wiciak, 2012). Another study found that the health effects of fatigue include impaired judgment, unhealthy weight loss or gain, impaired eye-hand coordination, increased gastrointestinal problems and more serious health problems such as diabetes or cardiovascular disease (Basińska & Wiciak, 2012; Senjo, 2011). Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a form of stress that is common among military veterans and police officers (National Center for PTSD, 2015). The National Institute of Mental Health describes PTSD as a disorder that develops after a person experiences a shocking, scary, dangerous or traumatic event. Traumatic events can include any hostile situation, an injury to an officer during their tour of duty, the death of fellow police officers, and the exposure to dead bodies. Unexpected exposure to dead bodies has been found to be a significant psychological stressor among police officers (Chopko, 2010). It has been estimated that over 150,000 police officers have symptoms of PTSD (Kulbarsh, 2016). Alcoholism is among the several issues of police stress as well. Studies have

found that police officers often turn to alcohol to cope with the stress from their job (Lindsay & Shelly, 2009; Madonna & Kelly, 2002; Richmond, Wodak, Kehoe, & Heather 1998). A survey of 852 police officers was conducted to explore the alcohol consumption levels of police officers. The researchers defined excessive consumption as eight or more drinks per day for men and six or more drinks per day for women. The revealed that 48% of male officers and 40% of female officers reported excessive levels of alcohol consumption (Richmond, Wodak, Kehoe, & Heather, 1998). There is an expanding body of literature that examines the correlation between stress and job performance. These studies suggest that stress can result in performance deficits (Regehr, LeBlanc, Jelly, & Barath, 2008). Regehr et al. (2008) examined the connection between the biological and psychological manifestation of stress and performance in law enforcement officers. The study included 84 police recruits in a high-fidelity simulation of a policing event, to determine performance in a life-like work setting. Physiological (heart rate and salivary) and psychological (subjective anxiety) measures were included as an indicator of stress. Results showed that neither physiological nor psychological responses impaired performances in the simulated stressful policing situation. However, it supported the notion that cortisol levels can enhance ability in high-stress situations. Although their performance was not affected, their emotional response to the crisis was affected, suggesting that there may be a potential need for intervention. An often-overlooked aspect of stress is the effect it has on the economy. According to the American Institute of Stress, the estimate of economic costs of worker stress in the United States is over \$300 billion annually. These costs are accumulated as the result of

accidents, absenteeism, employee turnover, diminished productivity, direct medical, legal, and insurance costs, and workers compensation awards.

### **Measuring Police Stress**

There have been several approaches to measuring police stress of the past four decades. The 60 item Police Stress Survey was developed, and pilot tested among a sample of Florida police officers as a rating scale to quantify officers' perceived stress and exposure to job stressors (Spielberger, Westberry, Grier, & Greenfield, 1981). Hart, Wearing, and Headey (1995) described the development and use of two scales that measured negative and positive organizational and work experiences. McCreary and Thompson (2006) described a 20-item Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Op) that measures exposure to stressors that come from performing police duties, and a 20 item Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Org) that measures stressors that come from the law enforcement organization. There have also been instruments developed to measure burnouts. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is considered as a gold standard for measuring burnout (Maslach, Jackson, Leiter, Schaufeli, & Schwab, 1981; Schaufeli & Taris, 2005). Its three dimensions include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Other instruments include the Pines' Burnout Measure(BM) (Pines & Aronson, 1983), the Shirom Melamed Burnout Questionnaire (SMBQ) (Melamed et al., 1999) and the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) (Kristensen, Borritz, Villadsen, & Christensen, 2005)

## **Stress Management**

Stress in the police profession cannot be eliminated due to the nature of police work. However, if stress is identified and treated, it can potentially be effectively managed. Several studies have suggested that providing police officers with effective coping methods could improve health issues (e.g., hypertension, heart disease, headaches) and psychological outcomes such as suicide ideation and relationships (Garner, 2008).

Given that the profession is so psychologically and physically demanding, all police departments should provide stress management interventions for officers to help manage stress and protect their well-being. Patterson (2008) explained that stress intervention for police officers should include non-work domains, and help officers obtain cognitive, behavioral, and social support-seeking skills. Patterson (2008) identified five concepts in the development and implementation of stress management education (SME) groups: 1). Coping is a complicated process; 2). Individuals cannot be trained to utilize coping strategies in an inflexible and rigid way; 3). Individuals are likely to use problem-focused and emotion-focused strategy; 4). The same coping strategies are not effective for all individuals; 5). Stress management interventions are designed for general use and cannot be applied to specific group members. The most common stress management interventions for treating police stress is training police officers to recognize signs of stress and improve coping strategies (On the Job, 2000; Sewell, 1999). Examples of a variety of stress management interventions described in the literature include the use of spot checking and scanning, positive self-talk, deep breathing, progressive muscle

relaxation, meditation, stress debriefing, time management, financial planning, critical incident management, physical fitness, and social support (Addis & Stephens, 2008; Anderson, Swenson, & Clay, 1995; Chapin, Brannen, Singer, & Walker, 2008; Shipley & Baranski, 2002). Identifying and treating police stress can be difficult for several reasons. One reason is that stress affects people differently and people cope with stress differently. These differences can be attributed to personality, psychological background, support systems along with a host of other things (Brewin, Andrews, & Valentine, 2000; Luther & Cicchetti, 2000; Maddi & Khoshaba, 2005; Miller, 2006). However, there are methods and techniques that have been used to help officers effectively manage stress. Effectively managing police stress can potentially improve quality of life, health, job performance, and a host of other issues regarding policing. O'Toole, Vitello, and Palmer (2006) explained that loss of trained and experienced police officers could be prevented by identifying and reducing stress. Having well trained and experienced officers is essential to any police department. These types of officers are usually better equipped to deal with the aspects of police work because they are often more knowledgeable, because of their training and experience than new police officers.

Research studies have identified several programs that can be used to manage police stress effectively. These programs include medical, psychological, fitness, and educational. The FBI requires all new agents to complete a Stress Management in Law Enforcement (SMILE) course. This course is designed to provide a better understanding of the potential stress that may arise from the job (Hess & Orthmann, 2012). Peer counseling provides officers with the opportunity to get help from fellow officers, who

are trained peer counselors. This counseling is designed assist officers in finding the appropriate resources needed (i.e., alcohol and drug treatment centers, or psychologist/psychiatrist) as well as an emotional support system (Perin, 2007). Since officers may be more willing to seek help from a fellow officer instead of professionals outside of law enforcement, peer counseling has the potential to be a useful resource for managing police stress (Conti, 1982). Critical Incident Stress Management and Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) are stress interventions designed to assist officers in the aftermath of a traumatic and stressful work event in the form of educational interventions, psychological fist aids and peer strategies (Everly & Mitchell, 1999; Mitchell, 2006). Educational based interventions are designed to educate officers on the effects of stress and how to effectively manage it. Amaranto, Steinberg, Castellano, & Mitchell (2003) found that educational based interventions can increase police use of mental health options. In one experiment, a toll-free crisis hotline was established for the Newark Police Department after a series of high profile incidents, including the murder/suicide of two police officers. Eight months after creating the hotline, the department started an educational prevention program consisting of five lectures on police issues with stress. The lectures included stress management, domestic violence, PTSD, critical incident stress management, and substance abuse. Results indicated that the number of calls to the toll-free hotline increased significantly during the educational intervention period (Amaranto et al., 2003).

EAPs provide resources for employees who struggle with a variety of issues that may affect work performance. EAPs are used in a variety of workplaces, but they are

most applicable in workplaces associated with highly stressful occupations such as law enforcement (Moriarty & Field, 1990). These resources include treatments designed to help with personal or family issues, mental health and substance abuse along with financial or legal matters. EAPs focus on finding help for employees so that they can continue to work efficiently and effectively (Employee Assistance Industry's Trade Association, 2013). Although law enforcement agencies around the world provide resources for officers such as EAPs, there are only a small number of studies that explore the relationship between law enforcement officers and EAPs (Albrecht, 2011). For example, Asen and Colon (1995) surveyed 82 police officers from four police departments in New Jersey. Each of the departments offered EAPs. The findings indicated that all participants were aware of their EAP and that 70.7 percent of them had reviewed or seen their policy. The study revealed that only 22 percent reported using their EAP and 15.9 reported the using their EAP for a family member. The authors also found that female police officers were more willing to use an EAP than male officers. Goldstein (2006) examined EAPs for law enforcement officers and addressed the hesitant nature of officers accessing EAP services offered to them by their departments. Findings indicated that police officers are often not interested or unwilling to seek help with job related issues. Page and Jacobs (2011) investigated police stress and social support among rural police officers and their awareness of counseling services in their area. The study found that 55.3 percent of the officers were aware of EAP services within their department, but the study did not address whether officers utilized those services.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The major themes presented in this literature review include the nature of police work, police stress, measuring police stress, and treatments used to help manage police stress. Research has indicated that the police profession can produce high levels of stress and that stress has a profound effect on police officers' well-being and job performance (Burke, 1993; Finn & Tomz, 1997; Wilson, Tinker, Becker, & Logan, 2001). The literature also indicates that there are stress management methods that can be used by police departments to manage stress if it's identified and treated effectively. There is a notable gap in the literature on how many police departments employ these interventions and how often police use these intervention. This research will attempt to fill this gap by exploring the services offered by police departments to help officers manage job-related stress and how much the services are used. Given the impact police stress has on police officers, job performance, and the community, stress management interventions should be provided for officers by their respective departments to help effectively manage stress (Patterson, 2008).

### Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine police stress, the effects it has on police officers, and explore the treatments offered by police departments to help officers effectively manage job-related stress. The research questions were:

Research Question 1: What methods are used by police departments to identify police officers who may suffer from police stress?

Research Question 2: What are the stress levels of police officers in each department?

Research Question 3: What are the stress management intervention techniques used in each police department?

Research Question 4: How often do officers access the available stress intervention treatments in their department?

This chapter provides the methods and procedures used in this study. This chapter also includes sections on the settings, research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, threats to reliability and validity, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

This study included both qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative method consisted of narrative interviews. The narrative approach can be used to understand stressful events and how the respondents encounter these experiences (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). The quantitative method included questionnaires (PSQ-

op & PSQ-org) consisting of previously validated instruments measuring the psychosocial and physical work environment, coping strategies, and stress of conscience.

Qualitative research is typically used to explore phenomena from participants' point of view (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Using a qualitative study allows researchers to collect and analyze data to provide an in-depth exposition of a given phenomenon (Mitchell & Jolley, 2012). Phenomenology is an inductive and descriptive approach that is focused on lived human experiences of a phenomenon explained by participants (Creswell, 2009), which provides tools to study complicated phenomena in context (Maxwell, 2012). This phenomenological qualitative study was designed to examine the phenomenon of police stress and stress management. The decision to use the phenomenological approach was based on the focus of this study, the research questions, and the review of the relevant empirical literature. One of the strengths of a phenomenological approach is its ability to provide a rich description of human experiences related to a common issue or event (Creswell, 2013). The participants consisted of current police officers and human resources department employees from two different police departments in South Georgia. This approach allowed officers to express true and raw emotions in an environment that would welcome it. Another strength of phenomenology is that results in most cases emerge from the data collected rather than by structured statistical analysis (Creswell, 2009). This methodology allowed me to explore organizations and policies, individuals, communities, relationships, and programs. This analysis can lead to policy implementations or changes (Maxwell, 2012).

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher is an instrument of data collection (Patton, 2002). As the primary source of data collection, it is essential to identify my role in this research (see Seidman, 2012). I gathered data through surveys and face-to-face interviews with police officers from two different police departments in South Georgia. The surveys measured the stress levels of police officers and the extent to which the officers are using stress management treatments. The face-to-face interviews were conducted in a safe environment that would allow officers to express sincere and raw emotions about their police experiences. Participation in this research was voluntary, and each participant was given a consent form after agreeing to participate in this study.

I assumed the role of interviewer throughout this research study. Interviews play a significant role in qualitative research studies because they allow the researcher to gather an in-depth understanding of an individual's subjectivity or a collectivity's intersubjectivity. The interview questions consisted of open-ended questions comprised of background questions, questions related to police work, police stress, and stress management. Each question gave the participants an opportunity to share their lived experiences and perspectives. As a former police officer, I understand that this design includes potential bias (see Janesick, 2011; see Patton, 2002). In qualitative research, quality can depend on the researcher's ability to capture the authentic and genuine intentions, experiences, and understandings of the participants (Maxwell, 2005). To address potential researcher bias, survey and interview questions were designed to avoid manipulating the results.

## **Methodology**

This section and its subsections include the methods used for recruitment, selection of participants, gathering data, strategies to reduce researcher bias, establishing credibility, ethical considerations, and data analysis.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

The participants for this study consisted of certified law enforcement officers from two different police departments in South Georgia who have completed Peace Officers Standards and Training. Law enforcement officers included police officers of various ranks, ages, gender, and years of experience. The police departments used in this study consisted of one department that employed 206 police officers and another department with 35 police officers.

The sampling strategy began with reaching out to each department to explain my research study and requesting permission to resources from the departments to conduct my research. Once permission was granted, I scheduled meetings with officers from each department and each shift. During these meetings, I explained my research study and sought officers to voluntarily participate in this study. Each participant was asked to sign a consent form that explains their rights to confidentiality and their right end participation at any time. To preserve confidentiality, identifying information will not be disclosed and responses will be kept confidential. Furthermore, participants will only be identified numerically to conceal identity. Each survey took an estimated five minutes or less to complete.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) explain that phenomenological research involves extended interviews with a sample size ranging from five to twenty-five participants who have had direct experience with a phenomenon. Janesick (2011) defines interviewing as “a meeting of two persons to exchange information and ideas through questions and responses, resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning about a particular topic” (p.100). Some of the means for conducting interviews include face to face, phone, email, and synchronous chat. The researcher will conduct face to face with 10-15 police officers from each department. Face to face interviews allows the interviewer to observe body language and other movements during interviewing that can be very helpful to the data collection process. A face to face interview can provide better accuracy about age, gender, or race. Face to face interviews will give me more control over the interview process which will help with keeping the interviewee engaged and focused on completing the process on time and collecting all the information after the interview is completed. Phone interviews will not be conducted via telephone or cell phone. They lack the visual aspects that face to face interview provide, although these interviews allow the researcher broader geographical access in shorter time periods with no travel or travel cost.

Once the participants agreed to be interviewed, they were given an informed consent form to sign. The interview began with simple background questions to build rapport with the interviewee and to make the interviewee more comfortable. The next step consisted of the research interview questions. The interviews were audio recorded, with permission from the interviewee, for accuracy with transcribing and to ensure

validity. In the field of criminology, the practice of using human subjects are widespread (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). However, when using human subjects, researchers should examine the ethical implications involved in the study. Each participant in this study was provided a consent form, which was explained in detail before they signed. The participant was also given time to read the consent form for themselves and to ask questions. The consent form purposes included establishing the purpose for the study, procedures, possible risks, and benefits, right to withdraw or refuse to answer questions, privacy, an area to request a summary of the results and a signature line.

### **Instrumentation**

The data collection instruments for this study consisted of questionnaires from McCreary and Thompson's (2006) PSQ-Op and PSQ-Org design without any modifications and interviews. McCreary and Thompson (2006) PSQ-Op and PSQ-Org were described in Chapter 2. Content validity for the questionnaires has already been established by McCreary and Thompson during prior application of the surveys on several regions of the Ontario, Canada's police agencies.

An audio voice recorder was used, with the permission of the interviewee, to record the responses to the interview questions. A transcription company was used to transcribe responses. Upon completion of the interviews, each interviewee was assigned a numerical ID that replaced their names. During all interviews, a research journal, and audio voice recorder were used. The data was converted into a password-protected digital format and stored on my personal computer. That data will be destroyed five years after the completion of this study.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The interview questions are:

1. How long have you been a police officer?
2. What are some of the reasons you decided to become a police officer?
3. What are the most stressful aspects of policing in your experience?
4. Explain the most stressful situation you've experienced as a police officer?
5. How did you cope with that experience?
6. How did it impact you personally?
7. Are you aware of any stress management programs available to you through your department? Follow-ups: (How were you made aware?); (Why do you feel you are not aware?)
8. Have you ever used any departmental programs to cope with stress? Why? Why not?
9. What could the police department do to help reduce workplace stress?

The participants' responses were followed up with questions that investigated and encouraged further explanation on important issues that are not clearly explained. No follow up interviews were necessary upon the completion of the original interviews. The participant's information will remain confidential and their names will not be released. As previously stated, the participants were assigned a number and this will be how they are referred to in the study. A code sheet with the assigned code numbers and each participant's identity will be kept separately from the original materials in a locked storage cabinet only accessible by the researcher. This code sheet along with all audio

voice recordings were transferred to my personal computer as a hard copy. The hard copy will be securely maintained and only accessible to the researcher for five years after the completion of my research in my home. All data will be destroyed after that five-year period.

Qualitative research has multiple means of data and data collection methods a researcher can choose from throughout their research process. With every piece of data collected, managing and organizing the data also becomes as important as the issue being researched. Good data management and organization helps with accuracy, minimizes the risks of data loss, and prevent duplication. The NVivo software program was used to assist with organization data and identify themes from the interviews. NVivo is a computer software program that supports qualitative research as well as mixed methods research. It assists researchers in organizing and managing data such as interviews, survey responses, articles and web and media content. This software system allows researchers to find connections or disparities in data that would most likely wouldn't be found if done manually. NVivo is available in multiple languages, data can be shared among team members, it supports multiple file types, and it can be used to import data from social media (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012).

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

I used multiple strategies to ensure the credibility of the analysis. I read and studied information from multiple reliable sources, regarding qualitative research techniques, such as observation, interviewing, coding of data, and analysis. The

credentials of each participant were verified through their respective departments to ensure that all participants were certified police officers. This established confirmability. Questions from this study were formatted to capture the naturalistic essence of officers' perspectives and lived experiences. Additional questions were asked during interviews to clarify and expand upon responses that were unclear to increase the accuracy of the meaning of the responses. Field notes and transcript memos were used to clarify any possible and identified bias. I also ensured that all ethical concerns and standards essential to the participants are taken into account and strictly adhered to.

### **Transferability**

The specific congruent concerns in this study are to illuminate police stress, the effect it has on officers, and the treatments used by departments to help officer manage stress. The goal is to gain explore to what extent the treatments are being used by police officers if they available, and if departments don't offer stress management services, why not?

### **Dependability**

After data was collected, I identified emerging patterns with comparisons by going back and forth between the transcribed interviews to generalize the true meanings and levels of importance placed on the data by the participants. Data levels were compared and documented by creating nodes in Nvivo 12 for confirmation of emerging new patterns and findings and ease of replication. The data was triangulated with notes from observations. For the data that did not fit into existing themes or patterns, new

nodes were created and analyzed independently into findings that contradicted prior data or confirmed previous findings.

### **Ethical Procedures**

To address ethical concerns in this study, each participant was provided with written documentation of informed consent. This document explained the nature, purpose, risks, confidentiality, the right to decline or withdraw from the study at any point in the process, and the procedures of the process. The ethical element of confidentiality was addressed by safeguarding the integrity of the data collected from the research in a secure safe that will be locked and can only be accessed by the researcher for a five-year period concluding the research study. The data will be destroyed after the five-year period. To protect the anonymity of participants, individuals were not asked to provide names and were only be identified by an assigned numerical ID. Participants were able to participate in this study in a safe environment without risks of any harm or danger. Finally, as mentioned earlier, participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Walden University IRB approved the research design and ethical practices for this research study and assigned approval number 05-31-18-0381919.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this research study is to examine police stress and the treatments used by police departments to help officers manage police stress. The participants in this study included male and female police officers from two police departments in South Georgia. Ethical concerns for data collection, minimizing risk to participants, rights

associated with participation, anonymity, and confidentiality were safeguarded by employing ethical procedures that follow the American Psychological Association and the Walden University Institutional Review Board for Ethical Standards in Research.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine police stress caused by internal and external factors through surveys and the lived experiences of police officers as well as the effects the perceived stressors have on job performance, health, and personal relationships. I also examined the treatments offered to police officers by their departments to help manage police stress. The research questions for this study were as follows:

Research Question 1: What methods are used by police departments to identify police officers who may suffer from police stress?

Research Question 2: What are the stress levels of police officers in each department?

Research Question 3: What are the stress management intervention techniques used in each police department?

Research Question 4: How often do officers access the available stress intervention treatments in their department?

This chapter includes the research setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, the trustworthiness, and the results of the study.

### **Setting**

The setting for this study was two South Georgia police departments: the Albany Police Department (APD) and the Cordele Police Department (CPD). Contact was made with the chief of police at each department after approval from the IRB committee to set

up dates and times for me to come in and introduce my study. APD was the first location in the data collection process. The staff from the chief's office provided me with a private room on the 3rd floor of the building to use for data collection. I then introduced myself and my research study to officers in a staff meeting on the first floor of the building. After the meeting, my contact and location information was provided to potential participants, so they could contact me if they decided to volunteer for this study. I then proceeded back to the 3rd floor to wait on potential participants. The chief's office staff directed participants to the private room one at a time to maintain order and privacy. CPD was the second location in which data was collected. Upon arrival at the CPD, I was taken to a private designated room to set up for conducting my study. Once the setup was completed, contact was made with potential participants to introduce myself and my study as well as informing officers where I would be located if any of them wanted to participate. I then went back into the private room to wait for participants to come. To maintain privacy, only one participant per interview session was allowed in the private room during the research conducting process.

### **Demographics**

The participants who volunteered for this research study were male and female police officers who were employed as full-time police officers with at least 1 year of experience and human resource employees with at least 1 year of experience.

### **Data Collection**

This mixed method study consisted of a quantitative portion as well as a qualitative portion. The quantitative portion consisted of two surveys (PSQ-org & PSQ-

op). Both surveys were created and designed by McCreary and Thompson (2006). The PSQ-org is a 20-question survey used to measure police stress associated with internal(organizational) stressors (see Appendix B). The PSQ-op is a 20-question survey used to measure police stress associated with external(operational) stressors (see Appendix A). The qualitative portion of the study was face-to-face interviews with police officers and human resources employees. The police officer interviews consisted of nine questions:

Question 1: How long have you been a police officer?

Question 2: What are some reasons you decided to become a police officer?

Question 3: What are the most stressful aspects of policing in your experience?

Question 4: Explain the most stressful situation you've experienced as a police officer?

Question 5: How did you cope with that experience?

Question 6: How did it impact you personally?

Question 7: Are you aware of any stress management programs available to you through your department? Follow-ups: How were you made aware? Why do you feel you are not aware?

Question 8: Have you ever used any departmental programs to cope with stress? Why? Why not?

Question 9: What could the police department do to help reduce workplace stress?

Human resources employee interviews consisted of four questions:

Question 1: How long have you been an employee at the Human Resources Department?

Question 2: Could you please tell me about the stress management program(s) offered to police officers in general?

Question 3: What happens when an officer seeks treatment for coping with experiences a traumatic event? Can you take me through the process step by step?

Question 4: How are these treatments or programs evaluated for effectiveness?

A total of seven police officers from APD completed both surveys (PSQ-org & PSQ-op) and face-to-face interviews. One member of the Human Resources Department completed the face-to-face interview. Each participant had more than 4 years of experience with the department. Interviews were estimated to last 20-30 minutes. However, no interview lasted more than 10 minutes. A total of eight police officers from the CPD completed both surveys (PSQ-org & PSQ-op) and face-to-face interviews. One member from the Human Resources Department completed the face-to-face interview. Each participant had more than 2 years of experience with the department. Interviews were estimated to last 20-30 minutes; however, no interview last more than 10 minutes.

Due to officers' work schedules and assignments, a convenience sample was used for available police officers. A total of 15 police officers and two human resources employees from two different police departments volunteered to participate in this mixed methods study. Each participant was presented an informed consent form upon entering the private room. I then explained my research, the data collection process, and the informed consent form again, and gave participants a chance to ask questions about my

research. After each participant signed the informed consent form, the data collection process began. Police officers completed the PSQ-org and PSQ-op first, and then the face-to-face interviews proceeded. Human resources employees completed the face-to-face interviews directly after signing the informed consent form because for the purposes of this research study the surveys were for police officers only. There were no interruptions during the data collection process. The rooms were private and safe for myself and all the participants. Data from the interviews were collected using a small handheld voice recorder. A legal pad and pen were kept on hand for clarification purposes. The information on the voice recorder was transferred electronically to Rev.com, an online transcription company and returned to my Walden University student e-mail. Each transcript was reviewed and verified to be accurate. The information from the interviews will be stored in a file on my desktop with a secure password. The voice recorder will be secured in a locked file cabinet at my residence, with myself being the only person with access to it.

### **Data Analysis**

This mixed methods study was designed to examine the types of stressors, the levels of stress from each police department, and the stress management programs provided by each department. The quantitative portion of the study consisted of two surveys, and the qualitative portion of the study consisted of face-to-face interviews. The results for each portion are presented next in the quantitative and qualitative results sections.

### Quantitative Data Results

Quantitative data for this research study were collected using the PSQ-org and PSQ-op surveys. Each survey consisted of 20 questions to measure organizational stress levels (PSQ-org) and operational stress levels (PSQ-op). The levels are measured on a scale of 1-7, 1 meaning *no stress at all* and 7 meaning *a lot of stress*. Data were collected from a total of 15 police officers from two different police departments, 7 from the APD and 8 from the CPD. Intellectus Statistics software was used to conduct the data analysis for this portion of the study.

#### Descriptive Statistics

The observations for the PSQ-org had an average of 3.44 ( $SD = 1.09$ ,  $SE_M = 0.28$ ,  $Min = 1.05$ ,  $Max = 5.60$ ). The observations for the PSQ-op had an average of 3.23 ( $SD = 1.34$ ,  $SE_M = 0.35$ ,  $Min = 1.15$ ,  $Max = 5.00$ ). Skewness and kurtosis were also calculated (see Table 1). When the skewness is greater than 2 in absolute value, the variable is asymmetrical about its mean. When the kurtosis is greater than or equal to 3, then the variable's distribution is markedly different than a normal distribution in its tendency to produce outliers (Westfall & Henning, 2013).

Table 1

#### *Summary Statistics for Interval and Ratio Variables for Both Departments*

Variable	$M$	$SD$	$n$	$SE_M$	Skewness	Kurtosis
PSQ-org	3.44	1.09	15	0.28	-0.20	0.23
PSQ-op	3.23	1.34	15	0.35	-0.30	-1.42

*Note.* '-' denotes the sample size is too small to calculate statistic.

The observations of the PSQ-org from APD had an average of 3.84 ( $SD = 1.05$ ,  $SE_M = 0.40$ ,  $Min = 2.50$ ,  $Max = 5.60$ ). The observations of the PSQ-org from CPD had an average of 3.09 ( $SD = 1.06$ ,  $SE_M = 0.38$ ,  $Min = 1.05$ ,  $Max = 4.55$ ). For APD, the observations of PSQ-op had an average of 3.61 ( $SD = 1.37$ ,  $SE_M = 0.52$ ,  $Min = 1.50$ ,  $Max = 5.00$ ). For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op. had an average of 2.91 ( $SD = 1.31$ ,  $SE_M = 0.46$ ,  $Min = 1.15$ ,  $Max = 4.70$ ). Skewness and kurtosis are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*Summary Statistics for Interval and Ratio Variables Split by Department*

Variable	$M$	$SD$	$n$	$SE_M$	Skewness	Kurtosis
PSQ-org						
ADP	3.84	1.05	7	0.40	0.26	-0.65
CPD	3.09	1.06	8	0.38	-0.62	-0.08
PSQ-op						
ADP	3.61	1.37	7	0.52	-0.66	-1.17
CPD	2.91	1.31	8	0.46	-0.07	-1.40

*Note.* ‘-’ denotes the sample size is too small to calculate statistic.

For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #1 had an average of 3.0. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #1 had an average of 3.3. For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #2 had an average of 4.4. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #2 had an average of 3.8. For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #3 had an average of 3.6. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #3 had an average of 2.5. For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #4 had an average of 3.1. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #4 had an average of 3.1. For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #5 had an average of 4.0. For CPD, the

observations of PSQ-org-question #5 had an average of 3.1. For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #6 had an average of 5.6. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #6 had an average of 4.8. For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #7 had an average of 4.7. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #7 had an average of 3.9. For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #8 had an average of 2.6. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #8 had an average of 3.3. For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #9 had an average of 2.9. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #9 had an average of 2.3. For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #10 had an average of 4.0. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #10 had an average of 2.3. For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #11 had an average of 3.9. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #11 had an average of 2.6. For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #12 had an average of 5.3. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #12 had an average of 3.8. For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #13 had an average of 4.3. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #13 had an average of 2.6. For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #14 had an average of 3.7. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #14 had an average of 3.0. For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #15 had an average of 1.3. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #15 had an average of 2.5. For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #16 had an average of 4.4. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #16 had an average of 3.3. For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #17 had an average of 3.7. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #17 had an average of 3.0. For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-

question #18 had an average of 4.9. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #18 had an average of 3.0. For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #19 had an average of 3.4. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #19 had an average of 3.3. For APD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #20 had an average of 4.1. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-org-question #20 had an average of 2.8.

For APD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #1 had an average of 2.9. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #1 had an average of 2.5. For APD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #2 had an average of 2.9. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #2 had an average of 2.5. For APD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #3 had an average of 3.7. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #3 had an average of 2.9. For APD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #4 had an average of 3.4. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #4 had an average of 3.4. For APD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #5 had an average of 4.4. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #5 had an average of 2.9. For APD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #6 had an average of 2.9. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #6 had an average of 2.6. For APD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #7 had an average of 2.7. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #7 had an average of 2.6. For APD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #8 had an average of 4.7. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #8 had an average of 3.3. For APD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #9 had an average of 3.3. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #9 had an average of 3.3. For APD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #10 had an average of 4.7. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #10 had an average of 3.9. For APD,

the observations of PSQ-op-question #11 had an average of 3.6. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #11 had an average of 3.6. For APD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #12 had an average of 4.3. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #12 had an average of 2.9. For APD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #13 had an average of 4.1. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #13 had an average of 3.1. For APD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #14 had an average of 3.0. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #14 had an average of 2.3. For APD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #15 had an average of 2.9. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #15 had an average of 2.4. For APD, the observations of PSQ-op-16 had an average of 3.7. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #16 had an average of 2.4. For APD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #17 had an average of 3.6. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #17 had an average of 3.6. For APD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #18 had an average of 4.4. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #18 had an average of 2.6. For APD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #19 had an average of 3.7. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #19 had an average of 3.4. For APD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #20 had an average of 3.3. For CPD, the observations of PSQ-op-question #20 had an average of 2.1.

Table 3

*PSQ-org Observation Results*

Question	Police Department	
	APD	CPD
PSQ-org 1	3	3.3
PSQ-org 2	4.4	3.8
PSQ-org 3	3.6	2.5
PSQ-org 4	3.1	3.1
PSQ-org 5	4.0	3.1
PSQ-org 6	5.6	4.8
PSQ-org 7	4.7	3.9
PSQ-org 8	2.6	3.3
PSQ-org 9	2.9	2.3
PSQ-org 10	4.0	2.3
PSQ-org 11	3.9	2.6
PSQ-org 12	5.3	3.8
PSQ-org 13	4.3	2.6
PSQ-org 14	3.7	3.0
PSQ-org 15	1.3	2.5
PSQ-org 16	4.4	3.3
PSQ-org 17	3.7	3.0
PSQ-org 18	4.9	3.0
PSQ-org 19	3.4	3.3
PSQ-org 20	4.1	2.8

Table 4

*PSQ-op Observation Results*

Question	Police Department	
	APD	CPD
PSQ-op 1	2.9	2.5
PSQ-op 2	2.9	2.5
PSQ-op 3	3.7	2.9
PSQ-op 4	3.4	3.4
PSQ-op 5	4.4	2.9
PSQ-op 6	2.9	2.6
PSQ-op 7	2.7	2.6
PSQ-op 8	4.7	3.3
PSQ-op 9	3.3	3.3
PSQ-op 10	4.7	3.9
PSQ-op 11	3.6	3.6
PSQ-op 12	4.3	2.9
PSQ-op 13	4.1	3.1
PSQ-op 14	3.0	2.3
PSQ-op 15	2.9	2.4
PSQ-op 16	3.7	2.4
PSQ-op 17	3.6	3.6
PSQ-op 18	4.4	2.6
PSQ-op 19	3.7	3.4
PSQ-op 20	3.3	2.1

**Cronbach's Alpha**

Cronbach's alpha was used to test the reliability of each of the PSQ-Org (2 from each department) and the PSQ-op (2 from each department) surveys used in this study. The reliability of each survey was found to be excellent for measuring organizational and operational stress in police officers. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was evaluated using the guidelines suggested by George and Mallery (2016) where  $> .9$  *excellent*,  $> .8$  *good*,  $> .7$  *acceptable*,  $> .6$  *questionable*,  $> .5$  *poor*, and  $\leq .5$  *unacceptable*. All departments from a number of 20 items has an alpha of .93, except the CPD Department, which had an alpha of .96.

## **Qualitative Data Results**

The qualitative portion of this research consisted of face-to-face interviews with police officers and members of the department of human resources from the APD and CPD. The interview questions were focused on police stress and stress management techniques used by the departments.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

There was a total of 15 police officers and two members from the human resources department combined from each department that volunteered to be interviewed for this study. All interviews were conducted in a private room within each department. There were no interruptions during the interview process from outside sources. The interviews were conducted with only one participant at a time to ensure privacy and confidentiality. There were no safety issues during the times interviews were conducted.

### **Demographics of Interviewees**

Interviews were conducted with sworn male and female police officers from each department with all having 2 or more years of law enforcement experience as well as two members of the human resources departments with 4 or more years of experience within the human resources department. The APD interviews include Participants 1-7 and HR Participant 1 and the CPD interviews include Participants 8-15 and HR Participant 2.

### **Interview Participant 1**

After a brief greeting between me and participant, the informed consent form was reviewed and explained again. The informed consent form was then signed by the participant. It was then explained to the participant that a small voice recorder would be

present to record the interview for accuracy and that the recordings would be transcribed by a transcription company. Without declining at any time, the participant answered each question.

Question 1: How long have you been a police officer?

Participant 1: "17 years."

Question 2: What are some reasons you decided to become a police officer?

Participant 1: "Initially I decided to become a police officer because I really believe in helping and giving back to the community. But over the years I've learned there is way more to the job than that."

Question 3: What are the most stressful aspects of policing in your experience?

Participant 1: "Some of the most stressful is just meeting people at their level. What I mean is getting people to understand that the stresses are going to come, you get better with time with this job. And when people try to do too much too fast. Meaning if you're a young officer and try to treat people like you're the police instead of treating people like people, that's my biggest stress."

Question 4: Explain the most stressful situation you've experienced as a police officer?

Participant 1: "Just a personal, to start out as professional but I would say the personal attack on my character."

Question 5: How did you cope with that experience?

Participant 1: "I prayed about it a lot. I talk about it a lot and I even tried to find my fault in the experience and just move on from it."

Question 6: How did it impact you personally?

Participant 1: “Personally it made me a stronger person. It made me understand that people have faults, including myself and you have to forgive people for those faults and a lot of times just understand it’s not about you, it’s about them.”

Question 7: Are you aware of any stress management programs available to you through your department?

Participant 1: “No. I’m not honestly.”

Follow-up: Any reason why?

Participant 1: “I think that a lot of times people just don’t do a good job of making the officer or the employee understand that there’s things out there to help them. And I think that’s what it is in this case, nobody has done it. The best job will let people know there’s stuff out there.”

Question 8: Have you ever used any departmental programs to cope with stress?

Participant 1: “No.”

Question 9: What could the police department do to help reduce workplace stress?

Participant 1: “I think the basis of it is understanding that the officers are people and they have families, they have lives outside this place. I think they create that basic foundation that will help reduce a lot of stress. Spending a lot more time building the person instead of trying to build an officer.”

The interview with Participant 1 was concluded with no further research discussion. A brief salutation of thanks for participating was given as Participant 1 departed.

## **Interview Participant 2**

After a brief person to person greeting between the researcher and participant, the informed consent form was reviewed and explained again. The informed consent form was then signed by the participant. It was then explained to the participant that a small voice recorder would be present to record the interview for accuracy and that the recordings would be transcribed by a transcription company. Without declining at any time, the participant answered each question.

Question 1: How long have you been a police officer?

Participant 2: "15 years."

Question 2: What are some reasons you decided to become a police officer?

Participant 2: "I've always liked to give back to the community. I was in the military. Once I got out of the military, it was just something that I felt like I could give back to the community. I feel like giving back, helping out, and trying to look out for people. I just feel like I'm a protector of citizens."

Question 3: What are the most stressful aspects of policing in your experience?

Participant 2: "Some of the things I think are stressful are dealing with a lot of issues that you see on the job, like domestics and dealing with child deaths and stuff like that. If you're not careful, I feel like it could take a toll on you and be real stressful to an individual."

Question 4: Explain the most stressful situation you've experienced as a police officer?

Participant 2: “Well, I think the most stressful situation would be when I first started policing. I think when you first start policing, there’s going to come a time when it’s either in you or it’s not. I got into a fight with . . . Well, it was actually three officers and I was one of them. There were like 50 different individuals that was trying to jump on us, and I didn’t know at the time . . . I feel like dealing with juveniles, I always felt like I’m grown, I wouldn’t do anything to a juvenile. But then when I looked up, I had two juveniles on top of me, and reality kicked in. It’s like, if I don’t get up from here, then these juveniles will kick my behind. So I got up, did what I had to do, and from that day on, it was like, I give you the respect you need, but if you come at me, regardless of who you are or what size you are, I’m going to do what I need to do to protect myself.”

Question 5: How did you cope with that experience?

Participant 2: “I realized, also, that when that happened, although it was very stressful . . . One of the other officers, when he was calling for assistance, and I heard those sirens coming, and when I saw the police come . . . and I realized that this was a brotherhood and that you just hold your own for a little while. Then I think that your brothers are going to always have your back. So I’ve tried to live by that and I always have my fellow officer’s back.”

Question 6: How did it impact you personally?

Participant 2: “Didn’t really . . . I mean, I’m not going to say it didn’t impact me, it just made me realize that this job is a dangerous job. Sometimes if you don’t do . . . You need to do things that you need to do in order to make it home at the end of the day.”

Question 7: Are you aware of any stress management programs available to you through your department?

Participant 2: "I'm aware of EAP."

Follow-up: How were you made aware?

Participant 2: "When I first became a supervisor, I had . . . when I first got people that were working for me, I had one of my. . . It wasn't my personnel, but it was another personnel on shift . . . came to me with some personal problems and because they felt like they could reach out to me. I reached out to another supervisor who . . . to ask them, 'What should I do?' And they advised me about the EAP program."

Question 8: Have you ever used any departmental programs to cope with stress?

Participant 2: "Yes. EAP."

Question 9: What could the police department do to help reduce workplace stress?

Participant 2: "They need to just let the employees know that . . . For one, they should treat everybody like they're human beings. Just because you make a certain rank doesn't mean to give you the right to try to talk down to somebody or look down on somebody. You should treat everybody equally and also let them know that if they do have problems, just try to look out. Because if you know an individual, you should get to know the people that work for you. So when they start having problems, you can notice the certain signs. Maybe them coming in late to work or something like that, or different things like that. But let them know that you're there to talk to them and if they don't want to open up to you, that there are other resources, such as EAP, that they can go to and talk to and be kept confidential."

The interview with Participant 2 was concluded with no further research discussion. A brief salutation of thanks for participating was given as Participant 2 departed.

### **Interview Participant 3**

After a brief person to person greeting between the researcher and participant, the informed consent form was reviewed and explained again. The informed consent form was then signed by the participant. It was then explained to the participant that a small voice recorder would be present to record the interview for accuracy and that the recordings would be transcribed by a transcription company. Without declining at any time, the participant answered each question.

Question 1: How long have you been a police officer?

Participant 3: "I've been a police officer for 14 years."

Question 2: What are some reasons you decided to become a police officer?

Participant 3: "To help and to also speak for people that can't speak for themselves."

Question 3: What are the most stressful aspects of policing in your experience?

Participant 3: "Safety, that's first. Safety first. Make sure I go back home to my kids. Most thing I'm concerned about safety. Make sure I don't violate nobody's rights. All my policies in the department."

Question 4: Explain the most stressful situation you've experienced as a police officer?

Participant 3: “I was with a department for a little over 10 years. I was going to the aid of a female deputy that called for help over the radio. In the process of me getting to her, I broke, dislocated, and had bone exposure at my right ankle. While I was out of work, the head person, sent a letter to my house stating me to bring his equipment back, I no longer work for him. They cut all my income off. I ain’t have no income for two years. Lost everything I had, then I went through a nasty divorce. That stress caused me to lose my gall bladder because of heavy stress. Doctor kept telling me to stop stressing, but it’s easy for a person to say when they a man and they have a way to take care of they kids. So, after that surgery, I gave everything to God and left it alone because stress will kill you.”

Question 5: How did you cope with that experience?

Participant 3: “Well, first of all, I grew from it. I’m a better person because of all that, what happened to me. I’m a stronger person, I’m a better person. I had my family, my mother and father and them, backing me 100%. I mean, what else you can ask for?”

Question 6: How did it impact you personally?

Participant 3: “That stress caused me to lose my gall bladder.”

Question 7: Are you aware of any stress management programs available to you through your department?

Participant 3: “As of right now, by me being new in this department, I don’t know right now. But, I know the information definitely to get. If I need it, I know I can go get the information with the captain that we got. I know he’ll provide it.”

Question 8: Have you ever used any departmental programs to cope with stress?

Participant 3: “No.”

Question 9: What could the police department do to help reduce workplace stress?

Participant 3: “To me, my opinion, coming from where I came from, me starting working here was where the stress leaves for me. So, when I came to work here, a load came off my back from the department I came from.”

The interview with Participant 3 was concluded with no further research discussion. A brief salutation of thanks for participating was given as Participant 3 departed.

#### **Interview Participant 4**

After a brief person to person greeting between the researcher and participant, the informed consent form was reviewed and explained again. The informed consent form was then signed by the participant. It was then explained to the participant that a small voice recorder would be present to record the interview for accuracy and that the recordings would be transcribed by a transcription company. Without declining at any time, the participant answered each question.

Question 1: How long have you been a police officer?

Participant 4: “This year makes 12 years in December.”

Question 2: What are some reasons you decided to become a police officer?

Participant 4: “Well, initially I wanted to become an FBI agent but I kind of just got stuck here.”

Question 3: What are the most stressful aspects of policing in your experience?

Participant 4: “Probably the internal politics of the job. Its kind of like, I feel like, the agency usually does things to please other folks more so than their employees and that can be very stressful.”

Question 4: Explain the most stressful situation you’ve experienced as a police officer?

Participant 4: “Probably death. Car crashes with juveniles involved and seeing people that are deceased and you having somebody around the same age, your child or whoever, close to you and seeing that. That can be very stressful.”

Question 5: How did you cope with that experience?

Participant 4: “Usually I just try to block it out. I don’t really deal with it. I look at it and keep moving, try to bring up another subject. Just gotta play like it didn’t happen and move on.”

Question 6: How did it impact you personally?

Participant 4: “Probably, now that I think about it, probably a good reason why, myself included, a lot of officers drink a lot when they get off work. You don’t even think about it while you be drinking. You just be drinking just to be drinking. You may have a couple of drinks when you get off, and I wouldn’t normally do that before I became a police officer, so apparently it happened for a reason, so I don’t know if that’s part of it or what but I kind of feel like that’s probably what that is.”

Question 7: Are you aware of any stress management programs available to you through your department?

Participant 4: “Yeah, we have an employee assistant program.”

Follow-up: How were you made aware?

Participant 4: “Well, when I became a supervisor, of course, you have to refer people to it. If there’s an issue or you’re having a problem with a certain type of employee or you’re seeing warning signs with people, you have to refer them to it, so I’m fully aware of it.”

Question 8: Have you ever used any departmental programs to cope with stress?

Participant 4: “No.”

Follow-up: Why not?

Participant 4: “Probably because of a stigma be attached to it more than likely. Somebody find out you going to see a shrink and they’ll be thinking you’re crazy, something wrong with you, so nobody really uses it unless you were referred, you know what I mean?”

Question 9: What could the police department do to help reduce workplace stress?

Participant 4: “I think they need to listen to the employees. When I say listen to them, not give them what they want, but actually sit down and have a real conversation and get some real answers. I think a lot of times people put on a front because people don’t know what the backlash is going to be based on what they say, so when they do ask questions, people don’t spit out really how they feel because they don’t know what the response is going to be. So, I feel like they need to listen to the employees when they do say something, try to get real answers and then you can really affect the problem if you got real answers.”

The interview with Participant 4 was concluded with no further research discussion. A brief salutation of thanks for participating was given as Participant 4 departed.

### **Interview Participant 5**

After a brief person to person greeting between the researcher and participant, the informed consent form was reviewed and explained again. The informed consent form was then signed by the participant. It was then explained to the participant that a small voice recorder would be present to record the interview for accuracy and that the recordings would be transcribed by a transcription company. Without declining at any time, the participant answered each question.

Question 1: How long have you been a police officer?

Participant 5: "26 years on the civilian side, seven and a half years in the United States Air Force."

Question 2: What are some reasons you decided to become a police officer?

Participant 5: "My mother kept a log when we were school. It was like a yearbook. You put your school picture, who your friends were, what classes you took. My first grade ones that I either wanted to be police officer or a firefighter. It's something that I wanted to do for a long period of time."

Question 3: What are the most stressful aspects of policing in your experience?

Participant 5: "Like I said, as a supervisor you deal with new officers. You get somebody that comes in, and they're trying to learn the job, and you're trying to teach

them. First of all, so they don't get hurt. Secondly, so they don't get sued. Just getting them to the level where they can proficiently be on their own."

Question 4: Explain the most stressful situation you've experienced as a police officer?

Participant 5: "We had an issue one time where a gentleman had run over his cousin twice with a vehicle. His mother actually babysat my son before I met her. Me and my wife divorced, and she was watching my son. At the time this happened, I knew that . . . We actually became good friends. When I went and arrest him, he had started fighting, and we ended up rolling around. He tried to take my taser, and the decision I had to make was whether or not to shoot the gentleman."

Question 5: How did you cope with that experience?

Participant 5: "Basically I compartmentalized and deal with that situation. I'll give you an example. There's another one. We had a nine-month-old baby that was beat to death by her mother. I had the opportunity to see the young lady in the hospital, and they transferred her to Macon Medical. Went up there and interviewed Mom at Macon Medical. The conversation went like it was now. The baby ended up passing away. I went home, hugged your kids, but three days later I was going on the road and had to pull off the side of the road. I was crying so bad. I don't deal with it here and now. I put it away, and then when I've got time, I deal with it then."

Question 6: How did it impact you personally?

Participant 5: "Makes you want to go home and hug your kids, let them know you love them. You try not . . . I try not to take the job home. My wife used to be a 911

dispatcher. If call her and tell her I'm late, she understands. My second wife did, but she actually helps me cope a lot. If I go home saying, she, "How was your day?" I was like, "It was a bad day." She will leave me alone until I come out and talk to her."

Question 7: Are you aware of any stress management programs available to you through your department?

Participant 5: "I am now. Like I said, our chief has been here about a year, going on a year and a half now. Prior to that, no. I knew they had employee stuff in process. I've never used it. We had an officer that went to pull over a car and was shot at. They actually brought a counselor in and talked to everybody as a group. Since then, I've learned we have four free . . . I think it's four free visits a year that we go talk to them at no cost to us. It's something the city provides."

Follow-up: And how were you made aware of that?

Participant 5: "Like I said, the officer being shot. Actually, the lady came up here and she introduced herself to me. When the officer got shot, I was on light duty, so I didn't come to that training. She came up here and she does pre-interviews with the applicants like a psychological interview. She explained to me that we have this available to us, so I learned that from her directly."

Question 8: Have you ever used any departmental programs to cope with stress?

Participant 5: "Personally, no, sir."

Follow-up: Any reason why?

Participant 5: "Well, first off, I didn't know they were available. Secondly, I'm the kind of person, I don't stress a lot. I recently probably in the past two years started

starting exercising and kayaking and all that, so that's my stress relief. I do know that there is a stigmatism that if you go talk to a psychologist or psychiatrist, that you know. I know that is changing. Over time the stigmatism isn't there with the new officers as it is with the older officers."

Question 9: What could the police department do to help reduce workplace stress?

Participant 5: "The only thing I can think of off the top of my head is maybe do something preemptive. Instead of an issue happening and then they call in and talk to them, maybe have . . . Like you coming out and doing this is one thing, but something similar. Basically have them come out and talk to each officer on a one-on-one basis 15 minutes if there's nothing going on, or if they don't want to talk or whatever. If they do, just make that available."

The interview with Participant 5 was concluded with no further research discussion. A brief salutation of thanks for participating was given as Participant 5 departed.

### **Interview Participant 6**

After a brief person to person greeting between the researcher and participant, the informed consent form was reviewed and explained again. The informed consent form was then signed by the participant. It was then explained to the participant that a small voice recorder would be present to record the interview for accuracy and that the recordings would be transcribed by a transcription company. Without declining at any time, the participant answered each question.

Question 1: How long have you been a police officer?

Participant 6: "I've been with Albany Police Department, this is my 11th year."

Question 2: What are some reasons you decided to become a police officer?

Participant 6: "I hated police growing up. Now one of the reasons I actually became a police, when I joined the military they made me a military police officer. So I realized the reason I didn't like police growing up is because they treated us differently. I seen police officers treat black people differently than they treated some of the Caucasians. So I grew up not liking them. But once I became a military police officer and I realized that I didn't have to be like them. I could be different. I could help others. So that's really what made me become a police officer."

Question 3: What are the most stressful aspects of policing in your experience?

Participant 6: "I'd say one of the most stressful things is how much of your personal time this job demands. When you have events such as Christmas, Fourth of July, anytime that when normal families getting together, our job's requiring us to work. That's one of the most stressful things. The other one, I would do regular homicides. So a lot of times it's easy to take a lot of this stuff home with you. Seeing people getting killed, seeing those bodies all the time, and when the community is not coming together and speaking out saying, "Hey, this is who did it." It's hard to solve a case without the community's help. And so that kind of takes a toll on you when you haven't solved a homicide to give that family closure."

Question 4: Explain the most stressful situation you've experienced as a police officer?

Participant 6: "I had a situation where, actually two situations, but the one I really speak on, I was hitting the nightclub and there was a gentleman that was in there. I didn't know him. And it was a young lady that I knew. We used to work together so I saw her. I approached her. And he was standing by her but they wasn't together. And I guess he had become staying with her so he felt like I disrespected him. The gentleman came up to me and said, "Hey man, you disrespected me. I don't like that." I started laughing at him. I said, "Man. You don't even know what I do." So after that, before I went and told Mark, I said, "This guy just approached me saying I disrespected him." So what happened after that, my uncle was like, "Well man, before we go, we probably just going to let security know." And you know, I wasn't thinking that, there were officers outside. To make a long story short, I went and told security that, "Hey, this guy had done threatened me. I don't know what's going to go on when I leave outside." And I had just gotten in trouble recently before this but this particular incident it really hurt me. So after I got outside another little guy that I didn't know came up to me poking me in my chest. "Hey man, I don't know what happened between you and my cousin, but you need to meet me around the corner." And I handled the situation just like I knew I should. I looked at the guy, police was standing here, my uncle got rowdy saying, "Hey man, he don't need to meet you nowhere." But with me just being in trouble, knowing that I got an appeal going on, I wasn't doing nothing stupid. So what happened, the guy touched me again, he said, "No man, I need you to meet me around the corner." I looked at the little dude. I said, "Look bro", just like that, "Don't touch me no more." An APD Officer stood right here looking at the dude doing this. And he did that he did it again. So I grabbed him and threw him.

And so after I threw him, the APD officer looked at me and my uncle and said, "Man take him home." So I walked down through the alley to come to the police department. I got a phone call from the APD officer saying, "Hey, Captain wants you to come back to the police station." So what happened is they ended up charging me with disorderly conduct. And I was like man, if they're charging me then somebody didn't say what happened. Because the security guard, he wrote a statement saying that boy kept poking me and I pushed him. Come to find out after I got all the paperwork, so you know all this stuff go to IA when you done got charged with something. They wrote me the ticket. But through the course of the investigation, I got all the paperwork, come to find out the APD officer outright lied on me. His story straight up different from the security officer. The APD officer wrote that he was standing there, he got the situation, me and the guy was arguing, which is a lie because I just told him don't touch me no more. And then he wrote that after he got the situation calm I suddenly grabbed the guy and shoved him. But the most hurtful thing he put in there, in that only statement, was that after I pushed the guy, he don't know if I went back in the club or fled the scene, when he was the fucking one that told me to go home. And to have an officer write a statement and lie on you is one of the most hurtful things. That was a stressful situation that you can go through. To make a long story short, after I ended up going, they dismissed it from court, they dismissed the ticket. IA, Internal Affairs, at the end of their investigation, they dismissed everything. And supposedly their investigation they met with the department head because they knew I wasn't lying. I shouldn't have been charged but to have your name put out like that, they put it on the news that I was in a brawl. Embarrassment, you know what I'm saying?

It was embarrassing. But that was the most stressful thing I ever been through as an officer.”

Question 5: How did you cope with that experience?

Participant 6: “I changed my circle. I actually stopped going out to the club. If I’m not going with my wife, then I don’t go out. And I don’t hang, I minimized my circle to the point where I really don’t deal with police outside of business.”

Question 6: How did it impact you personally?

Participant 6: “My personal life changed some. My social life. So I didn’t, I was going, I would go out with some of the police officer’s, have drinks. So my social life changed. It made me more now where I’m just at home. Whatever I’m doing I’m at home and that’s it.”

Question 7: Are you aware of any stress management programs available to you through your department?

Participant 6: “I think they have, they do have a program. I can’t think of the name, but”

Follow-up: How were you made aware?

Participant 6: “They (the department) made me aware of it.”

Question 8: Have you ever used any departmental programs to cope with stress?

Participant 6: “I have. I actually, right around when my son died while I was working. But I forgot about that one. That was stressful too, but . . . What’s the name of the? I can’t think of the name of, but it’s, we got a program, where we go talk to a . . . I just call it a shrink.”

Question 9: What could the police department do to help reduce workplace stress?

Participant 6: “Quit demanding so much of your time. After you work 12 hours, put in so many hours, people need a break from this. I mean, we know what we signed up for, but if they start bothering people all the time with their time, because that’s overwhelming, I think, and be fair. Fair treatment that will help more officers to manage the stress already anyway. That’s what it is a lot. Time. Too much of your time.”

The interview with Participant 6 was concluded with no further research discussion. A brief salutation of thanks for participating was given as Participant 6 departed.

### **Interview Participant 7**

After a brief person to person greeting between the researcher and participant, the informed consent form was reviewed and explained again. The informed consent form was then signed by the participant. It was then explained to the participant that a small voice recorder would be present to record the interview for accuracy and that the recordings would be transcribed by a transcription company. Without declining at any time, the participant answered each question.

Question 1: How long have you been a police officer?

Participant 7: “I’ve been a police officer for ten years.”

Question 2: What are some reasons you decided to become a police officer?

Participant 7: “I’ve always wanted to be a police officer, so I walked a certain line, didn’t do certain things.”

Question 3: What are the most stressful aspects of policing in your experience?

Participant 7: “Most stressful aspect . . . negative comments from the public. That feeling that rules don’t apply to other people. Feeling like you always have to prove yourself to the organization. Oh this is big one . . . constant changes in policy. And legislation.”

Question 4: Explain the most stressful situation you’ve experienced as a police officer?

Participant 7: “Just pressure to make a decision on a case and then when you make a decision, getting scolded for the decision that you make.”

Question 5: How did you cope with that experience?

Participant 7: “I tucked it in my pocket and know next time to make a different decision because either way, there’s gonna be stress to make a decision whether . . . it doesn’t matter the situation, it’s gonna be a stress to make a decision. And then they choose if it was the right decision or not.”

Question 6: How did it impact you personally?

Participant 7: “I just makes you walk on eggshells.”

Question 7: Are you aware of any stress management programs available to you through your department?

Participant 7: “I only know of one, but I . . . yeah, I only know of one, which is, I forget what they call it. EAP program or something like that.”

Follow-up: How were you made aware?

Participant 7: “Hearing about other people who had to go to it.”

Question 8: Have you ever used any departmental programs to cope with stress?

Participant 7: “Yeah.”

Question 9: What could the police department do to help reduce workplace stress?

Participant 7: “I really don’t see much that they can do other than try to understand situations because there’s going to be stress coming from all angles. There’s stress on them so in turn, they put stress on us. So it’s just a revolving door.”

The interview with Participant 7 was concluded with no further research discussion. A brief salutation of thanks for participating was given as Participant 7 departed.

### **Interview Participant 8**

After a brief person to person greeting between the researcher and participant, the informed consent form was reviewed and explained again. The informed consent form was then signed by the participant. It was then explained to the participant that a small voice recorder would be present to record the interview for accuracy and that the recordings would be transcribed by a transcription company. Without declining at any time, the participant answered each question.

Question 1: How long have you been a police officer?

Participant 8: “I’m working on my 15th year.”

Question 2: What are some reasons you decided to become a police officer?

Participant 8: “Honestly, I figured it was a step up from my last job. I think I was in a job before where I was more hated than a police officer. I was a bill collector for 10 years.”

Question 3: What are the most stressful aspects of policing in your experience?

Participant 8: “Children getting hurt. And the elderly, the people that can’t defend themselves. That’s the toughest part of the job.”

Question 4: Explain the most stressful situation you’ve experienced as a police officer?

Participant 8: “The most stressful situation? See, I figure myself a different breed. I don’t get stressed out a lot. Probably the most stressful situations I get into is searching dark buildings because the fear is a child is in there, or something, and you might end up hurting a child just because they jump out on you and stuff. But those are fleeting moments. I don’t constantly worry about that.”

Question 5: How did you cope with that experience?

Participant 8: “Well, I do my job. You know? You’ve got to do it. If there’s a situation that happens, you’ll have to deal with it on an individual basis.”

Question 6: How did it impact you personally?

Participant 8: “Like I said, I’m not like the typical. I don’t stress very long over there. I think bill collection was, honestly, more stressful than this job. I learned to deal with it a long time ago. I got in this job a little later. I was 32 years old when I entered, so it wasn’t I had no life experience coming into it.”

Question 7: Are you aware of any stress management programs available to you through your department?

Participant 8: “I know we have EAP, but you know, I think stress, other than an EAP program, when it gets too much for you to handle, I think stress is something that’s

got to be handled individually. Or when it gets to the EAP level, you're talking to counselors and stuff like that."

Follow-up: And how were you made aware of that?

Participant 8: "Just recently, they brought the woman in that handles that, but during the hiring process, you're made aware of the EAP programs."

Question 8: Have you ever used any departmental programs to cope with stress?

Participant 8: "No."

Question 9: What could the police department do to help reduce workplace stress?

Participant 8: "I'd say the biggest thing is consistency, as far as how officers are treated. There's always the favoritism within the agency and stuff like that. That's usually what brings on the stress is someone feels like they're not being treated the same as someone else. Then actually the manpower."

The interview with Participant 8 was concluded with no further research discussion. A brief salutation of thanks for participating was given as Participant 8 departed.

### **Interview Participant 9**

After a brief person to person greeting between the researcher and participant, the informed consent form was reviewed and explained again. The informed consent form was then signed by the participant. It was then explained to the participant that a small voice recorder would be present to record the interview for accuracy and that the recordings would be transcribed by a transcription company. Without declining at any time, the participant answered each question.

Question 1: How long have you been a police officer?

Participant 9: “19 years. I come from a law enforcement family. I loved all the little shiny things on the bat belt.”

Question 2: What are some reasons you decided to become a police officer?

Participant 9: “I don’t know. Every day is a different day so that seemed like it would fit me well.”

Question 3: What are the most stressful aspects of policing in your experience?

Participant 9: “Bullets whizzing by. Yeah, that’s not a good feeling whatsoever. That was just a more recent situation. That was not a good situation to be in. Just getting the paperwork done in time for court. We’re short-staffed so it’s just me and the captain right now and it’s very stressful.”

Question 4: Explain the most stressful situation you’ve experienced as a police officer?

Participant 9: “We had a double homicide last month. We went to arrest the guy up in Perry. I’m super glad that the decision was made by the powers that be to use SWAT because the guy started shooting through the door and hit the guy with the shield two times on the shield. Anyway, what I thought I was well far out of range of anything, being that I wasn’t even on the motel lot. I was at the restaurant next door. Damn it, man. The bullets were just . . . I never heard bullets go by me before. I’ve never been on that side I guess you’d say. I could hear them snap and crack as they go past my head. When I’d look to the right I’d see them skipping across the parking lot where I was standing at

just a few feet away and then across highway 41. That was probably my most puckered experience.”

Question 5: How did you cope with that experience?

Participant 9: “Well, we had already been working probably 24 hours at that point. What’s a few more hours at the GBI field office in Perry? A lot of coffee. Then I went home and just fell asleep.”

Question 6: How did it impact you personally?

Participant 9: “I really don’t want to be in that kind of a situation ever again. I told Rhett, the agent in charge, that I was never leaving Cordele with him ever again. I know it wasn’t his fault. It made me think more about officer safety issues and making sure that we make the right decisions when we’re on those critical incidents. Granted the guy had just killed two females just because they made him mad but at the same time I don’t want to see him get hurt during the apprehension process. I don’t want to see any of my fellow folks get injured at the same time. Officer safety issues became I guess more apparent to me when that happened.”

Question 7: Are you aware of any stress management programs available to you through your department?

Participant 9: “I know we got psychologists and stuff like that on standby that we can go use.”

Follow-up: And how were you made aware of that?

Participant 9: “Chief actually had the counselor come to the agency and talk to everyone in the department after Patrolman Brian Lewis was shot at on a traffic stop.

That happened last fall but I think they came earlier this year to talk to us about it. I knew we always had psychologists on standby for us that we could use. He had her come and talk to us to dispel the stigma that comes with going to speak to a psychologist or therapist, whatever, and all that. It made it much more comfortable I think for some of the folks to go utilize her services.”

Question 8: Have you ever used any departmental programs to cope with stress?

Participant 9: “No.”

Follow-up: Any reason why?

Participant 9: “I cope with it pretty good. I’ve got a lot of hobbies that just are my own hobbies. Ride my motorcycle, ride my horses. I got great family support, my church and my faith. I have many ways of coping with it.”

Question 9: What could the police department do to help reduce workplace stress?

Participant 9: “Well, it’d be great if we could fix the staffing issue but that’s a nationwide problem.”

The interview with Participant 9 was concluded with no further research discussion. A brief salutation of thanks for participating was given as Participant 9 departed.

### **Interview Participant 10**

After a brief person to person greeting between the researcher and participant, the informed consent form was reviewed and explained again. The informed consent form was then signed by the participant. It was then explained to the participant that a small voice recorder would be present to record the interview for accuracy and that the

recordings would be transcribed by a transcription company. Without declining at any time, the participant answered each question.

Question 1: How long have you been a police officer?

Participant 10: "12 years."

Question 2: What are some reasons you decided to become a police officer?

Participant 10: "I needed something to do with my life and I needed a job, and I wanted to help the community."

Question 3: What are the most stressful aspects of policing in your experience?

Participant 10: "Just dealing with the citizens that don't understand some of our procedures and some of the things that we have to do, and some of the things we're not allowed to do."

Question 4: Explain the most stressful situation you've experienced as a police officer?

Participant 10: "Dealing with a robbery situation and not having enough evidence to arrest the people that they thought was guilty. So it took me a little bit of time to gather all the evidence in order to be able to arrest the suspect, but in the meantime the victims were complaining that we weren't doing enough."

Question 5: How did you cope with that experience?

Participant 10: "I just basically kept in contact with the victims, and tried to just explain to them what was going on and just talked with my coworkers, see if they had any more options or things that I could do to make the situation better."

Question 6: How did it impact you personally?

Participant 10: “It was just stressful and just made my life a little bit harder for that little small amount of time.”

Question 7: Are you aware of any stress management programs available to you through your department?

Participant 10: “I believe we have a EAP program and we have a gym that’s temporarily out of service, other than that, not much.”

Follow-up: How were you made aware?

Participant 10: “I just hear people talking about it.”

Question 8: Have you ever used any departmental programs to cope with stress?

Participant 10: “No”

Follow-up: Why not?

Participant 10: “Because I drink alcohol to deal with stress.”

Question 9: What could the police department do to help reduce workplace stress?

Participant 10: “I don’t know. Probably just give us more in our paychecks and I don’t know, probably implement some more programs. I don’t really know . . . there’s a lot of stuff.”

The interview with Participant 10 was concluded with no further research discussion. A brief salutation of thanks for participating was given as Participant 10 departed.

### **Interview Participant 11**

After a brief person to person greeting between the researcher and participant, the informed consent form was reviewed and explained again. The informed consent form

was then signed by the participant. It was then explained to the participant that a small voice recorder would be present to record the interview for accuracy and that the recordings would be transcribed by a transcription company. Without declining at any time, the participant answered each question.

Question 1: How long have you been a police officer?

Participant 11: "Approximately 11 and a half years."

Question 2: What are some reasons you decided to become a police officer?

Participant 11: "Well, I like helping people, outside of protecting and serving. I like helping people who can't defend themselves and I like to do my best in my ability to hold people accountable."

Question 3: What are the most stressful aspects of policing in your experience?

Participant 11: "Trying to get solutions to things that are out of your control."

Question 4: Explain the most stressful situation you've experienced as a police officer?

Participant 11: "I would have to say one time on a traffic accident, me and a coworker, I was on my way home and the coworker, we witnessed a guy in a wreck. The female was able to get out, but apparently the guy died in the inflamed vehicle, which was engulfed in flames."

Question 5: How did you cope with that experience?

Participant 11: "Just talking, sharing with my spouse. Talking about it. Venting about it, because at first, you always have that thought in your mind, "What could I have

done more?” Could have gotten the individual out, but other than that just more communicating, getting it off your chest.”

Question 6: How did it impact you personally?

Participant 11: “Personally, it just made me look at it as what if it had been one of my loved ones? If it had been one of my loved ones, I saw that same individual, didn’t know anything about him, but just looked at him and said, hey, they have a family, so it made me think about it from a family standpoint.”

Question 7: Are you aware of any stress management programs available to you through your department?

Participant 11: “EAP - Employee Assistance Program.”

Follow-up: How were you made aware?

Participant 11: “Through website. Shared information from my employee resource manager.”

Question 8: Have you ever used any departmental programs to cope with stress?

Participant 11: “No”

Follow-up: Why not?

Participant 11: “In my mind, I felt like I can get past it with my own methods of dealing with it. They are positive methods. Nothing negative. But I just felt like I could get past it, which I did.”

Question 9: What could the police department do to help reduce workplace stress?

Participant 11: “Do a better job of recognizing their personnel and refrain from turning a blind eye when they see situations. Once they see those early warning triggers.”

The interview with Participant 11 was concluded with no further research discussion. A brief salutation of thanks for participating was given as Participant 11 departed.

### **Interview Participant 12**

After a brief person to person greeting between the researcher and participant, the informed consent form was reviewed and explained again. The informed consent form was then signed by the participant. It was then explained to the participant that a small voice recorder would be present to record the interview for accuracy and that the recordings would be transcribed by a transcription company. Without declining at any time, the participant answered each question.

Question 1: How long have you been a police officer?

Participant 12: "Seven years, it'll be eight years in October."

Question 2: What are some reasons you decided to become a police officer?

Participant 12: "Finding a job where I can make a difference, actually accomplish something. And finding a job where the people involved actually had a moral compass."

Question 3: What are the most stressful aspects of policing in your experience?

Participant 12: "Sometimes management can be stressful. I know that's probably not your first typical answer, but I think that can be a stressor, for sure. And I would say just the public, and the negativity that people have towards you. And you do a difficult job, that not many people have an understanding of. That, yeah, I would say that. Just dealing with the difficulties of making the arrests, having to make the hard decisions, and taking people away from their families, when it's stressful."

Question 4: Explain the most stressful situation you've experienced as a police officer?

Participant 12: "Most stressful . . . I've worked in investigations, as a detective. I would say that probably was, like any time we had a homicide, there was a lot of stress, 'cause you had everybody looking at you, as the primary detective, even when working with GBI. So, I would say just any homicide we had, those were extremely stressful, 'cause we were trying to get stuff done in a short amount of time. But I found the more work together, the more we worked together, then the more if someone just took the leadership role, and said, "Hey, I need you to do this, this, this," we got a lot more accomplished."

Question 5: How did you cope with that experience?

Participant 12: "Kinda like I said, just learning that someone's gotta take that leadership role, and say, "Hey, we need you to do this. I need you to go run and find this person. I need you to go find this person, as far as evidence. Or I need you to go look at this location." Whatever it may be. Communicating, communicating with each other, and then, just again, realizing you can't do it all. Asking for help is a big, big part of that."

Question 6: How did it impact you personally?

Participant 12: "Well, you get confidence, for sure, especially if you are willing to take charge of the situation, and work through the tough parts, the busy parts, and the stressful parts. Give you confidence, but it also can be stressful for your family, and things like that. And then, just communicating with them, and saying, "This is part of the job, and at times I'm gonna be gone for a few days, at a time." Where, we gotta just make

it work. So figuring that out helped. And I always found communication was a big key to that.”

Question 7: Are you aware of any stress management programs available to you through your department?

Participant 12: “Yeah. We have a counselor, that the agency uses, out of Americus.”

Follow-up: And how were you made aware of that?

Participant 12: “We had a class. We had a class, a few months back, where we, she came in and explained what her services were, and that the city has had her for years, but we may or may not have realized that she was available. But that she’s available, if we just need to go anonymously, we can go in and talk to her, and set up an appointment, et cetera.”

Question 8: Have you ever used any departmental programs to cope with stress?

Participant 12: “I haven’t. I really haven’t.”

Follow -up- Any reason why?

Participant 12: “I mean, at the time, like I said, when I was in investigations a few years ago, I don’t know, I’m a guy. I guess I don’t think I really need it. I feel like I can handle it. But, we’ve seen officers, not in our department, but in our community, that have committed suicide. We’ve had two in the last year, year and a half.”

Question 9: What could the police department do to help reduce workplace stress?

Participant 12: “The only thing I can think of, is be more present, as far as leadership, and be aware of when people are having issues. Going and having a

conversation with them, letting them know we're here for them. I know that helped me. My dad passed like right after I got hired here, years ago. And they supported me, and said, "Hey, you do what you gotta do. Take you're time." And let me go, and I was a brand new employee. I was just really happy to see that they took care of me like that, and said, "Hey, you're gonna have a job when you come back. Don't worry about it."

The interview with Participant 12 was concluded with no further research discussion. A brief salutation of thanks for participating was given as Participant 12 departed.

### **Interview Participant 13**

After a brief person to person greeting between the researcher and participant, the informed consent form was reviewed and explained again. The informed consent form was then signed by the participant. It was then explained to the participant that a small voice recorder would be present to record the interview for accuracy and that the recordings would be transcribed by a transcription company. Without declining at any time, the participant answered each question.

Question 1: How long have you been a police officer?

Participant 13: "2 years."

Question 2: What are some reasons you decided to become a police officer?

Participant 13: "Well, it's mostly the reason I'd say . . . One reason would be my mom, watching her when I was younger. She wasn't a police officer, but she was an armed security guard so I was just like . . . It was kind of looked up to my mamma doing that. So I was wanting to do something in that atmosphere. And then just the times now

are changing, and I kind of wanted to offer people of color fair policing. And I felt like if I got into it, the stigma of, “Oh, we’re going to get a cop that don’t care about us show up.” Maybe if they see me show up, they’ll know I’m just going to be fair, by the book. The law is the law. I have seen it happen a lot now too. So I think it’s working out for the best.”

Question 3: What are the most stressful aspects of policing in your experience?

Participant 13: “I would say the most stressful is the being away from family.”

Question 4: Explain the most stressful situation you’ve experienced as a police officer?

Participant 13: “I would say the most stressful thing so far would be since my three years, not that long, after having my son, coming back, and I’m nursing, so trying to stop to come into the office, to take all this stuff off, to nursing, then get dispatched to a call, and get back dressed, and get back to a call, so that has been the most stressful thing so far.”

Question 5: How did you cope with that experience?

Participant 13: “I go home, and I vent to my husband. So he just listens to me just cry all day.”

Question 6: How did it impact you personally?

Participant 13: “I have to say sometimes, I can be a little standoffish, when I go home, maybe not so much ready to be bothered my kids. I’ll tell them like, “Mommy come home. Give me at least 30 minutes just to myself” and then I’m good to go. I kind of have to just digress.”

Question 7: Are you aware of any stress management programs available to you through your department?

Participant 13: "Besides the psych person, No."

Follow-up: And how were you made aware of that?

Participant 13: "Well, I think when I was first hired on, they let us know that if we need to talk with somebody"

Question 8: Have you ever used any departmental programs to cope with stress?

Participant 13: "No"

Follow -up- Any reason why?

Participant 13: "I just felt like I haven't needed to."

Question 9: What could the police department do to help reduce workplace stress?

Participant 13: "I know it's kind of a hard thing to do, but if we could just get some help."

The interview with Participant 13 was concluded with no further research discussion. A brief salutation of thanks for participating was given as Participant 13 departed.

#### **Interview Participant 14**

After a brief person to person greeting between the researcher and participant, the informed consent form was reviewed and explained again. The informed consent form was then signed by the participant. It was then explained to the participant that a small voice recorder would be present to record the interview for accuracy and that the

recordings would be transcribed by a transcription company. Without declining at any time, the participant answered each question.

Question 1: How long have you been a police officer?

Participant 14: "18 years."

Question 2: What are some reasons you decided to become a police officer?

Participant 14: "Wanting to help others, and some bad things that happened in my family, my childhood dealing with law enforcement, and want to make a difference."

Question 3: What are the most stressful aspects of policing in your experience?

Participant 14: "Disgruntled, upset supervisors."

Question 4: Explain the most stressful situation you've experienced as a police officer?

Participant 14: "My dealing with those stressful supervisors, a supervisor, and doing a grievance and nothing taking place."

Question 5: How did you cope with that experience?

Participant 14: "Through my friends at work, and through family."

Question 6: How did it impact you personally?

Participant 14: "A part of me doesn't want to believe that the system doesn't work like it's supposed to work."

Question 7: Are you aware of any stress management programs available to you through your department?

Participant 14: "No."

Follow-up: Why do you feel like you're not aware?

Participant 14: “Maybe because I haven’t reached out for one, any help.”

Question 8: Have you ever used any departmental programs to cope with stress?

Participant 14: “No”

Question 9: What could the police department do to help reduce workplace stress?

Participant 14: “Consistency. Making sure that your upper management is capable of doing the job.”

The interview with Participant 14 was concluded with no further research discussion. A brief salutation of thanks for participating was given as Participant 14 departed.

### **Interview Participant 15**

After a brief person to person greeting between the researcher and participant, the informed consent form was reviewed and explained again. The informed consent form was then signed by the participant. It was then explained to the participant that a small voice recorder would be present to record the interview for accuracy and that the recordings would be transcribed by a transcription company. Without declining at any time, the participant answered each question.

Question 1: How long have you been a police officer?

Participant 15: “13 years.”

Question 2: What are some reasons you decided to become a police officer?

Participant 15: “The main reason I became a police officer is because I wanted to work in the Crime Scene Unit. I want to be a Crime Scene Investigator. The Albany

Police Department had a unit here for that, so I applied, worked here for seven years, trying to work to the Crime Scene Unit, worked there five and a half years.”

Question 3: What are the most stressful aspects of policing in your experience?

Participant 15: “I think the most stressful aspects would be personnel shortage, having to work mandatory overtime, missing out on holidays with family, the biggest thing. Especially when you’re short personnel and you can’t take off because you have to work, so I would say holidays and spending time with family would be the most stressful, along with working shifts with not enough people.”

Question 4: Explain the most stressful situation you’ve experienced as a police officer?

Participant 15: “The most stressful situation I experienced as an officer had to deal with working with a supervisor, who fabricated a situation with me to try to get me terminated.”

Question 5: How did you cope with that experience?

Participant 15: “I had a meeting with the chief and I told him that he had to transfer me.”

Follow-up: Did you get transferred?

Participant 15: “I did get transferred, it took me about two weeks to get transferred, however, I still had to work with that supervisor for that timeframe. I did my job, which I always do, and I know how that person was. I wasn’t surprised that they did it, so I was cordial, I did what I was supposed to do as I always did, and I was transferred.”

Question 6: How did it impact you personally?

Participant 15: “It pissed me off. Because I’m too good of a worker to be subjected to nonsense like that. The supervisor had a problem with me, because that supervisor did not necessarily want to do things the right way. I am strict about policy and the law. He is one of those people who was accommodating to others, and will bend rules and break rules, and I’m not going to do that, because I know the greater liability that comes along with it. So, in turn, he saw me as always challenging him and it was a problem, because he said I was too outspoken and determined, but, as long as I’m doing what is in accordance with the law and policy, then it’s okay. So he had an issue with that and then he thought like I was influencing the other officers to be outspoken. He just saw me as a problem, so he tried to get rid of me.”

Question 7: Are you aware of any stress management programs available to you through your department?

Participant 15: “The city offers EAP, which is counseling. That’s the only resource that I’m aware of.”

Follow-up: How were you made aware?

Participant 15: “Someone came in muster and talked about it, they handed out little brochures on it.”

Question 8: Have you ever used any departmental programs to cope with stress?

Participant 15: “No”

Follow-up: Why not?

Participant 15: “I don’t trust anyone in the department or the city.”

Question 9: What could the police department do to help reduce workplace stress?

Participant 15: “Listen to the officers, be more considerate, and realize that once people move up in the rank structure, they tend to forget, or they don’t care, because they’re not subjected to the issues that officers are facing. So, the superiors should stay in contact with their officers, be aware of what is going on in their organization, and that will help reduce workplace stress, which could improve retention and all the other issues that agencies are facing. Especially ours.”

The interview with Participant 15 was concluded with no further research discussion. A brief salutation of thanks for participating was given as Participant 15 departed.

### **Interview HR Participant 1**

After a brief person to person greeting between the researcher and participant, the informed consent form was reviewed and explained again. The informed consent form was then signed by the participant. It was then explained to the participant that a small voice recorder would be present to record the interview for accuracy and that the recordings would be transcribed by a transcription company. Without declining at any time, the participant answered each question.

Question 1: How long have you been an employee at the Human Resources Department?

HR Participant 1: “August will be 20 years.”

Question 2: Could you please tell me about the stress management program(s) offered to police officers in general?

HR Participant 1: “The main program is the EAP program through City Human Resources. And there’s another program that Chief likes to use. I can’t think of the name of it, but it deals with other officers that have been put in the same situation. And they call the officers up. I don’t even know if it’s an official title for that program. But they call other officers that have been put in the same situation, and they come and talk to them.”

Question 3: What happens when an officer seeks treatment for coping with experiences a traumatic event? Can you take me through the process step by step?

HR Participant 1: “Then we refer them to EAP. We have a 24 hour hotline now that they can call. And the hotline doesn’t get them to somebody. But it allows them to be able to to make an appointment. So even though they may not be able to talk to someone right then, they should be able to get an appointment within that week. So there’s a 24 hour number. They don’t have to wait until the next day to make the appointment.”

Question 4: How are these treatments or programs evaluated for effectiveness?

HR Participant 1: “Their program goes through a bid process. And they’re supposed to do surveys with the employees to see how they feel about the program.”

The interview with HR Participant 1 was concluded with no further research discussion. A brief salutation of thanks for participating was given as HR Participant 1 departed.

## **Interview HR Participant 2**

After a brief person to person greeting between the researcher and participant, the informed consent form was reviewed and explained again. The informed consent form

was then signed by the participant. It was then explained to the participant that a small voice recorder would be present to record the interview for accuracy and that the recordings would be transcribed by a transcription company. Without declining at any time, the participant answered each question

Question 1: How long have you been an employee at the Human Resources Department?

HR Participant 2: "Four years."

Question 2: Could you please tell me about the stress management program(s) offered to police officers in general?

HR Participant 2: "Generally, we just get the letter of recommendation from the chief, and then we send them to Harmony Counseling if there's an issue. From there, if they reschedule them, we can do the rescheduling and such."

Question 3: What happens when an officer seeks treatment for coping with experiences a traumatic event? Can you take me through the process step by step?

HR Participant 2: "Like I said, we just send them to the psychiatrist and from there, she makes her recommendations as to follow through with visit sessions. Or, if they don't need to be in the PD, anything like that, we follow their recommendations."

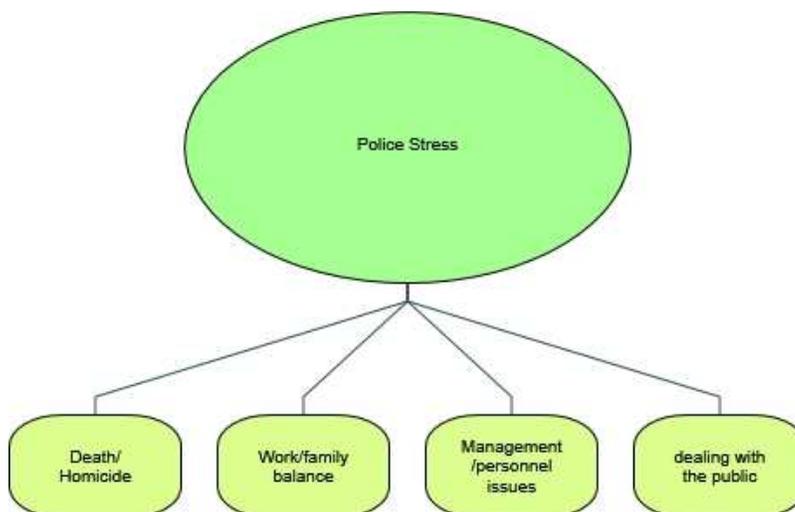
Question 4: How are these treatments or programs evaluated for effectiveness?

HR Participant 2: "I honestly can't answer that one"

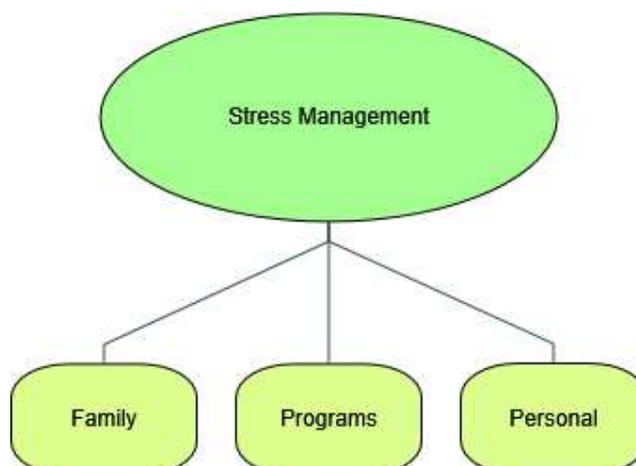
The interview with HR Participant 2 was concluded with no further research discussion. A brief salutation of thanks for participating was given as HR Participant 2 departed.

## Themes

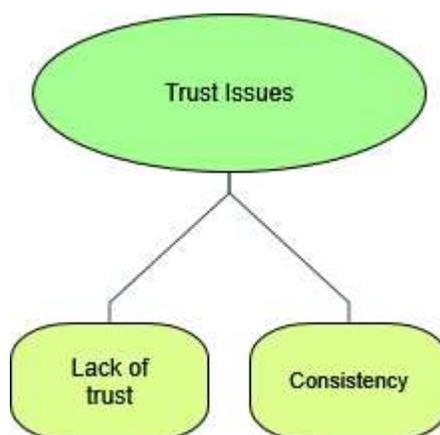
Once each participant's interview was transcribed verbatim, I reviewed each transcript multiple times. I then organized and analyzed the data using NVivo 12. Three main themes emerged from the data, as well as eight subthemes. Each theme and subtheme corresponded to the particular node where a specific NVivo code and pattern code was categorized. These themes assisted with answering some of the research questions. Figures 1, 2, and 3 represent the structural analysis that lead to the themes and subthemes.



*Figure 1.* Coding structure of theme 1 and subthemes. Structural analysis from the theme of police stress as the parent node(Theme) and the child nodes(subthemes) of death or homicide, work/family balance, management or personnel issues, and dealing with the public.



*Figure 2.* Coding structure of theme 2 and subthemes. Structural analysis from the theme of stress management as the parent node(Theme) and the child nodes(subthemes) of family, programs and personal.



*Figure 3.* Coding structure of theme 3 and subthemes. Structural analysis from the theme of trust issues as the parent node(Theme) and the child nodes(subthemes) of lack of trust and consistency.

Figure 1 depicts the emergence of the first theme, police stress. Subthemes consisted of death or homicide, work/family balance, management or personnel issues,

and dealing with the public. Participants were able to provide detailed descriptions of their lived experiences during the interview process.

Figure 2 depicts the emergence of the second theme, stress management.

Subthemes consisted of family and programs. Participants were able to provide detailed descriptions of their lived experiences during the interview process.

Figure 3 depicts the emergence of the third theme, trust issues. Subthemes consisted of lack of trust and consistency. Participants were able to provide detailed descriptions of their lived experiences during the interview process.

### **Theme 1: Police Stress**

The first theme that emerged from the data was the causes of police stress.

Participants discussed the different aspects of being a police officer that lead to stress

**Death /Homicide.** Death or homicide was the first subtheme that emerged under police stress. During the interviews, when asked, “What are the most stressful aspects of being a police officer?” Out of the fifteen police officer participants, seven (46.7%) indicated that death or homicide contributed to job-related stress. For example, Participant 2 discussed the difficulties of dealing with “child deaths” as a major job-related stressor. Participant 4 stated, “Probably death. Car crashes with juveniles involved and seeing people that are deceased and you having somebody around the same age, your child or whoever, close to you and seeing that. That can be very stressful.” Participant 5 stated, “We had a nine-month-old baby that was beat to death by her mother.” Participant 6 stated “I would do regular homicide. So a lot of times it’s easy to take a lot of this stuff home with you. Seeing people getting killed, seeing those bodies all the time, and when

the community is not coming together and speaking out saying, "Hey, this is who did it." Participant 9 stated, "Granted the guy had just killed two females just because they made him mad but at the same time I don't want to see him get hurt during the apprehension process." Participant 11 stated,

I would have to say one time on a traffic accident, me and a coworker, I was on my way home and the coworker, we witnessed a guy in a wreck. The female was able to get out, but apparently the guy died in the inflamed vehicle, which was engulfed in flames.

Participant 12 stated, "I would say that probably was, like any time we had a homicide, there was a lot of stress, because you had everybody looking at you, as the primary detective, even when working with GBI."

**Work/family balance.** Work/family balance was the second subtheme that emerges under police stress. Multiple officers talked about the stress of being away from family during interview sessions. Participant 6 stated,

I'd say one of the most stressful things is how much of your personal time this job demands. When you have events such as Christmas, Fourth of July, anytime that when normal families getting together, our job's requiring us to work.

Participant 13 stated,

I would say the most stressful thing so far would be since my three years, not that long, after having my son, coming back, and I'm nursing, so trying to stop to come into the office, to take all this stuff off, to nursing, then get dispatched to a

call, and get back dressed, and get back to a call, so that has been the most stressful thing so far.

Participant 13 also mentioned that being away from family is very stressful. Participant 15 stated, “Having to work mandatory overtime, and missing out on holidays with family can be very stressful.”

**Management/personnel issues.** Management and personnel issues were the third subtheme to emerge under police stress. Several officers described management and personnel issues as being stressful during the interview process. Participant 4 described dealing with the internal politics of the job as being very stressful. Participant 5 indicated that supervising new officers and teaching them the job can be stressful. Participant 6 stated, “The most stressful situation I’ve experienced as a police officer actually was dealing with a coworker.” Four of the participants (#8,#9,#13,&#15) described being short staffed as being stress. These participants are indicating that being short of manpower causes them to have to work overtime, sometimes mandatory. With the added work hours combined with the potential threat of danger, lack of rest, and personal time taken away, officers often feel the mental and physical effects. Participant 12 stated, “Sometimes management can be stressful.”

**Dealing with the public.** Dealing with the public was the fourth subtheme to emerge under police stress. Six of the fifteen officers (40%) described dealing with the public as being stressful during the interview process. Participant 2 stated “Well, it was actually three officers and I was one of them. There were like 50 different individuals that was trying to jump on us.” Participant 3 described balancing the threats of the job with

the conscience of making sure no constitutional rights or departmental policies are violated can be stressful. Participant 6 stated “It’s hard to solve a case without the community’s help. And so that kind of takes a toll on you when you haven’t solved a homicide to give that family closure.” Participant 7 stated, “One of the most stressful aspects of policing is the negative comments from the public.” Participant 10 stated, “Just dealing with the citizens that don’t understand some of our procedures and some of the things that we have to do, and some of the things we’re not allowed to do.” Participant 12 stated “I would say just the public and the negativity that people have towards you. And you do a difficult job, that not many people have an understanding of.

## **Theme 2: Stress Management**

The second theme that emerged from the data was stress management.

Participants described the methods they use to cope with job-related stress.

**Family.** Family was the first subtheme that emerged under stress management. Seven of the fifteen officers (46%) mentioned a form of family when discussing their methods for coping with job-related stress. Participant 2 stated,

I realized that this was a brotherhood and that you just hold your own for a little while. Then I think that your brothers are going to always have your back. So I’ve tried to live by that and I always have my fellow officer’s back.

Participant 5 stated,

My second wife did, but she actually helps me cope a lot. If I go home saying, she, “How was your day?” I was like, “It was a bad day.” She will leave me alone until I come out and talk to her.

Participant 9 stated “I got great family support, my church and my faith. I have many ways of coping with it.” Participant 10 stated, “just talked with my coworkers, see if they had any more options or things that I could do to make the situation better.” Participant 11 stated “Just talking, sharing with my spouse. Talking about it. Venting about it” Participant 13 stated “I go home, and I vent to my husband. He just listens to me just cry all day.” Participant 14 described coping with job-related stress “Through my friends at work, and through family.”

**Programs.** Programs were the second subtheme that emerged under stress management. Six of the fifteen officers (40%) mentioned stress management programs that are offered by their police department. Participant 4 stated, “we have an employee assistant program.” Participant 5 stated “They [the police department] actually brought a counselor in and talked to everybody as a group. I think it’s four free visits a year that we go talk to them at no cost to us.” Participant 8 stated “I know we have EAP, but you know, I think stress, other than an EAP program, when it gets too much for you to handle, I think stress is something that’s got to be handled individually” Participant 9 stated “I know we got psychologists and stuff like that on standby that we can go use.” Participant 10 stated, “I believe we have an EAP program and we have a gym that’s temporarily out of service, other than that, not much.” Participant 15 stated, “The city offers EAP, which is counseling.”

**Personal.** Personal was the second subtheme that emerged under stress management. Several officers mentioned personal outlets they use to help manage job-related stress. Participant 1 stated “I prayed about it a lot. I talk about it a lot and I even

tried to find my fault in the experience and just move on from it.” Participant 4 stated, “myself included, a lot of officers drink a lot when they get off work.” Participant 5 stated, “I recently probably in the past two years started starting exercising and kayaking and all that, so that’s my stress relief.” Participant 7 stated

I tucked it in my pocket and know next time to make a different decision because either way, there’s gonna be stress to make a decision whether . . . it doesn’t matter the situation, it’s gonna be a stress to make a decision. And then they choose if it was the right decision or not.

Participant 9 stated “A lot of coffee.” Participant 10 stated, “I drink alcohol to deal with stress.”

### **Theme 3: Trust issues.**

The third theme that emerged from the data was trust issues. Participants described matters about trust that has cause job-related stress.

**Lack of trust.** Lack of trust was the first subtheme that emerged under trust issues. Eight out of fifteen police officers (53%) voiced feelings of disdain or lack of trust that resulted in police stress. Participant 1 stated, “Just a personal, to start out as professional but I would say the personal attack on my character [lead to stress].” Participant 2 stated “they should treat everybody like they’re human beings. Just because you make a certain rank doesn’t give you the right to try to talk down to somebody or look down on somebody.” Participant 4 stated, “It’s kind of like, I feel like, the agency usually does things to please other folks more so than their employees and that can be very stressful.” Participant 6 stated, “I minimized my circle to the point where I really

don't deal with police outside of business." Participant 7 stated "That feeling that rules don't apply to other people. It just makes you walk on eggshells." Participant 8 stated, "There's always the favoritism within the agency and stuff like that." Participant 14 stated, "A part of me doesn't want to believe that the system doesn't work like it's supposed to work." Participant 15 stated, "I don't trust anyone in the department or the city."

**Consistency.** Consistency was the second subtheme that emerged under trust issues. A few police officers voiced concerns related to consistency when asked what the department could do to help reduce police stress. Participant 1 stated "Spending a lot more time building the person instead of trying to build an officer." Participant 4 stated,

I think a lot of times people put on a front because people don't know what the backlash is going to be based on what they say, so when they do ask questions, people don't spit out really how they feel because they don't know what the response is going to be.

Participant 6 stated, "Fair treatment that will help more officers to manage the stress already anyway." Participant 8 stated "I'd say the biggest thing is consistency, as far as how officers are treated. That's usually what brings on the stress is someone feels like they're not being treated the same as someone else." Participant 11 stated "Do a better job of recognizing their personnel and refrain from turning a blind eye when they see situations. Once they see those early warning triggers." Participant 14 stated "Consistency. Making sure that your upper management is capable of doing the job."

### Research Questions Results

Research Question 1 asked: What methods are used by police departments to identify police officers who may suffer from police stress? The interviews with police officers and human resources department employees were used to answer this question. HR Participant 2 stated, “Generally, we just get the letter of recommendation from the chief, and then we send them to Harmony Counseling if there’s an issue.” Participant 2 stated,

When I first became a supervisor, I had . . . when I first got people that were working for me, I had one of my. . . It wasn’t my personnel, but it was another personnel on shift . . . came to me with some personal problems and because they felt like they could reach out to me. I reached out to another supervisor who . . . to ask them, “What should I do?”. And they advised me about the EAP program  
Participant 4 stated,

Well, when I became a supervisor, of course, you have to refer people to it. If there’s an issue or you’re having a problem with a certain type of employee or you’re seeing warning signs with people, you have to refer them to it.

Research Question 2 asked: What are the stress levels of police officers in each department? The PSQ-org and PSQ-op surveys were used to answer this question. The surveys used point 1 to indicate *no stress*, point 5 was used to indicate *moderate stress*, and point 7 was used to indicate *a lot of stress*. Participants responded to the surveys, resulting in statistical data. The statistical data from the survey responses were analyzed through Intellectus Statistics, an online computer software.

The overall observations for both police departments for the PSQ-org had an average of 3.4. The overall observations for both police departments for the PSQ-op had an average of 3.2. The observations for the Albany Police Department for the PSQ-org had an average of 3.8. The observations for the Cordele Police Department for the PSQ-org had an average of 3.1. The observations for the Albany Police Department for the PSQ-op had an average of 3.6. The observations for the Cordele Police Department had an average of 2.9

Research Question 3 asked: What stress management intervention techniques are used in each police department? The interviews with police officers and human resources department employees were used to answer this question. A total of 17 participants (15 police officers & 2 human resources department employees) were asked about the stress management methods available to them through their department. Fifteen (82%) of the participants acknowledged that their department use EAPs or some form of counseling to help officers manage job-related stress. For example, HR Participant 1 stated,

The main program is the EAP program through City Human Resources. And there's another program that Chief likes to use. I can't think of the name of it, but it deals with other officers that have been put in the same situation.

HR Participant 2 stated, "Generally, we just get the letter of recommendation from the chief, and then we send them to Harmony Counseling if there's an issue."

Research Question 4 asked: How often do officers access the available stress intervention treatments in their department? The interviews with police officers were used to answer this question. Officers were asked if they had ever used any stress

management programs offered by their police department. Twelve of the fifteen (80%) officers stated that they had never used any stress management programs provided to them by their department. Some of the reasons why officers had never used any of the stress management programs provided by their department included: lack of knowledge about the programs, lack of trust, the stigma that has been created among departments that follows those who seek psychological help, strong support from family and friends, and the use of alcohol to help relieve stress. Three of the fifteen (20%) officers stated that they had used stress management program provided by their department to help manage job-related stress.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Prior to conducting my research study, all research procedures were submitted to and approved by Walden University IRB committee, ensuring credibility and validity. After approval, I contacted the Chief of Police at both participating police departments to meet with staff and introduce my study. At the end of the meetings, I advised potential participants how to contact me if they wanted to participate in my study. This study consisted of data collection through the PSQ-org and PSQ-op, Likert scale surveys, as well as face to face interviews. An article published by McCreary and Thompson in 2013, shows the PSQ-org and the PSQ-op to be reliable through a series of studies that tested the reliability and validity. Cronbach's alpha was also used to test the reliability of the PSQ-org and the PSQ-op surveys. Both surveys were found to be highly reliable instruments for organizational and operation stress in police officers.

Each interview was transcribed by Rev.com, a professional online transcription company. Credibility and reliability of the retrieved data from Rev.com were examined by reading and comparing each transcript to the audio recording for accuracy. A few minor changes were made to ensure the reliability of the data. Quoted examples of responses from participants were used to address confirmability.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the quantitative and qualitative methods used in this study were discussed. In the quantitative portion, fifteen police officers completed the PSQ-org and PSQ-op surveys, which were used to examine the levels of organizational and operations stress among police officers. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data from the surveys. For the qualitative portion of this study, face to face interviews was used to collect data. Seventeen face to face interviews were conducted with fifteen police officers and two human resources department employees. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed by Rev.com. The transcribed data was organized and coded using Nvivo 12. The themes and subthemes that emerged from the data included: Theme 1-Police Stress (subthemes-death/homicide, work/family balance, management/personnel issues, and dealing with the public. Theme 2-Stress Management (subthemes-family, programs, and personal. Theme 3- Trust Issues (subthemes-lack of trust and consistency).

In Chapter 5, I reveal my interpretations of the findings, limitations of my study, my recommendations for future research, implications for social change and a conclusion.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusions

### **Introduction**

Decades of research studies identify the law enforcement profession to be one of the most stressful occupations in the world (Brooks, 2016). Police officers have the duty of protecting citizens and property, preventing and solving crimes, maintaining public order, and other duties that can cause stress. Job-related stress can impact police officers both mentally and physically. Stress is related to health issues such as high blood pressure, back pain, migraines, burnout, and fatigue (Gershon, 1999). The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine the nature of police stress, the stress levels of officers among two different police departments in South Georgia, and the programs used by police departments to help officers manage job-related stress. For the quantitative portion of the study, the PSQ-org and PSQ-op surveys were used to measure organizational and operational stress levels of police officers. I used descriptive statistics to analyze data from the answers provided by the participants on the surveys. For the qualitative portion of the study, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 15 police officers and two human resources department employees from two different police departments. All interviews were transcribed by Rev.com and checked for accuracy. The transcriptions were then organized and analyzed using Nvivo 12.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

A large amount of research has conducted over the past two decades on the topics of police stress, the impact police stress has of an officer's health and job performance, as well as stress management programs and techniques that can be used to help manage

stress. However, there has been minimal research on what programs or techniques departments use or if they use them. This study addressed a gap in the literature by exploring what programs are used in each of the participating departments.

Four research questions guided this study and were designed explore police stress and the treatments available to officers by their departments to help manage stress, and measure the stress levels of officers from each department:

Research Question 1: What methods are used by police departments to identify police officers who may suffer from police stress?

Research Question 2: What are the stress levels of police officers in each department?

Research Question 3: What are the stress management intervention techniques used in each police department?

Research Question 4: How often do officers access the available stress intervention treatments in their department?

### **Research Question 1**

To find out what methods were used by police departments to identify officers within their department who may suffer from stress, face-to-face interviews were conducted with police officers and human resources department employees. Three methods were discussed during the interviews. The first method was that individual officers reached out to their supervisors for help. In those instances, the supervisor refers that individual to an EAP that is available through the department. Another method discussed during interviews was immediately after a traumatic experience, the chief of

police would have counselors readily available for officers at the department to help them cope with that experience. Finally, supervisors look for noticeable signs such as an increase in tardiness for schedule work time, a sudden decrease in work performance, and sudden change in appearance and attitudes.

### **Research Question 2**

To determine the stress levels of each department, the PSQ-org and the PSQ-op surveys were used to measure organizational and operational stress among police officers. A total of 15 officers combined from both police departments completed both surveys. The overall observations for both police departments for the PSQ-org had an average of 3.4. The overall observations for both police departments for the PSQ-op had an average of 3.2. The results showed that the stress level of APD for the PSQ-org had an average of 3.8 and CPD for the PSQ-org had an average of 3.1. The results showed that the stress level of the APD for the PSQ-op had an average of 3.6 and CPD had an average of 2.9.

### **Research Question 3**

To find out what stress management intervention techniques were used by police departments to treat officers within their department who may suffer from stress, face-to-face interviews were conducted with police officers and human resources department employees. During these interviews, I found that both departments offer stress management programs to help officers manage job-related stress. EAPs are used at each to help officers cope with police stress. EAPs provide resources for employees who struggle with a variety of issues that may affect work performance. EAPs are used in a

variety of workplaces, but they are most applicable in workplaces associated with highly stressful occupations such as law enforcement (Moriarty & Field, 1990). These resources include treatments designed to help with personal or family issues, mental health and substance abuse along with financial or legal issues. EAPs focuses on finding help for employees so that they can continue to work efficiently and effectively (Employee Assistance Industry's Trade Association, 2013).

#### **Research Question 4**

Face to face interviews was conducted with police officers and human resources department employees to determine how often officers access the available stress intervention treatments offered by their department. During these interviews, 80% of officers stated that they had never used any stress management programs provided to them by their department. Some of the reasons given for not using the programs provided by the departments included lack of trust within and outside of the department, lack of knowledge of the programs offered, and the feelings of not needing any stress management treatments. It was also revealed that officers have their ways of coping with stress through alcohol, hobbies, and strong family and friends support systems.

#### **Limitations**

As with many research studies, this study has some limitations. Some of these limitations can be addressed in further studies by conducting similar research that includes more police departments and more participants. This study included two South Georgia police departments, one medium-sized department, and one small department. There were a combined seventeen participants. According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice

Statistics' 2008 Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies, the state had 628 law enforcement agencies employing 26,551 sworn police officers. Due to time, shortages of manpower, schedule conflicts, some participants wanted to participate, but due to the reasons above, were unable to. Those individuals could have potentially provided quality input that could have been used in this research study.

### **Recommendations**

Although there has been a massive amount of research studies that explore police stress and the impact it has on police officers, there has been little research that explores the type treatments police departments offer to officers to help manage stress. There is a need to examine the stress management methods used by police departments and the effectiveness of those methods. This study involved a relatively small sample among two South Georgia police departments compared to the numbers of law enforcement officers in the State of Georgia. I recommend researchers in the future use a larger sample from more than two police departments across the country.

A mixed methods design was used for this study. For the quantitative portion, the PSQ-org and PSQ-op surveys were used to examine the stress levels of each police department. For the qualitative portion, face to face interviews was conducted so officers can explain their lived experiences with police stress and the stress management treatments. Due to the complexed nature of police stress and stress management, using quantitative or qualitative research alone may not suffice to effectively finding answers. Therefore, I recommend that future research duplicate this study's research design and methodology by employing the use of the PSQ-org and PSQ-op surveys as well as face to

face interviews. Future research should expand beyond the focus of police stress and the impact of police stress to the treatments used by police departments to help officers cope with stress and their effectiveness.

### **Implications for Social Change**

One of the objectives of this study was to potentially use the findings from this study to make a positive contribution towards social change by bringing more awareness to the nature of police stress and the treatments available to officers through their departments to help cope with police stress. This research provided details from officers and human resources department employees about police stress and the programs the departments use to assist officers who suffer from job-related stress. The findings from this study revealed that 80% of police officers have never used any of the available stress treatment programs provided for them through the departments, but most of the officers had experienced job-related stress throughout their career. There were also officers who knew little to nothing about the stress programs provided to them by their department. Finally, some officers knew of the stress management programs available to them through their department, but it was later in their careers when they found out. This study may support the need for departments which do not have any stress management programs available to their officers, to start implementing such programs. Studies have shown that although stress in the workplace cannot be eliminated in most professions, it can be managed if effectively treated in many cases (Addis & Stephens, 2008; Waters & Ussery, 2007; Quigley, 2008).

This study may also support the need for police departments to continue to promote the stress management programs to officers more frequently. In this study, multiple officers revealed having little to no knowledge about their department's stress management programs. In most departments, the stress management programs are mentioned at the beginning of the hiring process, but officers in most cases, rarely see or hear information relating to the programs afterward. This study may also support the need for police department's stress management programs to be evaluated for their effectiveness. This could allow for departments to implement the more effective programs and eliminate or improve the less effective programs as needed. Effectively managing police stress could potentially lead to better physical and mental health for officers, improved job performance, and possibly better police-citizens relationships.

### **Conclusion**

This study was conducted to examine the nature of police stress and the treatments offered by police departments to officers to help manage police stress. Police stress has been an ongoing issue within police departments for decades due to the nature of police work. Police officers face scrutiny from both inside and outside of their department. Today's advanced technology and social media only add to the stress of policing. Several studies have revealed the physiological and psychological effects of police stress can have on police officers. The participants in this study provided detailed information that supports those studies. Throughout this study, the need for stress management programs for police officers became more apparent. Officers need to be able to comfortably seek help from their departments to help manage the stressors that derive

from the police profession. Departments also must continue to promote the stress management programs they offer so that officers are always reminded that help is available. There may be officers who need help but have no idea that it's available to them. Some officers revealed that the police culture plays a role in them not seeking more information about stress management programs. By working together, police departments and officers can continue to enhance stress management programs and increase officer's willingness to use these programs.

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### Appendix A: Operational Stress Questionnaire

Below is a list of items that describe different aspects of being a police officer. After each item, please circle how much stress it has caused you over the past 6 months, using a 7-point scale (see below) that ranges from “No Stress At All” to “A Lot Of Stress”:

No Stress			Moderate Stress			A Lot Of Stress
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. Shift work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Working alone at night	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Over-time demands	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Risk of being injured on the job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Work related activities on days off (e.g., court, community events)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Traumatic events (e.g., MVA, domestics, death, injury)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Managing your social life outside of work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Not enough time available to spend with friends and family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Paperwork	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Eating healthy at work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Finding time to stay in good physical condition	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Fatigue (e.g., shift work, over-time)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Occupation-related health issues (e.g., back pain)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Lack of understanding from family and friends about your work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Making friends outside the job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Upholding a “higher image” in public	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Negative comments from the public	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Limitations to your social life (e.g., who your friends are, where you socialize)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. Feeling like you are always on the job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Friends / family feel the effects of the stigma associated with your job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The Operational Police Stress Questionnaire is provided free for noncommercial, educational, and research purposes.

## Appendix B: Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire

Below is a list of items that describe different aspects of being a police officer. After each item, please circle how much stress it has caused you over the past 6 months, using a 7-point scale (see below) that ranges from “No Stress At All” to “A Lot Of Stress”:

No Stress			Moderate Stress			A Lot Of Stress
<b>1</b>	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. Dealing with co-workers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. The feeling that different rules apply to different people (e.g., favoritism)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Feeling like you always have to prove yourself to the organization	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Excessive administrative duties	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Constant changes in policy / legislation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Staff shortages	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Bureaucratic red tape	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Too much computer work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Lack of training on new equipment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Perceived pressure to volunteer free time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Dealing with supervisors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Inconsistent leadership style	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Lack of resources	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Unequal sharing of work responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. If you are sick or injured your co-workers seem to look down on you	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Leaders over-emphasize the negatives (e.g., supervisor evaluations, public complaints)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Internal investigations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Dealing the court system	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. The need to be accountable for doing your job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Inadequate equipment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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